

**T.Y.B.A.**  
**POLITICAL SCIENCE**  
**PAPER - IV**  
**POLITICAL PROCESS IN MAHARASHTRA**

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## SECTION - I

## 1

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF POLITICAL PROCESS IN MAHARASHTRA [1818-1960]

### Unit Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
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### 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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**This** unit explains

1. Social and Political movements in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Maharashtra
2. Contribution of Maharashtra in the national freedom movement

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Samyukta Maharashtra which came into existence on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1960 was the result of "a process which had begun many decades ago. The units of Marathi-speaking people which were geographically contiguous were brought under one political entity.

Before Samyukta Maharashtra was formed, Vidarbha region was part of Central Province, which later became Madhya Pradesh. Its legal name was 'MP and Berar'. The Berar [Vidarbha] region was attached to the Maharashtra. Similarly the Marathwada region was a part of Hyderabad State which was ruled by the Nizam till September 1948. The Police Action forced Nawab of Hyderabad to merge his state into the Union of India. Consequently the Marathi speaking area of Hyderabad state [Marathwada] became part of Maharashtra. Hence the new entity is known as 'Samyukta Maharashtra'. One must understand the historical forces behind this to understand the political process in Maharashtra. As we know, political process does not take place in vacuum. Hence it is necessary to understand the history of this region in modern era.

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## 1.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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A quick look at the history of this region would reveal that till 1307 AD, this region was ruled by various Hindu dynasties. The last dynasty was the Yadavs of Deogiri. This dynasty was defeated by the Muslims from North India. With this began the dominance of Muslim rulers on this region which lasted for over three centuries. Then came the Maratha rule. No matter who ruled this region, the entire region was never under one sovereign rule. Its various sub-units were ruled by different dynasties at different times. This observation is important so as to understand why special efforts need to be taken for the integration of various units of Maharashtra, which is not the case with many other states of Indian Union.

### A] Maratha rule:

The new political awakening in this region began with the rise and growth of Shivaji. A young Shivaji Maharaj, was fired by the dream of establishing his own kingdom in Deccan. He challenged Adilshahi of Vijapur as well as Mughals of Delhi. By latter half of Seventeenth century, Shivaji **managed** to carve out his kingdom bravely by defying the **Muslims** powers around him. After his death, by the middle of eighteenth century the Peshwas made Marathas an all India power by raising the standard at Attack. However, the third battle of Panipat, 1761 gave Maratha' hegemony a body blow.

By this time the East India Company from England had become an important power in the political life of India. It had won the battle of Plassey, 1757 and firmly entrenched itself in India. By 1818, the Company managed to defeat the Marathas and became the undisputed ruler of India.

### B] British rule:

With the surrender of Peshwas in 1818, this region came under the rule of the East India Company and was made part of Bombay Presidency. Historically Marathwada and Vidarbha were part of Hyderabad State. The Bhonsale of Nagpur surrendered in 1848 and Nagpur region was made part of the Central Province. Later the Company got Berar region on lease from Nizam of Hyderabad. The Company needed to control the reach cottongrowing areas of Berar. Such lease became necessary as there was Civil War in America. This disrupted the supply of cotton to the textile 'mills in England. As an alternative source of supply, the-EIC got Berar region on lease from Nizam of Hyderabad. This transaction took place in 1860. In 1903 Berar region was appended to the Central Province. Its new name became 'Central Province and Berar' [CP and Berar].

This picture shows how Marathi-speaking areas which are part of Samyukta Maharashtra today were scattered in the early years of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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### **1.3 SOCIAL REFORMS MOVEMENT**

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The English education began in India in 1835 thanks to the efforts of Lord Macalay. The Bombay Presidency was one of the few areas which came in contact with the Western education, Western values and culture. Consequently the political awakening began in this region much earlier compared to the other regions. The English-educated Marathi young generation started many social, educational and religious reform movements in this region. With English education and influence of Western values, these young Indians started questioning the outdated and quite often inhuman socio-religious practices like Child marriage, rigid caste system, widow remarriage, etc. To spread these new values, they started schools; colleges;" newspapers and later associations, political parties. The Non-Brahmin movement was launched by Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. In 1873, he started 'Satya Shodhak Samaj He wrote many books to express the plight of poor farmers [Shetkaryanacha , Asod], protest against caste-dominance [GulaMgiri]. Similarly there. were upper-caste leaders like Justice Ranade, Lokhitawadi' Deshmukh, Tilak and Agarkar. All were part of social reform movement. Tilak and Agarkar were founders of New English School as, well as, Fergusson College. Both had started newspapers like Kesari and 'Maratha.

These movements could be categorized into educational movements, social movements, women-related movements. This categorization is not water-tight as many issues would overlap. This categorization is done for better understanding only.

**Caste:**

. Indian society suffers the malaise of caste- system based on untouchability and sense of purity. In Bombay Presidency Mahatma Phule had launched a movement against caste system. He realized that lack of education is the main handicap of the Untouchables. Hence in 1852 he started a school for untouchables in Pune. He wrote a well-argued book [Gulamgiri] to expose the caste system.

In 1873 he started 'Satya Shodhak Samaj'. This shows his quest for truth. Phule never accepted the authority of Vedas. He was totally against idol-worship and recommended monotheism. At philosophical level, he gave a new concept 'Nirmile which means God has created universe and the human race which is equal in status. This logically leads to humanism.

After Matama Phule,' Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur must be mentioned for the important contribution towards abolition of caste. As King of Koihapur state, he had abolished 'Mahar vatan'. This was an age-ord practice of keeping Mahars in perpetual bondage to village community. He introduced reservations for the Dalits in 1902 in his state. Not only this, he established residential schools for Dalit students and also gave them scholarships to the deserving students.

Like Shahu Maharaj, Maharshi:Vitthal Ramji Shinde the torch further. In 1906 He had established 'Depressed Classes Mission Society' to fight against untouchability. His efforts were untiring. He was associated with the Indian National Congress in this cause.

**Women-related problem:**

All over the world, the status of women has been inferior. The realization that this needs to be .changed came with modem-age. In India social reformers had made tremendous efforts to improve the lot of women. Even today these efforts continue as we can see from the debate on Women Reservation Bill. Till the social reforms began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the plight of women was beyond imagination. The entire society was under the sway of exploitative practices like Sati, child-marriage, no right to remarry, no property right, no education and employment opportunities. Polygamy,. Devdasi, purdah system were keeping them in permanent bondage. In this struggle, one name deserves a special mention. Behramji Malabari, a Parsi person fought to get Widow Remarriage Act passed. His achievement was Age of Consent Act. This started a tremendous and heated debate in our society. On pro-reformist leaders included Gopal Ganesh Aagarkar, Justice M.G. Ranade, Pandita Ramabai had started a school for girls in -Rune. Its curriculum became a hot topic.

Those days there were a large number of child widows. They had no future, no life. They had to shave off their heads. Phule had opposed to the practice of tonsure. To stop this practice he appealed to the barbers of Pune to stop this.

Phule started Balhatya Pratibandhank Gruh in Pune to help the child widows and their children. Many prominent social reformers like G G Aagarkar supported the right of widow to remarry. Dhondo Keshav Kam set an example by marrying a widow Godabai. Karve went on to set up India's first university for women in 1916.

These reformers realized that lack of education among women makes them helpless and totally dependent of men. Here too, we find Phule taking the lead. In 1848 he had started a school for girls in Pune. To set an example he taught his wife Savitribai who later became a school teacher. After Phule, Shahu of Kolhapur enacted a law and made child marriages illegal. He ordered touch measures to end pernicious practices like Devdasi, jogtini, etc. He encouraged to Hindu widows to remarry. Maharshi Shinde worked towards ending Devdasi practices. Out of his efforts came a law passed by Bombay Presidency.

### **Education:**

As noted all social reformers were in agreement that lack of education led to slavery of India. Not only this they demanded modern education based on science and technology. We have already noted the pioneering work done by Mahatma Phule. We also mentioned how young graduates like Tilak and Aagarkar had started the New English School. The idea was to spread education among masses and empower them with scientific knowledge and patriotism. Phule was the first important social reformer who understood the importance of free and compulsory education. He had presented a memorandum to the Hunter Commission on education in 1881 and Suggested that children should be given education free till the Age of twelve. This education should be made Compulsory.

Phule was envisaging an educated society. Shahu Maharaj was keen to promote technical education among the Dalits so that they could easily get jobs. In 1897, Shahu took initiative and started a technical school at village Aalte. In 1902 Shahu Maharaj made education free and compulsory in his state. Jaganath Shankar Sheth, Bhau Daji Lad also made frnpOriarit contribution in the field of education,

**Religion:** These social reformers realized that there are too many bad practices and customs in Hindu religion. They wanted to reform Hindu religion and get rid of these inhuman practices. Phule's



Satya Shodhak Samaj [established in 1873] was one of the first serious attempt to reform Hindu religion'. Then came Arya Samaj founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Prarthana Samaj founded by Dr Atmaram Pandurang. The entire focus of these reforms was to purify Hindu religion by dropping outdated, inhuman practices prevalent in Hindu fold.

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## 1.4 THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

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As we have already noted the process of getting the entire Marathi-speaking area under British control began with the defeat of Peshwas in 1818. After this, the Bhonsales of Nagpur surrendered in 1848. The Nagpur region was attached to the Central Province. In 1861, Berar region was taken over from Nizam of Hyderabad. The Berar region had four districts: Akola, Amravti, Yeotamal and Buldhana. The Berar region was also attached to the Central Province and it was renamed as 'Central Province and Berar' [CP and Berar]. However Marathwada was part of Hyderabad state till 1948.

These details are necessary to understand the growth and emergence of nationalism in various parts of Maharashtra. The process began in Western Maharashtra, more specifically in cities like Mumbai and Pune. For example, the Indian National Congress was established in December 1885 in Mumbai. After this the flame of nationalism spread in Vidarbha region. Marathwada was the last to move in this direction. As late as 1930 Marathwada nationalistic spirit took roots in Marathwada. But the real focus was on Western Maharashtra.

### **A] Intellectual resistance:**

After the failed attempt to regain freedom in 1857 [popularly, known as India's First war of independence], the British power disarmed Indian society. The law made carrying keeping arms illegal. Consequently the freedom struggle had to be waged on intellectual plane. 'People of India had to be informed about their status, causes of their decline and how to get back the old glory, etc. This is reason why intellectual resistance became the reality in our fight for freedom.

The main spring board of this intellectual resistance was the contact we had with the Western civilization: It began with the introduction of English education. Since Indian Society was based on caste-system, the upper castes were the first to take the Western education and benefit from it. The British Empire needed English educated Indians to man the administrative posts at the lower levels.

These English educated Indians were exposed to the liberal thinking prevalent in UK. It also opened doors of other social sciences; like economics, western philosophy and political ideas like democracy, etc. Many Indian scholars, thinkers picked up their pens to expose the dirty side of British rule over India. Some of the most important and early scholars are discussed . below:

**Bhaskar PandurangTarkhadkar:**

He was perhaps the first scholar to argue that the rule of the East India Company is not good for India. He wrote eight article in the 'Bombay Gazette' from July to October 1841. These articles created a sensation as they had charged that the British rule is exploiting Indian economy. Through these articles, he exposed the dirty side of British policies and how they were impoverishing Indians. These articles played a multiple role. They exposed the economic exploitation of Indian traders and artisans. They also showed how the Company goes back on its word which was about non-interference in religious matter exposed the economic exploitation of Indian traders and artisans. They also showed how the Company goes back on its word which was about non-interference in religious matters. His important objection was about the Afghan war of 1839. He felt that the cost of this expensive war had been charged on Indians which is totally wrong. His conclusion was that this rule is a curse of God. No wonder these articles created a sensation as till then-nobody had the courage and intellect to put forward such charges backed by data and statistics.

Tarkhadkar was not alone in this mission. There were many who came up with similar charges. Ramkrishna Vishwanath and Lokhitwadi Deshmukh too leveled similar charges and demanded 'economic nationalism'. Ramkrishna Vishwanath had shown that for England, India, is just a colony to be exploited for cheap raw material, and a Captive market, for finished goods. He mentioned that the British policy is clear in its objective of killing local industries and local skills. He further proved that the East India Company was illegally engaged in the trade of salt and **opium**. **He** held.the Company responsible for the impoverishment of Indians.

Gopal Hari Deshmukh, who is popularly-known also Lokhitawadi' also wrote many articles, to ,criticize the policies of British power. The focus of his .Writings was 'welfare of people'. Hence he became popular as 'Lokhitawadi'. Between 1848 to 1850 he wrote 108 articles which , became famous as 'Shat-patre' [hundred letters]. He strongly supported !economic nationalism'. Like Dadabhai Naoroji, Lokhitawadi, also supported economic drain theory. One of his well-known article is Laxmi Chalali Vilayatela' [wealth is going to England]

The intellectual arguments and efforts of these intellectuals sustained the tempo of economic nationalism. Despite the constant fear of suppression, it is to the credit of these intellectuals that they put forward their views fearlessly. Though they were helpless in one sense, they yielded a powerful pen to create awareness about the economic exploitation of the Country by the foreign rule.

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## 1.5 INSTITUTIONAL NATIONALISM

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After the fall of Maratha power in 1818 and then disarmed Indian society after the unsuccessful rebellion of 1857, the natives, realized that they will have to adopt new techniques of resistance to fight the British Empire. The English-educated Indians turned towards institutions building in socio-educational and commercial field. As we know the language of economics and money is well understood by all. No wonder the first associations formed by the Indians had high economic content. The Indian merchants and traders realized the discriminatory practices of the East India Company. The trade and commercial politics of the EIC were quite in favour of European traders and businessmen. These Indian merchants were looking for a platform to voice their concerns. They could easily join hands with the Indian socio-political leaders. Out of the alliance came various associations all over India. For example Madras Natives Association, Madras Mahajan Sabha, in Madras. In Bombay, The Bombay Association' formed on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1852, The initiative for this was taken by Dadabhai Naoroji, Dr Bhau Daji, Narayan Dinanath, etc. The leading businessman Sir Jaganath Shankarsheth became the President of The Bombay Association.

What needs to be noted is that, the government accepted the body, as the representative of the traders, and merchants. The Bombay Association became the pool from which" the government drew official and non-official members for various gal/ eminent bodies.: The attitudes of the Bombay Association towards the government was that of subservience and not of Conformation: In that sense the Bombay Association had a limited agenda: getting maximum trade concessions' from the government. They had no political agenda worth the name., They played the role Of middleman, explaining the needs of the natives Id the government and taking government perspective to the people of India. The ultimate aim was to co - operate with British rulers for mutual benefits.

No wonder the English educated ;Indian's were very not happy with the workings, the demands of the 'Bombay Association. This led to serious differences. Finally Or Blau Daji resigned as the secretary of the Association. After that the Association practically became defunct. `There were attempts to revive the Association. In 1867 Naoroji Furdunji took interests in reviving the Association but did not succeed.

The Association came back into reckoning in 1869 when the likes of Justice M G Ranade and Dr R G Bhandarkar took the membership of the Association. Even this inning of The Bombay Association was not very fruitful as the interests of political leaders and traders/merchants had to clash sooner than later. The differences came to surface once again in 1872.

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## 1.6 PUNE SARVAJANIK SABHA

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If The Bombay Association played the subservient role towards the British power, the Pune Sarvajanik Sabha had played a meaningful role in our socio-political field. Quite often the Sabha had confronted the government with facts and figures. Though the Sabha was established in 1867, it became a force under the guidance of Justice M G Ranade, Gopal Krishan Gokhale and its famous secretary G. V. Joshi. The Sabha had adopted agitational politics and quite often took the government head-on. The Sabha played a sterling role during Deccan riots and Great famine of 1875.

Those days the Sabha was quite popular in Pune city. Many of its members got elected to the Pune Municipality. Almost all of them were educated and hardworking. Through the platform of the Sabha they aired the problems, the expectations of the natives. Even the British rulers respected the views and opinions of the Sabha. Though more operational in Pune city, the Sabha had the policy of looking into the grievances of the farmers. It was involved in the revised land revenue assessment of the 1870s, Under the intellectual leadership of the Sabha, the peasants refused to pay land revenue;'. Finally government was forced to reduce the land revenue. During 1875-77; the farmers of Deccan had to face severe famine'. During this period, the policies of the government were not in favour farmers: The Sabha had 'used the native press quite effectively to express the views and opinions of the farmers. Those days the Sabha had attained national importance: It also helped to host some of the earlier session of the Indian National Congress. Those days it was one of the most important public body of the It ran a quarterly journal to exchange ideas among the various classes of Indian society.

### **Conspiracy Theory:**

If the Pune Sarvajanik Sabha was body with democratic outlook, the activities of freedom fighter Vasudev Balwant Phadke had violent component. Phadke and his associates believed in armed struggle against the British power. Their attempts were unsuccessful and Phadke was caught tried and sent to Eden where he died in 1863. The whole episode is famous as 'Deccan Dacoites' 1879. The then governor of Bombay province Sir Richard Temple felt that there is some indirect and direct connection between the activities of the Sabha and the rebellion of Phadke.

There is a conspiracy to overthrow the government of Britain from India. He further felt the Chitpawan Kokanasthan Brahmin like Phadke are out to push British out of India. These perceptions of Sir Temple became famous as 'Conspiracy Theory'. The outcome of this was that the government withdrew the recognition of the Sabha.

The closure of the Sabha did not deter the leaders from coming together on some pretext or the other. Many important and popular leaders of that era were the active members of the Sabha. Ranade, Gokhale, Tilak gave a lot to the Sabha and learnt a lot as the active members of the Sabha. All these members later played an important role at the national level. Many of them took initiative in forming the Indian National Congress [INC] in 1885. Its first session was to take place in Pune city but due to the epidemic of plague, the venue was shifted to Mumbai and the first session of INC was held on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1885.

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## 1.7 THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

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As noted, the introduction and spread of English education in India created political awareness, consciousness among the Indians. This got expressed through various associations and bodies. The most important came in 1885 when the INC was established in Mumbai. Before the INC was formed, there were associations in various provinces of the British Empire. As noted, there was Madras Mahajan Sabha in Madras, there was Pune Sarvajanik Sabha in Pune. The importance of the INC was that it brought on one platform all Indian bodies. It was truly a national body. Very soon the INC became the main vehicle, the main tool to fight the British Empire. Its history could be understood in two phases discussed before:

### **First Phase 1885-1920**

During this phase, leaders like Justice M G Ranade, Sir P M Mehta, Gopal Krishan Gokhale, Lokmanya Tilak, etc. played a dominant role. The Bombay presidency offered many leaders, activists and workers to the Congress. This fact has been noted by scholars like Gordon Johnson. He had commented, 'It is, indeed, doubtful whether any other region in India could have so successfully nurtured such an all India movement.' It would be interesting to note that during this phase, there were six sessions of the INC held in Mumbai and Pune. In addition, to the inaugural session of 1885, there were the sessions 1889, 1895, 1904, 1915 and a special session in 1918.

According to some scholars, even this phase can be subdivided into moderate phase and extremists phase. The first twenty years of the INC are regarded as the moderate phase when leaders like P. M. Mehta and Gokhale were controlling the INC. These leaders are known as moderates because of their attitude towards British power and the tone of their politics. They believed in the 'politics of prayers and petitions'. By

1890s, the limitations of this politics became quite visible. The " reason behind this was the Constitutional reforms granted in 1892. This did not satisfy the extremists elements in Congress neither did it satisfy the moderates in the INC. The extremist faction had a powerful leader like Lokmanya Tilak - whereas the moderates were led by Gopal Krishna Gokhale. In other words, the politically conscious-people of Maharashtra were divided into Tilak group [extremists] and Gokhale group [moderates], Tilak was not actively supporting the extremists' activities but he had sympathies for the activities of Chapekar brothers who were responsible for murdering Mr. Rand who was the Plague Commissioner of Pune. He was killed by Chapekar brothers in 1897.

Tilak had started public Ganapati Festival and Shivaji Jayanti to spread the message of nationalism. He could write articles on Kesari, a Marathi paper started by him for the same purpose. He could deliver public lectures to spread awareness among the natives about the pernicious aspect of British rule. This is how he became famous as 'Lokmanya', a person loved by the masses.

But the machinery of the INC was under the control of the moderates. At Maharashtra level, there appeared a dichotomy The Congress organization was controlled by the moderates whereas people were supporting Tilak, leader of extremist faction. This situation continued till 1905. The situation dramatically due to the Partition of Bengal announced in 1905 by Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of India. This gave a golden' opportunity to the extremists to popularize their brand of politics. They took to streets and organized nation-wide protest movements against the partition of Bengal. INC was on the verge of split. Against such stormy situation Congress session was held at Calcutta in 1906 which was chaired by the grand old man of Indian politics Dadabhai Naoraji. The extremists' faction wanted Tilak to chair the session which was opposed by the Moderates. Dadabhai was a compromise candidate to preside over the session.

The extremists' faction demanded that the agitation against the Partition of Bengal should be intensified. This was unacceptable to the Moderates who insisted on constitutional methods of protest. The led to the split in Congress in 1907 at Surat session of Congress.-The extremists' faction was expelled from the Congress. But with the arrest of Tilak in 1908, the extremist faction lost its main leader and it became rather dull. Tilak was arrested and sentenced to six years of imprisonment to Mandalay which is located in Brahamdesh [now Myanmar].

Lokmanya Tilak was released in 1914. By this time the moderate faction had lost its steam as many of its prominent leaders had died. Sir P M Mehta, Gopal Krishna Gokhale were no

more by 1915. With the death of many moderate leaders, the unity among the extremist and moderates became easy. When Tilak came back, he became the undisputed leader of Congress. He took initiative to sign Lucknow pact of 1916 at the Congress session. This pact ensured Hindii-Muslim unity, Tilak started Home Rule movement to demand . swarajya. Similarly Tilak extended support to the Khilafat movement to attract the Muslims towards Congress. Tilak died on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1920 in Mumbai. With this ended Tilak era in Congress and with also ended the prominent position Maharashtra enjoyed in national politics.

### **Second Phase [1920-1947]:**

The end of Tilak era also meant arrival of Gandhi era in national politics. Gandhiji had come back permanently to India in January 1915. He took five years to familiarize himself with the conditions of the ordinary Indians. During these five years he did run some small agitations like Champaranya movement, Textile workers strike in Ahmedabad.

The arrival of Gandhiji and his supreme leadership of Congress created a vertical divide in Maharashtra, Some believed in Tilak's ideology to be different from .Gandhiji did not accept Gandhiji's leadership, while some believed that Gandhian programme is an extension of Tilak's programme. The clash, came to surface in 1920 at Nagpur session of Congress when the no-co operation movement was under discussion. The Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee [MPCC], leadership was divided on this issue. The divide was, clearly between pro-Gandhiji and anti- Gandhiji faction. The pro-Gandhijj faction had leaders like Kakasaheb Khadilkar, Shivrampant P.aranjape, Gangadharrao Deshpande These leaders felt that. Gandhian programme of no-co operation is nothing but, extension, of Tilak's programme of boycott. This group whole-heartedly became pro-Gandhiji. But on the other hand, the anti-Gandhiji group, had .leaders, like Aney,. Munje; N C Kelkar and Khaparde.

Gandhiji called. off hp-co operation movement in February 1922 This disturbed many senior leaders of Congress. Motilal Nehru, C R Das advocated entry into the Council.. For this purpose they had launched. 'Swaraj Party'. This party contested elections held in 1923. In Maharashtra this party was led by NC .Kelkar, which contested elections and entered the Legislative Council. One must a basic difference between Motilal Nehru and C R Das on one side and N C Kelkar-Aney on the other side. While Nehru-Das started a party but they were pro-Gandhiji whereas Kelkar-Aney and their friends were dead against Gandhiji and his style of leadership. Consequently there were serious differences between the Maharashtra leadership of Swaraj Party and its national leadership about assuming ministerial offices. N. C. Kelkar-Aney left

Swaraj Party in 1925 and started 'Parti Sahakar Party' in 1926. As was the practice then, such parties could be started while remaining in Congress. The leaders of Prati Sahakar Party openly expressed their differences with the Congress as well as the Swaraj Party. They were in Congress till 1933 and had used the platform of the Hindu Maha Sabha [HMS] to criticize Congress leadership. Finally they left Congress in 1934 and contested the 1937 elections on the banner of 'Democratic Swaraj Party'. This party fared extremely poorly in the elections. As such they had no option but to merge in Hindu Maha Sabha.

Since these senior Congress leaders from Tilak era were opposed to Gandhi's style of politics, it created a space for a new set of leadership in MPCC which would be pro-Gandhiji. This is where we must mention Shankarrao Deo who in due time managed to capture MPCC offices. Other parallel development which needs to be mentioned is that under Gandhiji's leadership a large number of non-Brahmin leaders as well as masses had joined Congress during the 1930s. These non-Brahmin leaders were in league with pro-Gandhi leadership in MPSC. With this numerical strength, pro-Gandhi leadership managed to capture MPCC. This created a new set of leadership in Congress which had non-Brahmin leaders as well. The troika of Jedhe-Gadgil-Deo dominated the politics in MPCC.

During the same 1930s another important development in Congress politics was the emergence of Congress Socialist Party [CSP] in 1934. In Maharashtra, the CSP was led by Ashok Mehta, Achyut Parwardhan. These young leaders opposed the acceptance of ministerial offices in 1937. Not only this, the CSP did not contest the elections to the Constituent Assembly held in 1945. They had a different perception of independence based on socialist ideas. Instead of playing power politics, they believed in social reforms and hence organized, Rashtriya Seva Dals as well as the Trade Unions in various industries. Like Swaraj Party, even CSP was a party within a party. Soon differences developed between the leaders of CSP and other Congress leaders about the Control of Rsshtriya Seva Dal and Trade Unions. The CSP leadership was unwilling to surrender these bodies to other Congress leaders. This indeed 'Created a rift between the CSP and Congress; which finally resulted in socialist Party'.

During these times, one can notice the increasing Participation of the non-Brahmin masses and leaders in Congress. The numerical strength of the non-Brahmin masses gave the non-Brahmin leadership an edge over the Brahmins in the Congress organization. The Hindu Maha Sabha [HMS] was established in 1915, as a body meant for the unification of all Hindus. This body



later became the front of Hindu communal forces. This development took place especially after the death of Lokamanya Tilak in 1920. They could easily adopt anti-Gandhi position as Gandhiji never supported one community over the other community. It must also be noted that the HMS had reasonable following among the upper-castes and upper classes of Hindu society.

The HMS became a political front which left a vacuum in social and cultural field. This was filled in by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS] established in 1925 at Nagpur by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar. The RSS was modeled on marshal training, character building. Though the RSS did attract upper caste youths, it did not get much response from non-Brahmin youngsters. The declared enemy of the RSS was the Muslims and secularism of the Congress. Since the numerical strength of the Muslims in Maharashtra is insignificant, the RSS directed its energies towards opposing Congress. This in turn intensified the Brahmin v/s .non-Brahmin rivalry.

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## **1.8 THE NON-BRAHMIN MOVEMENT**

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It is interesting to note that in Maharashtra the emergence of nationalist movement coincided with the emergence of non-Brahmin movement. Though the Brahmins were the first to take-benefit of English education, after them came the non-Brahmins who enrolled for English education. This exposure to modern values, ideas through English education gave non-Brahmins an ideological tool to challenge Brahminical supremacy. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule becomes the first scholar to start this ideological battle. He had started the "Satya Shodhak Samar in 1873. He wrote many important books like 'Gulamgiri' [Slavery], 'Brahmananche Kasab [the skills of the Brahmins], 'etc.

### **Mahatma Phule:**

He holds a unique position in the . annals of the, social reformer. Phule [1823-1890] was born into Mali [gardener] community. Thanks to the educational efforts of. the Christian missionary, Phule could get education which otherwise was the prerogative of the upper castes only. The modern education opened Phule's eyes to the Western values like equality, liberty, rights of man, etc. He was deeply influenced by Thomas Paine's Rights of Man. He realized that there has been grand conspiracy to keep non-Brahmins away from learning and knowledge. Hence he started the non-Christian Girls' school in Pune in 1848. He taught his wife Savitribai who later became a school teacher. His reforms were all embracing. He opposed the practice of tonsure by actively organizing a strike of barbers of Pune.

Phule wanted to spread his message to the many. With this in view he had started 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' in 1873. This should be regarded as the beginning of Non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra. Like many of the movements of that era, the non-Brahmin movement was initially non-political in nature. In fact, Phule was a supporter of British Raj because he could 'see that under British power, non-Brahmins like him could get education. The education was denied to the non-Brahmins. This is also why Phule refused to join the Indian National Congress [INC] as he felt that this is a body of upper-castes people of India.

The ideology of Satya Shodhak Samaj was totally anti-Brahmin. It was bound to generate a strong reaction from the Brahmin class. It was expressed by Vishnushastri Chiplunkar who wrote 'Nibandhamala' and reacted strongly to the attack of Phule. Phule also attacked the Prathana Samaj, Pune Sarvajanik Sabha and Indian National Congress. His basic thrust was that none of these bodies were doing anything to improve the lot of the untouchable masses.

It must be noted that Phule was not against the Brahmins but against the ideology of caste dominance. The Brahmins as a class were dominating the socio-economic structure of the society for centuries. In fact Phule had many Brahmin friends like Justice Ranade. Phule was truly a philosopher who believed in egalitarian society. As he had attacked the Brahmin dominance, he also attacked the Marathi aristocracy. As he wanted the Brahmins to drop caste consciousness, he also expected the Shahanyav Kuli Marathas to move away from sense of caste superiority. Like Brahmins, even the Marathas believed in and practiced untouchability. This is precisely why Phule's contribution is of high quality.

At theoretical level one must mention Phule's Sarvajanik Satyadharma Pustakt [Book of Universal True Religion]. Here we find him exposing the illogical practices prevalent in the Hindu religion. For anything and everything, Phule demanded rational explanation. No wonder under his scrutiny many Hindu religious practices came under attack.

Phule should be hailed as the prophet of modern thinking in India. He was the first scholar-activist who launched a multi-thronged attack on religion. Hence he is rightly called 'Mahatma' Phule. Phule died in 1890.

### **The Revival of Satya Shodhak Samaj**

As normally happens in India, with the death of the pioneer his association and the cause also suffers. This happened with the Satya Shodhak Samaj also. After Phule's death in 1890,

the Samaj went into decline. After some years, it was revived by Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur, a princely state of South Maharashtra. Shahu Maharaj was dead against the caste-system. He took efforts to promote education among the untouchables. He had used the power of the state to bring in social reforms. In 1902, he announced the policy of 50% reservation in the administrative posts for the untouchables. He wanted to break the upper-caste monopoly in these fields. Hence he is rightly regarded as the 'father of reservation policy in India.' Shahu realized that it is not enough to give reservations. These students need hostels facilities. He had established many hostels for this purpose.

Shahu came to throne in 1894. Same year, he ordered the abolition of forced labour. His many measures attacked the roots of the caste system and the Brahmin dominance. However during the 'Vedotka' controversy, he had supported the Maratha dominance. He insisted that the Marathas have a right to come to throne. Some Brahmins from his kingdom were not ready to accept this position. This is one episode where one finds Shahu Maharaj accepting the vama system by accepting the Brahminical dominance. Phule had dreamt of a caste-less society.

It is indeed clear that Shahu Maharaj was a progressive ruler who offered free and compulsory education to all. This was a novelty then when education was restricted to the upper-castes. He understood the importance of education in modern world. He used his resources to start many primary, secondary and higher secondary educational bodies in his state. In the later part of his life, he made some changes in his policy. He had ordered the closure of separate schools for the untouchables and ordered that students of all castes must seat together and learn together. He used similar measures in his administrative system. He replaced the Kulkarnis [Brahmins] with the Talathis and ensured that some of these posts go to the untouchables.. In 1918 he abolished Mahar vatans, which were tying down the Mahars to the village economy. The Vedotka controversy convinced him that unless he replaces Brahmins with non-Brahmins in his administrative system, he would not be able to bring in drastic social change.

Mahatma Phule and Shahu Maharaj were two important leaders of the non-Brahmin movement. Their efforts created non-Brahmin consciousness among the masses. At the same time, let us not ignore the differences between their outlook. Though both had opposed Brahminical dominance, Phule was totally radical scholar who had demanded a caste-less society. On the other hand, Shahu Maharaj had adopted the elitist approach to the nonbrahmin movement.

### **The Decline of Non-brahmin movement**

Phule began the non-brahmin movement on the base of equality of all castes. But Shahu Maharaj was keen on hegemony of the Kshatriyas [Marathas in Maharashtra]. Phule had presented the concept of 'Bahujan Samaj', a grand alliance of all non-Brahmin sections. But Shahu was the practitioner of Kshatriya supremacy. This made the untouchables uncomfortable-with the Samaj. They moved away from the Samaj. Later the Samaj became the movement of upper caste Marathas.

In 1916 the Maratha leadership converted the Samaj into 'Non-Brahmin Party'. This leadership had a narrow perspective. When the Constitutional reforms were being discussed, the Non-Brahmin Party demanded reservations for the Marathas. Though this demand was not granted it showed the narrow outlook of Marathas. The elections to the Bombay Provincial Assembly were held in 1920, 1923, and 1926. The Non-Brahmin Party contested these elections but did not get any significant success. The decline of the movement began with these failures. The Non-Brahmin Party did not have any programme to appeal to people.

With the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian political scene, the non-Brahmin movement' further lost its relevance. Gandhiji's leadership had a bigger, and stronger appeal to non-Brahmin masses. Though, it declined in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Non-Brahmin movement had made its point. It showed that now the non-Brahmin masses will not tolerate the injustices and they are capable of revolt and organized protest. Not only this, the movement could produce intellectuals like Phule who had given a cogent analysis of caste system.

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## **1.9 CHANGES AFTER 1930**

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As already noted, the Brahmin leadership in Congress was not happy with the ascendancy of Gandhiji's leadership. At the same time, the non-brahmin masses were moving away from Satya Shodhak Samaj and Non-Brahmin Party. They found a new appeal in Congress under Gandhiji's leadership. By this time, Gandhiji was getting ready to launch Civil Disobedience Movement in March 1930. Keshavrao Jedhe, Shankarrao More were the important leaders of Maratha caste in Maharashtra. They had joined Congress and with them their hundreds of followers had also joined the Congress. This increased the social base of Congress. The Congress in Maharashtra was led by the collective leadership of Gadgil-Jedhe-Deo. Because of this unique pattern, the message of Congress had reached the remotest part of Maharashtra. The

Congress organizational structure also reached the remote part of Maharashtra.

As is the case today, even then the Marathas were numerically powerful compared to the Brahmins. They felt that they should get the position of power within the party. But these posts were cornered, by the Brahmins, who were in minority. This resulted in Brahmin-Non Brahmin rivalry inside the Congress. This came to surface during the Provincial elections held in 1937 under the Government of India Act, 1935. -Like today, even then the Congress party took a look at the caste complexion of the constituency and selected the candidates. It meant more and more non-Brahmin candidates had won the elections. The Non-Brahmin elected representatives were more in number compared with the Brahmin elected candidates. Here again came the issue of leadership. The non-Brahmin leadership felt that the top post could come to them. It was offered to B G Kher, a Brahmin by caste. The Non-brahmin leadership decided to support K F Nariman who was the President of the Bombay, Pradesh Congress Committee [BPCC]. The idea was to support a non-Brahmin, even if it means supporting a Parsi. In this tussle, the high Command supported Kher. Kher could get elected with the support of Brahmins and the Gujarathi member of the Provincial • assembly. This spelt the dominance of Shetji and Bhatji. But the claims of non-brahmins could not be ignored totally. Jedhe became the chairman of Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee [MPGC]. In practical terms it meant an open rivalry between the organizational wing of Congress which was dominated by non-Brahmins led by Jedhe and ministerial wing-where the Brahmins had dominance.

When the World War II started in September 1939, the :Congress ministries had resigned. Then the provincial elections took place in 1945 in which once again Congress came to power. Once, again the claims of non-Brahmin leadership was ignored and top post had gone to B G Kher. And once again Jedhe was made. the President of the MPCC to pacify the non-Brahmins. To express their grievances the Jedhe - More group formed 'Peasants and Workers League' inside the Congress in 1946. Finally they left the Congress in 1948 to start the Peasant and Workers Party [PWP].

### **The Dalit Movement :**

This is the third strand in Maharashtra politics. The Dallis [formerly referred to as the untouchables] occupy the lowest rung of the caste hierarchy. For centuries they suffered the stigma of untouchability. After seventeenth century onwards, there came an awakening that the practice of untouchability was inhuman. As noted before, the initiative to attack untouchability was taken by

Mahatma Phule and his Satya Shodhak Samaj. Phule demanded casteless society. Then came Shahu of Koihapur who started the affirmative action for the untouchables.

The Dalit movement had two strands. One was led by upper-caste leaders and other was led by the untouchables themselves.- The upper caste strand was under the leadership of Maharshi Vitthal Ramji Shinde. He had started 'The Depressed Classes Mission Society of India' in the early, yea/.s of 20 century. Before Dr. Ambedkar arrived on the scene, the Dalit movement urged the upper castes to help them. Dr. Ambedkar injected the spirit of aggressiveness in the movement. One can trace the development of Dalit movement through following phases.

#### **Social Reform Movement :**

The activities of Mahatma Phule created a sense of confidence among the lower castes. This created many leaders, social reformers among the lower castes. The social reform movement was pioneered by Gopal Krishna Valanguar. He was operating in Konkan region .of Western Maharashtra. In Vidarbha region one can mention Vitthal Ramji Moon, Bansode and Gavai. Their efforts were aimed at two levels. At one level, they wanted to awaken the Untouchables through the spread of education. At other level, they had appealed to the upper caste section for help. They did not believe in caste-conflicts but caste co-operation. They did not question the caste frame work. They wanted to improve their lot within the existing social structure.

We could easily mention the activities of Gopalbaba Valanguar who felt that the Dalits could appeal to the senses of upper castes people and bring to their notice the pernicious caste system.. With this purpose in mind he had established 'Anaryadosh Panhara Mandal' [Society for the removal of disability of the non-aryans]. His idea was to integrate the untouchables in the mainstream of the Hindu society. The name of the society also strongly hints at. The Arya-Anarya struggle and how the Aryans had defeated the original inhabitants of this country i.e. Anaryans. Gopalbaba's society was appealing to the Aryans to regard the Anaryans as part of them.

The popularity of Gopalbaba's association could be gauged from the fact that soon its branches were established in many parts of Maharashtra. He could appeal to his people through the Bhajans and Kirtans. He did not stop at this. He wanted this cause to have a national appeal. Hence he had appealed to the Congress leadership to take up this cause. Like G. G. Agarkar, Gopalbala also raised a basic question: how could we ask for political reforms when social reforms had not taken place? It is

interesting to note that Gopalbaba wrote extensively for the 'Deenbandhu' edited by Mahatma Phule as well as 'Sudharak' edited by G. G. Aagarkar. All these articles later were compiled in a book 'Akhandas',

As Gopaibaba was active in Western Maharashtra, Bansode, Gavai were active in Vidarbha. The Vidarbha leadership also believed in Conciliatory approach. In 1901 Bansode had started 'Sanman Shodhak Nira'vit Samaj' [Society of the self-respect seeking depressed people]. The most significant contribution of the Samaj was the nine dos and don'ts which were as below:

- [1] Remove ignorance
- [2] Remove touchability
- [3] Do not embrace Christianity
- [4] Do not eat beef
- [5] Do not drink
- [6] Fight for civil rights
- [7] Educate yourself
- [8] Improve your economic status
- [9] Seek co-operation of Hindus.

Like Valangar and Bansode, Shivram Kamble, a Mang caste, also sought the co-operation of upper caste Hindus. He was looking forward to help from Vithal Ramji Shinde, Annasaheb Bhopatkar; the upper caste Hindu leaders. All of them appealed to the British government for help. The British government responded by starting Mahar Regiment in the Army. This opened job opportunities for the Dalit youths in the early years of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This Dalit leadership had conciliatory approach. They did not want to challenge the dominance of the upper castes. At the same time, the Dalit leadership was looking towards British government for some concrete steps and programmes. The Dalits did get some concessions here and there, but these concessions were more out of compassion and not as a result of struggle.

While discussing the Dalit movement, one must mention the contribution of Vithal Ramji Shinde. It is clear that Shinde was not a Dalit leader. Shinde belonged to the upper caste in Hindu society. He fought tirelessly for the improvement of the Dalits. Since he was English-educated, he was influenced by Western scholars like J. S. Mill, Spencer and Indian intellectuals like G. G. Aagarkar. For quite some time, Shinde was associated with the activities of the Prarthana Samaj. This is why he established the Depressed Classes Mission Society of India in 1906 and from 1910 he devoted his full-time attention to the Mission.

It was Shinde who forced the INC in 1917 to include abolition of untouchability as part of its programme. When Mahatma Gandhi became the supreme leader of the Congress, abolition of untouchability became its one of the important programme. After the withdrawal of no-co operation movement in 1922, INC launched 'constructive programme' in 1922. This is the time when removal of the untouchability became its important programme.

Like Shahu Maharaj, Shinde also started number of schools and hostels for the untouchable students. He died in 1944.

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## **1.10 PROTEST MOVEMENT**

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Till the arrival of Dr. Ambedkar, the Dalit movement believed in compromise, co-operation with the upper castes. But Dr. Ambedkar totally changed the nature of the Dalit movement. Dr. Ambedkar brought in protest, struggle in the movement. He realized the limitations of the earlier efforts of Valunguar, Kamble and Bansode. He felt that such conciliatory approach would not work beyond a point. He had to introduce drastic changes in the Dalit movement. He ended up. leading a cultural revolt against the upper caste domination. Ambedkar brought in comprehensiveness in the movement by including political, economic, social and educational dimensions.

Ambedkar had attended the Second Round Table Conference [RTC] held in UK in 1931. Here he demanded equal citizenship for all Indians, all caste-groups; a separate department to protect the interests of the Untouchables. His attack on untouchability was comprehensive. If he attacked the mentality of the Upper-castes, he also attacked the mental slavery, of untouchable brethren. He demanded the abolition of Mahar watans, a feudal practice which had kept the Mahars chained to village economy for centuries.

One must also discuss the basic difference between Pre-Ambedkar movement and Ambedkar movement. The Pre-Ambedkar movement believed in conciliation whereas Ambedkar believed in conflict. His call was 'educate, organize and agitate'. His leadership was responsible for organizing the Dalits, at least the Mahars of Maharashtra under one banner.

Like all great leaders, Ambedkar had launched a multi-dimensional attack on untouchability. His work began with the 'Bahishkrut Hitkarini Sabha' established in 1924. This was started to protect the interests of the Dalit community. In 1927 he took to streets and organized a mass rally at Mahad. There is



Chavadar tale [tank] which was open for all but somehow the upper castes had established a monopoly on the use of this tank. Ambedkar along with thousands of followers held a rally at this tank, in December 1927, he publicly burnt the copy of Manu Smriti. This sacred book had supported caste system. For social work and constructive work Ambedkar started Samata Samaj Dal, a body of volunteers. In 1930 came Kalaram Mandir Satyagraha [temple entry movement] held at Nashik.

For a leader of Ambedkar's caliber, social work would not be enough. Soon he became active in political field as well. In 1937 on the eve of provincial elections he launched Independent Labour Party. He contested seats reserved for the Untouchables in Bombay province. Later this party was renamed as 'Depressed Classes Federation'. In 1946 Provincial elections, his party had secured 15 out of 17 seats reserved for the Untouchables.

At personal level he used all the opportunities he got to further the cause of Dalit society. In 1940 he was appointed to the Governor-General's Executive Council. In 1946 he was elected to the Constituent Assembly and later became the chairman of the Drafting Committee. His untiring work in the Constituent Assembly was noted by all. He is known as the Architect of the Indian Constitution' as all other members of the Drafting Committee were unable to give time for some reason or the other. He became the Union Law minister in independent India. He had to resign as he had serious difference on the Hindu Code Bill.

Dr. Ambedkar had understood the importance of education. With this in mind he had started the People's Education Society in 1945. For public education he had run many journals and periodicals like Mooknayak, Janata, Samata, Bahishkrut Bharat, etc. He wanted the Dalit society to be armed in all respects to fight against the untouchability.

He had made an announcement in 1936 that 'though he is born as a Hindu, he shall die as a Hindu'. This announcement was prophetic in many senses. It clearly showed that someday he wanted to opt out of Hindu fold. The final act came in October 1956 at Nagpur when he publicly embraced Buddhism along with his followers. In between Dr. Ambedkar had made comparative study of other religions and came to the conclusion that Buddhism is the best possible option.

In the mid-1950s, he had planned to start a new political party to bring one umbrella all poor sections of the Indian society. He had planned all details of this party and wanted to name it as

'The Republican Party'. Unfortunately death took him away in December 1956.

Thus it becomes dear from the life and activities of Dr. Ambedkar that his impact on the Dalit movement has been lasting. He gave the Dalit movement a different dimension and made it a force to reckon with. Because his efforts, the Dalits have been getting the benefits of affirmative action. No wonder the scholars divide the history of Dalit movement into pre-Ambedkar and post-Ambedkar phase.

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### 1.11 SUMMARY

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1. We started with the historical background of politics of Maharashtra which covered the Maratha rule, the British rule. Later we discussed the social reform movements and the issues those movements addressed. . The issues included caste, women related problems and education
2. Next we studied the nationalist movement – intellectual resistance to the movement – Contribution of Tarkhadkar, Lokhitwadi Deshmukh and others. We also studied different institutions which were active in the nationalist movement particularly the Pune Sarvajanik Sabha, the Indian National Congress. We discussed the contribution of the Indian National Congress in detail in various phases
3. Next we discussed the non-brahman movement – Mahatma Phule, the Satya Shodhak samaj, Shahu Maharaj and his contribution to the movement, the decline of the nonbrahman movement and the changes after 1930.
4. In the final part we discussed the dalit movement as a social reform movement, protest movement, the role of Gopal baba Walangkar Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar to the movement.

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### 1. 12 QUESTIONS

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- 1 Briefly discuss the nationalist movement in Maharashtra.
2. Discuss the ups and downs of the non-brahman movement. .
3. Discuss the contribution of Mahatma Phule to the social reform movement in Maharashtra.
4. Discuss the different phases of the Dalit movement
5. Discuss the contribution of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar to the Dalit movement



## REGIONALISM - I

### Unit Structure

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Regionalism
- 2.4 Regional Consciousness In Maharashtra Its Emergence and Development
- 2.5 Factors Responsible for Regional Consciousness in Maharashtra
- 2.6 The Samyukta Maharashtra Movement
- 2.7 Formation of Samyukta Maharashtra
- 2.8 Hurdles in the formation of Samyukta Maharashtra
- 2.9 The Aftermath of the Samyukta Maharashtra
- 2.10 Western Maharashtra
- 2.11 Regional Disparities in Maharashtra
- 2.12 Statutory Development Boards
- 2.13 Other Measures
- 2.14 Unit End Exercises

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### 2.1 OBJECTIVES

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Students, friends after discussion of the historical background of Politics in the contemporary Maharashtra in this Chapter No 2 we will try to throw light on the problems arising out of regionalism and sub regionalism.

The objectives of learning these two significant dimension are as follows :

- To understand the growth of regional consciousness in the Marathi speaking area.
- To analyse the movement for the state of Marathi speaking people:
- To analyse the movement and formation of state of Maharashtra.

- To study the issue of sub-regionalism, causes of sub-regionalism and steps taken to reduced the same in Maharashtra State.

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## 2.2 INTRODUCTION

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The nation-building process in India, like many other newly independent states of Asia and Africa, commenced in the past colonial period. This task seems to be very different due to prevalence and significance of the multi-lingual and multiracial character of Indian State. Apart from lack of integration due to the ethnic, religious, racial and cultural pluralism and uneven operation of the process of modernization, in the traditional societies, the interests still tend to be defined in terms of tribe, race, caste or region. The persistence and predominance of such loyalties retard their assimilation into new national societies. As long as the interests are rooted in an find expression through primary groups, they decline to assimilate and therefore evolution distinct Indian national identity seems to be remote and distant dream. The agitations, whether *for* the linguistic states or on the issue of national language, made the central government succumb to the pressures and thereby undermine the state. An impression has been created that the government yields the demand, is violent agitations. Thus violent agitations have become an established procedure for the expression of dissent. The state authority was undermined since defiance of" authority was very common. On the other hand, the most important point is that language provided had ,proved . to be one of the most important political channel of pursuing political 'integration as well as political development. The compulsions of modern administration, economy, science, technology and education demand an uniform treatment. More meaningful national unity is possible only when regional elites works with spirit of accommodation and mutual understanding.

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## 2.3 REGIONALISM

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Regionalism in the ordinary usage refers to particularism or regional patriotism. The encyclopedia of the social sciences describes it as a manifestation of federalism and an intermediate stage between administrative decentralization and federalism. It involves such diverse problems of modern political and cultural life as those of minorities, administrative decentralization, local self government and autonomy, the cult of homeland and earth and local patriotism. It is most immediately related to particularism and opponents make the charge that is leads to separatism. In a very general way regionalism may be defined as a counter movement to any exaggeration or oppressive form of centralization. It must not, however, be considered solely from the view point of

political control or governmental administration. Regional problems arise only where there is a combination of two or more such factors or geographical isolation, independent historical traditions, racial, ethnic or religious peculiarities and local economic and class interests.

Regionalism is derived from the word region. "A region is a homogeneous area with physical and cultural characteristics distinct from those of neighbouring area. As part of a national domain, a region is sufficiently unified to have a consciousness of its customs and ideals and thus possesses a sense of identity distinct from the rest of the country. The term 'regionalism' properly represents the regional idea in action as an ideology or as social movement or as the theoretical basis for the regional planning. Thus, region represents more of analytical category than geographical entity. The region is a socio-cultural concept. Man is born with a territorial loyalty. He imbibes loyalty from the soil of his birth. Several Variables when remain in operation for a long period of time, in a certain territory, from the concept of regionalism, such as, geography, topography, religion, language; customs and mores, political and economic stages of development, way of living and commonly shared historical" experiences etc. Regionalism to be sure needs All these :ingredients, but the concept is much more inclusive and even when all is said and done, it remains at least Partially elusive. The essential fact is that region is characterized more than anything else, by a widely shared sentiment of , `togetherness' in the people, internationalized from a wide variety of sources, which might even include Common prosperity, common development etc.

Regionalism in context of India is a vague concept and has both positive and negative dimensions. Positively, it embodies a quest for fulfillment on the part of an area from this perspective it constitutes a true expression of federation and democracy and therefore it is not be suspected and considered as an alibi for the balkanisation of the country.

Negatively, regionalism, 'reflects a psyche of relative deprivation' on the part of a people or an area. It is not always possible to analyse such deprivation in rational economic analysis. This 'deprivation psyche' is exploited by the regional elite, who taking the benefits of negative consciousness whip up the feelings of the people in the region and manufacturing the ideology of regionalism. Taking advantage of the culturally hetogenous society in India, the regional elite articulate a regional identity and later on use it for strengthening their political position. Such regional movement if not tackled by political-bureaucratic elite may result in the demands of secession if the

quest for regional identities is satisfied at the managerial level they may mean relative autonomy for the region.

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## **2.4 REGIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MAHARASHTRA:-IT'S EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT**

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Marathi speaking population was divided into three different administrative units and lacked the distinct regional identity. Maharashtra, as a distinct geo-political entity, had existed for more than one thousand years. However, the distinct regional consciousness acquired sharpness during the seventeenth century when Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj established his 'Hindvi Swaraj' in defiance of the mighty Mughal Empire. The hegemony of Maratha rule ended in 1818 after the defeat of Second Bajirao by Britishers. The territory of and around Mumbai became a part of the Bombay Presidency and later on Bombay Province. Mumbai was the leading centre of trade and commerce and Pune was the nerve centre of intellectual activities during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The socio-political and economic affairs of Mumbai city were dominated by non-Maharashtrians, particularly the Gujratis and Parsis. This phenomena has persisted over a period of time and today the non-Maharastrian population out-numbers the Maharastrian but Maharashtra is not in Mumbai.

Similarly, Vidarbha region was under Bhonsale, a prominent Subhedar of Marathas till 1818. Afterwards sovereignty of this region was in the hands of East India Company. Nagpur state was annexed by Lord Dalhousie in 1848 and was integrated into the central province and made its capital. The Vidarbha's sub region, comprising of four districts of Amravati, Akola, Yeotmal and Buldhana, was a part of Hyderabad State till 1861. Even the region known as Marathwada was a part of the princely state of Hyderabad. Therefore, the political aspirations of the Marathi speaking population in the above discussed areas were distinctly different.

The first reference, in the recent times, to the distinct regional identity was made by Tamhankar in 1920. He advocated integration of the western Maharashtra, Vidarbha and Marathwada into single administrative entity. Occasional reference to the distinct Marathi identity and Samyukta Maharashtra were made by literates. The categorical statement regarding 'the geographical region of the Samyukta Maharashtra was made as late as in 1946 at the Belgaum Marathi Sahitya Sammelan. Therefore, it will not be wrong to say that the distinct regional consciousness was absent in Maharashtra in the pre-independence period. In any case, the regionalism had taken the back seat due to the struggle for the

national independence. The regional consciousness surfaced in Maharashtra on the threshold of the independence and gathered momentum during the next decade in the form of the demand for Samyukta Maharashtra. The struggle for the Samyukta Maharashtra increases regional consciousness and persisted even today. The manifestation of the regional consciousness was the establishment of Shiv Sena in 1966 and very recent establishment of Maharashtra Navnirman Sena.

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## 2.5 FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR REGIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MAHARASHTRA

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Congress party 'rules' in Maharashtra till 1995 but despite of its regional consciousness, it has flourished in Maharashtra. The development of regional consciousness in Maharashtra can be attributed to the following factors :

- 1. Economic and Political Factors
- 2. Psychological Factor

First, let us deal with

### 2.5.1 Economic and Political Factors behind it :

From the beginning of the State in 1960 to 1995 the relations of the Govt. of Maharashtra with the union, were cordial and that there were no 'outward manifestations of conflicts. But state of Maharashtra has a number of grievances towards the centre.' The following grievances have fuelled the regional consciousness:-

#### i) Problem with Overdraft Facility and Financial Resources :-

One of the financial irritants has been the problem of overdraft facility availed by the states. The 'ways and means' advances are given by the RBI to meet temporary contingencies or gaps between receipts and expenditure. However, most of the states draw in advance their share in central assistance for development. The overdraft Regulation Scheme provides for a very strict watch on the withdrawal of overdraft by the states. This is not liked by most of the states. States are having meager sources of revenue in comparison with the union. The states shift the blame for their financial difficulties on the Union and object to restrictions on overdraft which enable them to meet their ends.

#### ii) Development schemes and projects :

A difference in the perception of the centre and state causes some tension between the two. The centre was, to start with, not favorably inclined and later not too enthusiastic about Maharashtra

Govt.'s Monopoly Procurement of cotton Scheme. Therefore, the financial assistance from the Centre to this favourite-populist project. The licenses and quota for the sugar factor are issued by centre and state is not happy with it. The Konkan railway project has not received adequate attention from the centre. The long pending demand for the replacement of metre-gauge trains by 'the Broad-gauge in Marathwada region has been neglected. Though Mumbai contributing the maximum to the national revenue' no additional fund is made available for solving the civic problems of Mumbai city. Thus, the political class feels slightly humiliated as their proposals for the economic Development do not receive sympathetic consideration from the planning commission and the Union Government.

### **2.5.2 Political Causes :**

#### **i) Boundary dispute with Karnataka :**

The reorganization of states brought about in 1956 resulted in loss of Marathi-speaking areas of Belgaum, Nipani, Karwar etc. along with other Kannada-speaking areas to Karnataka. The Political class as a whole want this injustice to be corrected as in the election after 1957, the candidates of Maharashtra, Epicurean Samiti from the dispute area have been getting elected on Karnataka Assembly and Lok Sabha. This issue has been exploited by the non-congress parties, especially the regional parties like the Peasants and workers party, Shiv Sena and new to join this bandwagon in Maharashtra Nav-nirman Sena to gain some political advantage.

#### **ii) Congress Leadership and Party High Command :**

In order to deal with the process of internal disintegration and provincial chieftains the party high-command started the practice of nominating the Chief Minister. The same principle was adopted in case of and bearers of the Pradesh Congress Committee, hired and fired at will by the High Command.

#### **iii) Samyukta Maharashtra's Formation :**

The pressure in favour of linguistic states intensified during the initial period in the provincial congress organization in the non-hindi regions. The ruling national elite established a double standard in measures adopted to deal with mass agitations. Thus 'political class' in Maharashtra had its first political conflict, within the party fold, with the centre on the issue of formation of Maharashtra.

### **2.5.2 Psychological Factor :**

The state of Maharashtra has a peculiar type of 'no trust' relationship with union, the origin of which can be traced back to the pre-independence period. After the end of Tilak era, there was hostility of leaders of the MPCC to the national leadership. The Brahmin leadership switched over from congress to Hindu



Mahasabha, These developments had created an impression that Maharashtra is anti-congress. This "impression" resulted in hostile attitude of the national leadership towards Maharashtra. The lack of confidence in Maharashtra was displayed in the treatment imparted to C. D. Deshmukh by Nehru in 1956 and Y. B. Chavan by Indira Gandhi after 1969. On the other hand, the hostility towards centre was expressed during the Samyukta Maharashtra agitations and in the pronouncements of the regional political parties like Shiv-sena. The loyal congressmen from Maharashtra have suffered humiliation at the hands of their central leadership and showered with abuses by the regional non-congress leadership: This sense of helplessness has generated silent 'hostility of congress leadership in Maharashtra towards centre.

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## **2.6 THE SAMYUKTA MAHARASHTRA MOVEMENT**

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The Samyukta Maharashtra Movement was the strongest manifestation of 'Marathi Asmita' i.e. regional consciousness in the Marathi-speaking areas in the Western India. In the earlier part of this chapter we have noted that the emergence of sub-nationalism also described as regionalism. In India, it is a natural phenomena due to the sub-continental size and plurality of races, religions, languages, distinct history and culture of the different parts of India. Unlike most other linguistic groups in India, the Marathi speaking people had to struggle hard to fulfill their aspirations. This struggle has been described as the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement which was led by Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti in the period between 1956-1960. Maharashtra Congress contributed to this cause by exerting pressure on the party High Command. These two forces together led to the formation of the fifteenth state i.e.-Maharashtra, of the Indian Union on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1960.

### **2.6.1 Origin of the Demand for the Samyukta Maharashtra :**

The provinces in British India were formed on the basis of political expediency and administrative convenience. As a result, there were no linguistically homogenous provinces prior to 1947. Earlier the Bombay province, till the separation of Sindh in 1937, consisted of Marathi, Gujarathi, Kannada, Sindhi speaking areas. The linguistic and regional aspirations were under restraint, owing to the goal of national independence. Vitthal Waman Tamhankar a Marathi literate, in an article "Three parts of Maharashtra" made a plea for the integration of the Marathi speaking areas in Hyderabad state along with those in Bombay, C. P. and Berar provinces.

Later on the concept of Samyukta Maharashtra was getting crystallised by Acharya Vinoba Bhave in an article "Maharashtra Dharma.". Maha-Maho Padhyaya Datto Waman Potdar, in his presidential address to Marathi Sahitya Sammelan in 1937 again demanded Samyukta Maharashtra.

In 1946, very important development took place Belgaum, Marathi Sahitya Sammelan. G. T. Madkholkar in his presidential address, spelt the geographical composition of Samyukta Maharashtra and appealed to all Marathi speaking leaders to join hands together. A resolution on Samyukta Maharashtra was unanimously adopted. What is more significant is that permanent body called Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad was constituted to strengthen the cause. Shankarrao Deo was designated as the President of the Parishad. He was assigned powers to take all appropriate actions in this regard.

### **2.6.2 Akola Pact, 1947**

Shankarrao Deo, the President of the Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad, took initiative in summoning a meeting of the senior leaders and other notables from Western Maharashtra and Vidharbha regins to plan a common strategy regarding the future of the Marathi speaking areas. A meeting was held at Akola on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1947. In this meeting a broad consensus was reached. This consensus is described as 'Akola Pact', which was meant to be united stated to be taken by the members from the Marathi-speaking areas in the constituent-assembly.

### **2.6.3 Dar Commission, 1948 :**

The stand of national leadership on the issue of the linguistic reorganisation of the provinces, underwent a substantial change in the post independence period. This was partly owing to the partition of the country and partly due to the practical difficulties faced by the national leaders after assuming the responsibilities of governance. But such cautious approach of the national leadership was not acceptable to the protagonists of the linguistic provinces. Due to continuous pressure from linguistic groups the constituent assembly was forced to appoint a linguistic provinces commission known as Dar' Commission of June, 17, 1948. The Dar Commission submitted its' report on December 10, 1948. While recommending the desiability of constituting Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra on a linguistic basis, the commission -also 'sounded a note of warning that 'the formation of provinces exclusively or mainly on linguistic considerations is not in the larger interests of the Indian Nation."

#### **2.6.4 J. V. P. Committee:**

The protagonists of linguistic reorganization of the provinces were disappointed by the recommendations of the Dar Commission. Therefore within eight days of the publication of the Dar Commission Report, the A.I.C.C. at Jaipur Session (1948) appointed a high level committee, consisting of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhabhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya. The J.V.P. Committee submitted its report on April 2, 1948. Its recommendations were qualitatively no different from those of the Dar Commission.

#### **2.6.5 State Reorganisation Commission :**

In Andhra Pradesh the agitation reached a climax in December 1952 when Potti Sriramulu a veteran congressman undertook last unto death, died within four days after his death, Prime Minister announced the government's decision on 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1952 to form a state of Andhra by partition of Madras.

The formation of Andhra Pradesh on 15<sup>th</sup> November, 1953 led to the demand for linguistic states in the other of the country. The Government of India, in the face of agitation all over the country, appointed the State Reorganisation Commission in December 1953, under the chairmanship of Justice Fazal Ali, Pandit H. N. Kunzru and K. M. Pannikar were its members.

#### **2.6.6 Activities of Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad and Nagpur Pact (1953):**

The appointment of the States Reorganisation Commission and the permission granted by the Congress and the permission granted by the Congress High Command to Congressmen led to the revival and reactivation of the Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad. On the eve of the visit of SRC, the leaders from the Marathi – speaking areas met at Nagpur to prepare a joint memorandum. However, the Brahmin-Marwari leadership from Nagpur and the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee distanced themselves from deliberation: The Nagpur leadership was entertaining ambition of a separate Nag-vidarbha and the BPCC was opposed to the formation of Samyukta Maharashtra. In spite of lack of total cohesion, large majority of the leaders from the Marathi-speaking areas met at Nagpur on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1953. The outcome of their deliberations is known as the 'Nagpur Pact.' Consequent to the Nagpur Pact, a joint memorandum was prepared by the Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad. It made a plea for inclusion of Nagvidarbha and Marathwada in a strong memorandum submitted to SRC in 1954.

#### **2.6.7 Recommendations of the SRC. :**

The report of the SRC was published on 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1955. The SRC had recommended a bilingual State of Bombay

consisting of all Gujrathi speaking areas Belgaum and Kirwar district of former Bombay State and Nagvidharbha. It proposed inclusion of the "Border Areas" in Mysore state. The SRC also recommended formation of a separate state of Mahavidarbha.

### **2.6.8 More Struggle for Samyukta Maharashtra & Formation of Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti:**

The recommendations of the SRC caused an unprecedented outburst of popular resentment all over Maharashtra. These recommendations were condemned as a case of indigenous colonialism. It was felt that the SRC had given the Maharashtrians a special position of inferior citizenship. The .MPCC instantly rejected the 'balanced bilingual Bombay State proposed three state formula. Prime Minister Nehru announced the Bombay city would be centrally administered territory for five years. This decision was disapproved by the Congressman in Maharashtra; In order to openly support the Samyukta Maharashtra C. D. Deshmukh submitted his resignation and criticise the decisions of P. M. This development resulted in unprecedented popular unrest and breaking out of the riots all over the state. The Police Firing resulted in the death of '105 martyrs' for the cause of `Samyukta Maharashtra'. In spite of all opposition the Bilingual Bombay State came into existence on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1956.

As the Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad became a defunct body after its ambitions were frustrated by the S.R.C. and the Government of India, the leaders of the non-congress political parties in Maharashtra felt the need to have another organization to channelize the popular discontent and realize the objective of the Samyukta Maharashtra. For the same, the SMP was dissolved by its President on 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1956 and Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti (SMS) was established on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1956 in Poona.

The SMS was a joint front of the non-congress political parties as well as independent persons, for the limited purpose of the formation of united Maharashtra. Almost all the non-congress political parties and groups associated themselves with the SMS. After death of Dr. Ambedkar the Scheduled Caste Federation also joined the SMS. The formation of the SMS provided the PWP opportunity to revive, the CPI opportunity to lead and .PSP opportunity to become a major political factor in Maharashtra. The PWP and CIP made the best of the available opportunity. The working of the SMS was dominated by S. A. Dange, P. K. Atre and S. M. Joshi'. The BJS, the HMS, the SP, the KKP were the minor partners within the SMS. The number of the constituent parties of the SMS was eleven by the end of 1956. Ideologically divergent and mutually antagonistic parties aligned because of the compulsion of the linguistic regionalism. The

SMS had total support of the vernacular press; the entire social pyramid and the economic hierarchy from the labour to the Maharashtrian industrialists.

The 1957 General Election was kind of referendum on the issue of bilingual Bombay State. Although the Congress managed to secure a majority in bilingual Bombay State, it suffered a massive defeat in Maharashtra. The Marathi electorate vehemently rejected the Bilingual Bombay State and the congress party which symbolized the Bilingual Bombay State. The outcome of the second General Election initiated the process of rethinking on the desirability of Bilingual Bombay State when the people are vehemently opposed to it.

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## 2.7 FORMATION OF SAMYUKTA MAHARASHTRA

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Yashwantrao Chavan displayed the highest quality political skills in overcoming the opposition to Samyukta Maharashtra in overcoming the opposition to Samyukta Maharashtra from the Nag-vidarbha region as well as winning over the support of Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee. He was also successful in convincing the futility of the short **lived** experience of Bilingual Bombay State, which could, in long run, destroy congress in this part of the country.. Chavan had played a major role in the renegotiation, in dismantling Bombay State and in the creation of Maharashtra. The new state was ushered in on 1st May, 1960, by then P. M. Nehru. This gesture on the part of Nehru pacified the widespread anti-congress feeling in Maharashtra.

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## 2.8 HURDLES IN THE FORMATION OF THE SAMYUKTA MAHARASHTRA

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The factors which created difficulties in the formation of Maharashtra are analyzed below:

### i) Lack of Unity :

There was no unity among the Marathi-speaking population in the State. An influential section in Nagpur aspired for a separate Vidarbha and the BPCCC was opposed to the formation of Samyukta Maharashtra. The lack of unity and differences among the leadership in Maharashtra were exploited by the High Command and the SRC was influenced by view of some of those leaders who were opposed to Samyukta Maharashtra.

**ii) Congress High Command :**

Congress High Command persistently ignored the demands of Marathi speaking population and imposed their decisions on them. Historically, there was a psychological barrier between the Congress High Command and MPCC.

**iii) Aspiration for a separate Nag-vidarbha:**

The cotton growing areas of Vidharbha and the fertile land of Nagpur was a part of CP-Berar in the pre-independence period. Nagpur was the state capital and had all political advantages and status accompanying that. The leadership from this region believed that it would be an economically viable state. They were not a party of 'Nagpur Pact.' Thus, the aspirations of the leadership in Vidarbha to have a separate state was a major hurdle in the realization of the Samyukta Maharashtra.

**iv) Distinct Takhani Culture' of Hyderabad :**

The Princely state of Hyderabad had developed a distinct Hyderabad culture of its own over a period of time. Nehru was initially not in favour of splitting the Hyderabad State into Telugu, Kannada, and Marathi speaking areas in order to retain that distinct culture. However, the people and the leadership of Marathwada region were keen to merge in Samyukta Maharashtra.

**v) The Caste Factor :**

There was a possibility that in Samyukta Maharashtra, the Maratha Caste group would emerge as dominant and the interest of Dalits would be in jeopardy. Therefore, they were little apprehensive regarding it. The Brahmin upper caste leadership too was initially apprehensive about Samyukta Maharashtra as it meant the emergence of Maratha Raj.

**vi) Morarji Desai Factor :**

Morarji Desai, then Chief Minister of Bombay State, was in favour of a bigger or balanced Bilingual state and was opposed to Samyukta Maharashtra. He had ordered ruthless crushing of the agitations and issued 'shoot to kill' order to police.

**vii) Inadequacy of leadership :**

In the initial period, till the establishment of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, the agitations were leaderless. Thus, lack of leadership, lack of courage in leadership, the leadership working at a cross purpose and the leadership antagonistic to Samyukta Maharashtra were formidable hurdles.

**viii) Importance of Mumbai City :**

Samyukta Maharashtra without Mumbai was as backward as any other parts of India. Mumbai was not only highly industrialized but 'Commercial Capital of India' also. The industrial

trade and commerce was controlled by the non-Maharashtrians, whereas the proletariat class was Maharashtrians. The trade union movement was controlled by the left parties and their affiliates. Thus the capitalist class was apprehensive about its interests in Samyukta Maharashtra and favoured a bilingual state and preferably the city to be the Union Territory. Therefore, Marathi speaking population was forced to fight long struggle to bring Mumbai in Maharashtra.

All the above mentioned factors were responsible for the delay in the formation of Samyukta Maharashtra.

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## 2.9 THE AFTERMATH OF THE FORMATION OF THE SAMYUKTA MAHARASHTRA

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The formation of the Samyukta Maharashtra on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1960 was the victory of 'Maratha Asmita' that inspite of general difficulties the political elites in the congress and non-congress parities compelled the decision makers to reverse their earlier decision within less than four years. The formation of unilingual state of Maharashtra had a number consequences on the political process of Maharashtra. Thus the fall out of the Samyukta Maharashtra can be summed up as under :

### **i) Formation of the uni-lingual state :**

The bifurcation of the Bilingual. Bombay State meant formation of two uni-lingual states for the Marathi and Gujrathi speaking population. In the recent history of Maharashtra, it was for the first time, the Marathi speaking population was brought within a single political-administrative unit and Marathi become the official language of the State. Efforts have been made to enrich Marathi by promoting and protecting Marathi culture.

### **ii) Dominance of Marathas:**

After the formation of Maharashtra, though the promise of 'marathiche Rajya' (a rule by Marathi) was given by Y. B. Chavan, in reality it was 'Marathyanche Rajya' (a rule by Maratha caste). Y. B. Chavan's skillful leadership brought all the Maratha's from different political parties in Congress. Thus, the consolidation of Marathas within the congress-fold has added to their hegemony, as indicated by the fact that they corner 75% to 80% positions of power within the party and the government. They control Panchayati Raj Institutions and a large network of co-operative institutions. Thus the formation of Samyukta Maharashtra enabled to dominant caste to fulfill its political aspirations as well as perpetuate its dominance.

### iii) Consolidation of the Congress :

Under the able leadership of Y. B. Chavan congress gets its dominance back. He did not allow to grow any popular discontent. He took the leaders of opposition in confidence on Maharashtra-Kamataka boundry dispute and forcefully pleaded for the inclusion of the disputed areas in Maharashtra to weaken the opposition.

Chavan invited the non-brahmin leaders from other parties to join congress.

Chavan made the congress organisation homogenous and restored its self-confidence.

### iv) Disintegration of Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti

After the tremendous success in formation of Samyukta Maharashtra, the SMS failed to evolve as a powerful political force in Maharashtra because the SMS was far from a homogenous combination of political parties. The SMS suffered heavily because of power politics among its constituent parties and scramble for position and patronage. The two major constituent parties – The PSP and the CPI differed on several, organizational, national and international issues.

### v) Re-emergence of the One Party Dominance System:

The Third General Election of 1962 was the first general election after the formation of Samyukta Maharashtra. There was an atmosphere of popular dissatisfaction. The anti-congress atmosphere of 1957 had altogether disappeared. The opposition parties were in a demoralized state, whereas the congress was in confidence posture and got massive success in election.

### vi) Intensification of the Caste-rivalries

The formation of the Samyukta Maharashtra means replacement of the Bhatji-Shethji' dominance by the Marathadominance. The traditional Brahmin – non-brahmin rivalry has been replaced by the Maratha – Non Maratha rivalry. The growing discontent among the OBCs disillusioned them with the congress, on instrument of the Maratha dominance and whenever opportunities permitted, the non-marathas have in alliance with the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and muslims tried to challenge the Maratha hegemony. In any case, the formation of the Samyukta Maharashtra leading to the Maratha dominance has given rise to the politics of S.C., the S.T. and OBCs and intensified caste-rivalry.

### vii) Regional Partionism :

The formation of linguistic states had dangerously reinforced patriotism and revival of the vanished glory of the regions. Regional patriotism helps the emergence of political parties whose base is



local. Their outlook and approach differ radically from those of the national elite. The regional political parties have limited horizons, their allegiance is to region alone and a powerful appeal to a shared political past and cultural traditions are assets denied to a truly national party.

For e.g. Shivsehd in Maharashtra which exploits the regional and communal sentiments to make a head way, in the name of the 'past glory' of Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

#### **viii) Regional Chauvinism :**

Linguistic states breed regional chauvinism. The state governments face pressures from the regional parties and politicians to accord preferences in jobs, trade and commerce to the 'Sons of soil'. A number of states have issued directives to employers reserving, a percentage of the jobs for the local people. The militant group like Shiv sena took upon themselves the responsibility of ensuring that such directives were implemented.. Shiv Sena has a front organization called Sthanik Lokadhikar Samiti which ensures preferential treatment to the 'Son of soil' in the matter of employment.

Therefore, we can say that after the formation of Samyukta Maharashtra major socio-political changes took place in Maharashtra.

#### **ix) Sub-Regionalism:**

The state of Maharashtra comprises of four distinct regions, viz., Western Maharashtra, Marathwada, Vidharbha, Konkan including Mumbai City. Owing to the historical political and economic reasons, each of these regions has a distinct identity, which accounts for the problem of Sub-regionalism i.e. regionalism within the state.

The linguistic reorganization of the state was intended to established more homogenous linguistic entities. After the reorganisation of the state in 1956 and 1960, the people from other areas i.e. Marathwada and Vidarbha believed that there would be balanced economic development, progress and prosperity for the whole state. The ruling class has failed to bring about balance development of all sub-regions. The dynamics of development and relative deprivation gave rise . to discontent and tensions, in Vidarbha, Marathwada and Konkan and forstered the sub-regional identity. In every state there are regions which are backward as compared to other regions and their discontent manifests in demand as is case with Marathwada and Konkan. They feel that they have been let down' and the assurances have not been honoured. Thus the imbalance in development

accentuates the sub-regional differences and strengthens the sub-regional identity.

In political terms the state comprises of five regions Mumbai City, Konkan, western Maharashtra, Vidarbha, Marathwada. Let us try to understand the socio-economic, geographic, cultural features of these regions one by one.

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## **2.10 WESTERN MAHARASHTRA**

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Western Maharashtra along with Konkan and Mumbai city constitutes the 'original' component of the state.

The significant characteristic features of Western Maharashtra as follows :

### **1) Geographical features & Physical features :**

Nine - districts of.. Western Maharashtra . mainly comprises of Deccan - Plateau. The -land is flat and . is congenial for cultivation. Rainfall is moderate, and there are many rivers which provide water both for drinking for cultivation. The geographical and physical...features of-western Maharashtra are certainly congenial to prosperity.

### **2) Transport and Communication:**

Apart from its strategic geographical location, the existence of well-developed system of communication and transport provides region potentials for industrial and economic development as well as generating political and social consciousness amongst the people. Rail and road communications have facilitated this process. Linkage of several cities of western Maharashtra with the rest of India by air has certainly facilitated industrial development. Railway and road communication have further facilitated this process.

### **3) Political and Development awareness:**

Western Maharashtra is the 'leader' in the area of education, level of political awareness and participation of the masses in democratic process. In the field of education, Poona, Nasik and Satara and even Kolhapur are leading centres of education. The number of co-operative institutions in this region is the maximum awareness among the masses as well as initiative on the part of leadership.

### **4) Economic Development:**

In the past 1947 period, development of co-operative movement has contributed to the economic development of the rural areas. Setting up co-operatives processing industries,

meant taking modern technology to rural areas and its multiplier effect on the development of hinterland.

Credit facilities is also a very important indicator of economic development in Western Maharashtra which has 38% of population and has 36% branches of commercial banks; with a deposit of 16% and a loan of 13%.

### **5) Agriculture:**

In the Western Maharashtra, though the construction of canals for irrigation, it has been possible to ensure prosperity for commercial agriculture. A number of other measures have been taken for the development of food crops and horticulture. Important crops are cereals and pulses, oil seeds, cotton, species and tobacco. Agricultural prosperity has contributed to the development of cooperative agro-industries in rural areas. Co-operative industries have thrown up political leadership which is playing a significant role in the state politics.

### **6) Industrialisation**

In western Maharashtra rapid industrialisation has taken place in last 45 years. The network of industries in cities like Poona, Nashik, Kohapur, Satara, Solapur etc. has certainly brought prosperity to region. The provision for technical education provided technically skilled manpower to these industries and accelerated the process of development. The availability of means of communication and transport has also helped the process of industrialisation in this region. Thus the combination of various factors has contributed to industrial development in Maharashtra.

### **7) Social Composition:**

Western Maharashtra is believed to be the bastion of the dominant caste. i.e. Maratha-Kunbi cluster. They accounts for 41% of the total population of the region, more than any other region. The population of the SC is 8.65% and of Neo-Buddhists is 3.49%. In other words the nonmaratha castes constitutes about 4% of the total population and are concentrated in urban areas. Among the OBCs the mali caste accounts for 4% population and was the most vocal votary of the implementation of Mandal Commission recommendations.

### **2.10.2 Konkan :**

Four districts of Thane, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg constitute Konkan region which accounts for 13% population and 13% area of the state. Konkan was a part of Bombay province. Konkan was and is a backward region of the state. The industrial development, availability are inadequate.

The significant characteristics of this region are as follows :

**1) Geographical features:.**

The Konkan region represents a classical case of the supreme-importance of, geographical factors arresting growth and development., In Konkan, the land is mountainous and tapering towards the southern end. Thus, it has become inaccessible' and the lack of adequate roads and communication have made matters worse. The soil of the region is of inferior quality, suitable for horticulture and peddy cultivation: Owing to the lack of irrigation, the agriculture activity is entirely dependent on the monsoon. The adverse geographical conditions accounts for subsistence, agrarian economy prevailing in the Konkan region.

**2) Agriculture :**

The character of terrain and rainfall, the quality of soil and non-availability of irrigation facility accounts for the lack of development in agriculture. Peddy, the principle food crop that is raised in the region is insufficient even for the day-to-day consumption of cultivators and their families. The lack of capital hampers development of horticulture in the region.

**3) Industrialisation :**

Except of Thane and Raigad district, there is very little industrialization in Konkan region. Thane district, the most developed area in the region. There is lot of potential for fruit canning and other food processing industries as the raw material is available in plenty. But there is lack of infrastructure facility. Lack of industrialization, together with subsistence agriculture account, for the economic backwardness of Konkan region. As a consequence the banking activity, too, is very limited.

**4) Literacy and Political Awareness :**

Literacy rate of Konkan region is relatively higher. In spite of the political awareness displayed by the common man, the catalytic process of development and change has yet to start in this region.

**5) Infra-structure facilities:**

The infrastructure availability is woefully deficient. The geographical conditions have hindered development of transport and communication. Due to coastal line of 700 kms there are 49 parts but most of them are closed down for half a year due to heavy monsoon. There is not a single all weather port. The most significant role can be played by Konkan Railway which promises the development of this backward region.

### **6) Large scale migration of population :**

Due to lack of employment opportunities people from this region are compelled to migrate other parts of the state in search of employment. The best of the talent had also migrated for education and higher profession. Thus there is dearth of talented human resource.

### **7) Social Composition :**

In this region there is sizable population of Scheduled Tribes. The tribals account for 37% of Thane district. Some of the Adivasis villages in Mokhada and Jowhar talukas are difficult to inaccessible even today. The Marathas-Kunabis are 38%, the Dalits about 6% among them 4% are now Nay-Baudha, Brahmans are about 5%. There is sizable Muslims population in Ratnagiri and Raigad districts.

### **2.10.3 Mumbai City :**

Though Mumbai-City is the capital of state of Maharashtra, in several respect this region is un-Maharashtra like. Except Mumbai City, rest of the State is predominantly rural, agrarian. This region is apparently cosmopolitan and has metropolitan culture.

The significant features of Mumbai City are as follows :

#### **i) Geographical Features :**

Mumbai city and its suburbs together constitute Greater region which accounts for 13% population of the state and merely 603 sq. km. area. There is almost no agriculture activity and the population engaged in industries, trade, commerce, services and territory sectors. Mumbai well connected with all principle cities of the country.

#### **2) Highly Advanced Economy :**

**Mumbai** is the commercial capital of -India. Mumbai pay 1/13 of countries income tax. Mumbai pay 60% of the country's custom duties Mumbai pays 30% of "country's central excise. Mumbai also generates, 1" of Industrial jobs. Mumbai ports handle 40% of maritime trade. The highly advanced nature of Mumbai's economy, industry, commerce etc. become all glaring as compared to the rest of Maharashtra.

#### **3) Political Dimension:**

Political Dimension of Greater Mumbai has to be discussed in the light of changing situation in favour of nonmarathi speaking groups. The Marathi leadership had, failed to assuage the grievances of the educated and Marathi younger generation. As a reaction to this failure, Shiv sena, the movement of the 'sons of soil' had emerged in the metropolis as early as in 1966 and has been continuously supported by the middle class

younger generation of the Marathi speaking population. Thus the emergence of Shiv sena and now Maharashtra Navnirman Sena and its increasing popularity, over a period was expression of disapproval of the marginalization of 'marathi-manus.'

#### **4) Social Composition:**

The social, composition of Greater Mumbai, unlike other regions, has Marathi and non-marathi dimension, owing to cosmopolitan character of the region and continuous migration to the metropolis. The dominance of non-marathi linguistic groups, especially the Gujratis and Marwaris not only control the economy but politics of the region too.

#### **2.10.4 Marathwada :**

The Marathwada region, comprising of Aurangabad, Jalna, Beed, Nanded. Hingoli, Latur and Osmanabad. This region was a part of princely state of Hyderabad, ruled autocratically by Nizam till 1948.

Following are the significant features of the region:

#### **1) Geographical features:**

The region accounts for 20% of territory and 18% of population of Maharashtra. The region has fertile black soil as well as considerable water resources. But due to lack of irrigation projects it is not possible to tap these water resources.

#### **2) Agriculture:**

Although per capita land holding in this region is more than any other region of the state most of it is dry cultivation. Jewar is the principal crop of the region. Besides Jawar, some area is under cultivation of groundnut and sugarcane. Regions water sources has not been fully Utilized. This was a grievance vehemently expressed by the Marathwada Development Conference time and again.

#### **3) Industrialisation**

Since infra-structure facilities for industrial development are not adequate, industrialization is confined to the cities. like Aurangabad, Latur and Nanded. Aurangabad is developing fast as a active tourist centre.

#### **4) Infrastructure Development:**

The development of infra-structure in the region was neglected during Nizam days. Some efforts. have been made in the past 1960 period to make available means Of transport and communication. But still sizable areas. have no railway tracks and roads which hinders development of the region.

**5) Education:**

Dr.. Ambedkar established Milind College in Aurangabad in 1940, before which facilities of higher education were not available in this region. However, in the past 1960 period, the educational institutions have proliferated in the region which has Marathwada University at Aurangabad and Agriculture University at Parbhani.

**6) Social Composition:**

The general picture of social composition of the state holds good for Marathwada as well. But there are some significant differences owing to political, economical and administrative history and peculiarities of the region. The Maratha kunabi cluster, accounts for 37%, the Brahminical castes less than 4% the scheduled castes and NavBauddhas for 17% and STs for 4%, Muslims are 11% and Lingayats are 5%. However, at the village level or town level, the non-Maratha caste groups are scattered and therefore, absorbed by the Marathas.

**2.10.5 Vidarbha :**

Eleven districts of Vidarbha account for 28% population and 30% territory of the State of Maharashtra. What is known as Vidarbha today, historically comprised of the Nagpur and Berar regions. Nagpur was a part of central province.

The significant characteristics of Vidarbha region are as follows :

**1) Geographical Features:**

The entire Vidarbha is located beneath Satpuda range and has most fertile land as well as ample water resources. The rainfall is average and regular. Cotton and Paddy are major crops of the region. The region has sizable deposits of mineral resources-coal, iron, ore, manganese, bauxite.

**2) Infrastructure Facilities:**

Transport and communication has not been fully developed in this region, which accounts for difficulties in the industrial development to the desired extent of this region. Nagpur is well connected with all the important cities of India. The inadequate availability of means of transport and communication perpetuates the 'backward' character of the region.

**3) Agriculture:**

Vidarbha has a very fertile black cotton soil which is irrigated by many rivers such as Godavari, Wardha, Pranhita, Vainganga, Paniganga, Tapi, Poorna etc. Besides cotton, paddy, the other main crops are Jowar, Tur, Pulses and a variety of oil seeds. Akola, Wardha and Nagpur districts mainly grow cotton – 1/3 yield of total crops in India. Nagpur, Wardha grow orange and banana, Chandrapur and Bhandara are grainery of rice and

also grow water-melon and sugarcane cultivation is undertaken in Wardha and Bhandara districts,

#### **4) Industries:**

The pace of industrialization is not adequate. Most of the industries existing in the region are related to the either agriculture and to the minerals available in the region. Owing to the lack of adequate infrastructural facilities, short supply of electricity, owing to the lack of technically trained manpower, skilled manpower from Western Maharashtra, Mumbai migrate to this region. Thus, a feeling of being neglected, by passed and being suppressed by 'outsider' who encroach upon the local people's job opportunities persists among the people of Vidarbha.

#### **5) Education and Political Awareness:**

Nagpur is head-quarters of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) but hindu communalism was more or less confined to urban centres. Region has good number of educational institutions. Politicians from this region has weighrge in State Politics. Nagpur has accorded the status of 'becond capital.' Yet the fact remains that the leadership from the region, even today, suffer from sense of hurt owing to the non-implementation of 'Nagpur Pact'. These psychological barriers make the task of integration difficult.

#### **6) Social composition:**

The social composition i.e. caste structure of Vidarbha region is distinctly different from the rest of the state. The Maratha-Kunbi cluster is the single largest but not dominant caste group in Vidarbha region which accounts for 26% of population in the region. The Dalit population is 19.36% and 14.89% population is tribal. This the Dalits and tribals together account for 34.25% population of the region. Of 19.36% Dalits, the Nav-Baudhas account for 12.91% population and have sizable presence in almost all the districts.

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## **2.11 REGIONAL DISPARITIES IN MAHARASHTRA**

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We discussed above the socio-economic conditions each of the five regions in Maharashtra. This has brought out that the regions like Mumbai City are far too developed in comparison to the regions like Marathwada and Vidarbha. Disparities in the development of different parts of region of country exists over the world in the developing as well as developed countries. These disparities are owing to the socio-political, eco-cultural and historical reasons and it is wrong to accuse the developed regions the imbalance. The different regions of Maharashtra can be placed on time scale at different points in terms of their exposure to various modernizing forces like liberal, democratic traditions,



availability of modern education, industrialization and facility of gainful employment, development of means of transport and communication, ferment created by the nationalist, social reforms and protest movements, development of press and other mass medias to mould public opinion and geographical factors have to take into consideration. This will enable us to understand basic disparities and uneven development in these regions. The grievances of people in , Vidarbha or Marathwada and Konkan that they have been left out of development and prosperity, political domination and power that 'developed' regions have. concerned various sources both material and non-material is half truth and half fiction. But, in any case such grievances make the task of integration difficult. Once the crisis of confidence is resolved and concrete measures to reduce the disparities. are. taken, the objective of integration can be accomplished. Such efforts over a period of time will make the state more or less homogenous, ensure economic development and prosperity for all regions and participation in the democratic process on equal footing and ultimately sub-regional identities into overall Maharashtra identity.

#### **2.11.1 Findings and Recommendations of Dandekar Committee:**

In 1983, the Government of Maharashtra decided to undertake on objective and indepth study of the problem of regional imbalance. For this purpose a fact – finding committee of experts, headed by the noted economist V. M. Dandekar was appointed. The government also appointed four regional sub-committees for Vidarbha, Marathwada, Konkan and rest of Maharashtra to study the developmental problems of each of the regions and to report that the fact finding committee. Based on the reports of the regional subcommittees the Dandekar Committee was to formulate its recommendations to solve the problem.

#### **2.11.2 Findings of the Committee:**

The significant findings of the committee are as follows:

##### **1) Breach of Nagpur Pact:**

A number of provisions of Nagpur Pact (1953) were intended to reduce imbalance in development by taking special measures for development of Marathwada and Vidarbha regions. No special measures or programmes of regional development have been undertaken. Thus, the assurances given to these regions have not fulfilled. As a consequence, Vidarbha, Marathwada and Konkan regions have remained underdeveloped and the 'gap' between their development and developed region has further widened, thereby accentuated regional imbalance. In Nagpur

pact it was provided that 'Region' should be the unit of developed but district was treated as a unit of development.

## **2) Developed and Backward Districts:**

Dandekar Committee applied twenty-eight criterias pertaining to development and ascertains the level of development. These included the roads, means of transport and communication, primary, secondary, higher and technical education, area under irrigation, cropping pattern, industrialization, employment generation, health facilities, rural electrification etc. It is significant to note that the Study Team appointed by the Planning Commission had in its reports (1984) pointed out that Seventeen out of Twenty Six districts in Maharashtra were Backward'.

## **3) Backlog of Devt. Expenditure:**

Dandekar Committee has also estimated the requirement of capital and recurring expenditure to enable districts, whose development was below the average, the 'backward' to attain the 'average' development model. According to the committee, the total backlog of estimated development expenditure for the whole state was s. 3,187 cr.

The Committee made various recommendations for removing the backlog of development expenditure but most of these recommendations were not properly implemented by Government of Maharashtra.

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## **2.12 STATUTORY DEVELOPMENT BOARDS**

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The Seventh Amendment to the Constitution added article 371 (2) and provided for the setting up of Statutory Development Boards for Marathwada, Vidarbha, Saurashtra and Kutch region; Thus, article 371(2) provides that "Notwithstanding anything in this constitution, the President may by order made with respect to (the state of Maharashtra or Gujarat) provide for any special responsibility of the Governor for

- a. The establishment of Separate Development Boards for Vidarbha, Marathwada and rest of Maharashtra, Saurashtra, Kutch and the rest of Gujarat with the provisions that a report on the working of each these Boards will be placed each year before the State legislative Assembly.
- b. The equitable allocation of funds for developmental expenditure over the said areas, subject to the requirements of the State as a whole and
- c. Equitable arrangements providing adequate facilities for technical education and vocational training and adequate

opportunities for employment in services under the control of the State Government in respect of all the said areas, subject' to the requirements of the State as a whole.

Statutory Development Boards for Vidarbha, Marathwada and rest of the state were set up in 1994. A separate board for Konkan region could not be set up as it would necessitate an amendment to the constitution. Thus, Konkan region felt neglected and pressure was mounted by the Konkan Vikas Parishad to set up a separate board or region. In any case, one major obstacle in the process of integration of the Statutory Regional Development Boards which will be entrusted with the responsibility to wipe the backlog in development expenditure.

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## 2.13 OTHER MEASURES

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The goals that were set in 1960 emphasized

- a. Integration of all these components.
- b. Economic development of the sub-regions which have been proverbially economically backward.
- c. Political participation in decision making and power.
- d. Spread of educational facilities so as to generate manpower essential for the development of sub regions. The linguistic and cultural integration could have no meaning without providing facilities for economic development. Such as industrial development by setting up industries in the backward sub-regions, development of infrastructure facilities such as roads, railways, transport, communication, promoting development of educational institutions such as institutions of higher learning for providing education at the highest level and even more importantly by making provisions for sharing political power with various sub-regions.

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## 2.14 SUMMARY

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1) First of all we discussed the meaning of the term regionalism in all India context. Next we discussed the emergence of consciousness among the Marathi people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We discussed the economic, political and psychological factors responsible for the development of regional consciousness in Maharashtra which include the boundary dispute with Kamataka, the impact of the Congress leadership and the high command of the party.

2) We discussed the origin of the demand for the

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Samyukta Maharashtra, the Akola pact, Dar Commission, JVP Committee, The Fazal All Commission, Nagpur pact, Struggle of the Samiti, major hurdles in the formation of Samyukta Maharashtra,

- 3) Finally we discussed the environment after the formation of Maharashtra.
- 4) Next part of the chapter was sub-regionalism. In this part we overviewed the geographical features, social composition, industrial and agricultural development, educational status, political awareness of four major regions of Maharashtra
- 5) In the final part of the chapter we discussed the regional disparities in Maharashtra and the findings and recommendations of Dandekar committee.

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## 2.14 QUESTIONS

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1. What is regionalism and discuss the causes of regionalism in Maharashtra.
2. What is subregionalsim? Discuss the subregionalsim in Maharashtra with special reference to Maharashtra/ Vidarbha/ Mumbai/ Karnataka/ Western Maharashtra.
3. Explain the various hurdles in the formation of Se, 41ukta Maharashtra.
4. Discuss the regional disparities in Maharashtra and what were the ways and means suggested for integration of Samukta Maharashtra.
5. Write short Notes on :-
  - i) Statutory Devi Boards for Maharashtra.
  - ii) Role of Samukta Maharashtra Samiti
- 6) Discuss in detail the struggle for Samyukta Maharashtra



## CASTE, CLASS AND POLITICS

### Unit Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Theorisation by eminent scholars
- 3.3 Role of caste in Politics & Maharashtra
- 3.4 The Dominant caste phenomenon
- 3.5 OBC politics in Maharashtra
- 3.6 Dalit politics in Maharashtra
- 3.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.8 Unit End Exercises

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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Dear learners, by studying this chapter you will be able to understand the

1. We started with various theories about caste stated by eminent scholars including Rajani Kothari, Rudolph and Rudolph, M. N. Srinivas and Andre Baetille
2. Next we discussed the role of caste in politics of Maharashtra with the help of comments made by Jayant Lele and Suhas Palshikar.
3. We also discussed the dominant caste phenomenon, OBC politics, Dalit politics in Maharashtra

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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Today among the various divisive forces which influence the political process in India, Caste is the major factor. In the last few decades in Indian politics, caste has played a very decisive role. It is owing to this fact, that it is considered the most important element of political process of our country. The emergence of new caste based organizations, growing polarization along caste lines, violence and reservation conflicts, etc. are the events which have been embedded itself firmly in politico-economic fabric of the country. Maharashtra, being an important state in India, is no exception to this.

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## **3.2 THEORISATION OF "CASTE AND POLITICS" BY EMINENT SCHOLARS.**

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From the above introduction it becomes clear that caste is an important factor in Indian Politics. Within the new context of political democracy caste remains a central element of Indian Society while adopting itself to the values and methods of democratic politics. As the system of caste is based on inequality, the caste based politics also shows signs of inequality. It has been observed by several scholars that the lower castes, even after independence remained at periphery and were deprived of political - power. On the contrary, political power was concentrated in the hands of privileged caste i.e. upper caste.

In the due course of time, both the process of democratisation and elections get influenced by caste-equations and as a result of that, caste became one of the most basic units of political mobilisation. This phenomenon was observed by several scholars and academicians. The most prominent among them were Rajni Kothari, M. N. Srinivas, Rudolph and Rudolph and Andre Beattie.

All these scholars came out with their own independent research. The study and inter-relationship between caste and politics or theorisation of inter-relationship between caste and politics is as follows:

### **3.2.1 Rajni Kothari**

Rajni Kothari studied the role of caste in mobilising the people at regional level in many case studies he conducted from time to time. His basic argument was that, electoral politics in post-independent period is tremendously influenced by caste. He opined that caste is becoming a major weapon of political mobilisation. Based on his observation he propounded a theory that 'Castes are being politicized.' He gave this theory of "Politicisation of caste" in 1971. His main contention is that, caste functions today more as a political group than as a social or economic group.

He further says that a study of the interactions between the caste system and political democracy in India, revealed that there is a rejection of the familiar dichotomy between a traditional society and a modern polity on the contrary, it underlines the functional relevance of indigenous patterns of communication and differentiation in modernising a new nation. Much, of course depends upon on the developmental potentiality of a particular social system.

Rajni Kothari comments that, caste has assumed *new* functions. Such as the provision of educational, welfare and employment facilities and other economic benefits for its members. Caste associates and caste federations also have been formed which contribute to the social mobility and economic well being of the members. This underlines the fact that, political mobilisation is possible on the basis of caste. He described this phenomenon as "Politicisation of Caste" in 1971.

### 3.2.2 Rudolph and Rudolph:

Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph also examined the interrelation between caste and politics. They carried out their research during the same period, when Rajni Kothari was researching on this topic. They argued that the relation between caste and politics may be described in terms of 'Tradition' and 'Modernity.' According to their study, caste represents a traditional element and politics explains the modern trend in contemporary Indian Politics. They argued that caste is a medium of political mobilisation and an investment of political education. Caste is also seen as an infrastructure of a modern democratic society and it is held by some that tradition is not antithetical to the functioning of modern political institutions. India's success in managing crises of political development, especially those of political participation and mobilisation is largely attributed, to the ability of traditional society to contain the disruptive effects of rapid political mobilisation.

### 3.2.3 M. N. Srinivas :

The most important contribution of M. S. Srinivas was that he propounded the theory of 'Dominant Caste'. He also proposed the concept of 'Sanskritisation' It **is because** of these two concepts that he is considered as the most prominent thinker on the subject of caste and politics.

Sanskritisation denotes that a status group aspiring upward mobility in the system of social stratification tends to emulate the life style, traditional values and religious rituals of higher castes and seeks its acceptance within the great tradition of Sanskrit norms and the Varna system. He therefore admits that the tendency among the lower castes, is responsible for the continuity of the traditional structure of caste.

M. N. Srinivas while explaining the concept of 'dominant caste' says that every region in India displays a good example of dominant caste. He calls a caste dominant, if it preponderates economic opportunities, the introduction of Panchayat raj made it possible for the intermediate caste groups to move towards dominance. He made an important observation by saying that even a large and powerful caste group can be dominant only if its position in local caste hierarchy is intermediate. The

intermediate caste such as the Marathas in Maharashtra, Jats in western U. P., Punjab and Haryana and Kurmies and Yada<sup>y</sup>s in Bihar are some of the best examples.

#### **3.2.4 Andre Baetille**

He was of the opinion that Indian Social Stratification is undergoing a change as other elements of such status as power and class are coming to the fore. Under the influence of modernization, secularisation and democratisation, caste is being replaced by social circles, social network, political factions or factional alignments, pressure groups and even socio-economic classes. Baetille argues that the changes in the criteria of status in Indian Society, there has occurred transformation from closed status groups based on caste to more open ones, which accommodate other components as well.

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### **3.3 ROLE OF CASTE IN POLITICS OF MAHARASHTRA**

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Jayant Lele in his article "Caste, class and dominance." Political mobilization in Maharashtra" argues that in Maharashtra, the contemporary pattern of politico-economic dominance is widely understood as that of the Marathas as dominant caste. Contemporary Maratha dominance is portrayed not as a modern reassertion of traditional hegemonic rulership, resting in the control of the means of production, but as new and secularly-guided manifestation of lower caste class consciousness.

In other words one can say that caste politics in Maharashtra has led to the development of political mobilisation, political participation and even to certain extent political development. Caste factor, along with Regional factor has assumed extra-ordinary importance in a recent years. These are several factors which has led to the development of caste politics in Maharashtra. In fact over the years in Maharashtra, caste has emerged in a possible framework within which politics would be organised.

#### **3.3.1 Caste sustains on the basis of localisation :**

Dr. Suhas Palshikar in his essay "caste politics through the prism of region" has argued that caste, as a system of vertical division, sustains itself on the basis of localisation. Caste hierarchy may involve the ideologies of chaturvanya, and of purity pollution, but the hierarchy works only when it is concretised in a local situation. Similarly the cultural and ritual life of members of a jati is organised in the village or locality. It is only with reference to other castes in a locality that the higher or lower status of a caste can be experienced. In other words, caste as a unit of social relations,



rituals status and cultural universe is firmly based within the framework of well defined spatial unit. It is because of this reason that caste mobilisation in elections is possible at local level.

### **3.3:2 Strong territorial pockets of caste:**

It has been observed by many scholars that several castes are specific not only to a certain state but also to a particular area. This means that a caste which has a concentrated existence in one area may also constitute a numerically significant group in that area. e.g. in Maharashtra the 'Agris' are concentrated in one district of Konkan i.e. Raigad, the Lava Patils in Jalgaon district of North Maharashtra and the 'vanjaris' in Nashik, Ahmednagar and Bead districts. Similarly more than 50% of Ludhiana's population is Jat. In Tamilnadu Vanniyars belong to north and south of, Arcot, Salem and Chingleput regions. The Vokkaligas of Karnataka are concentrated in Mysore region. The Kammas belong to the Andhra region and the Reddi's to Rayalaseema region.

### **3.3.3 Consequence of dominant territorial pocket of caste:**

Dr. Palshikar has observed that the association of many castes with specific territorial 'pockets' has produced two political results. One is the rise of locally dominant castes, and other is localised electoral politics.

#### **3.3.3.1 Rise of locally dominant caste:**

The term 'dominant caste' was used by M. N. Srinivas and it was specifically with reference to a small locality or village or group of villages. Srinivas mentioned that the concept of the dominant caste is important for understanding intercaste relations in any local area.

Elaborating on the concept in 1957, he uses the phrase, 'locally' dominant and then adds, 'occasionally a caste is dominant in a group of neighbouring villages if not over a district or two and in such cases, local dominance is linked with regional dominance. Often a caste has numerical advantage when it also has a high degree of control over resources i.e. the land. Thus it can be said that economic power and size combine to produce pattern of local domination.

#### **3.3.3.2 Localised electoral politics:**

Another, more commonly noted political result of caste pockets relates to electoral politics. Localised politics have come to mean that candidates of a particular caste get elected from a certain area. The best example is of MarathaKunbi Caste cluster, which is spread across the state, manages to send the largest number of MLA's to the state legislative irrespective of political upheavals. In 51 constituencies in Maharashtra, the elected candidate has

been a Maratha for six consecutive elections, since 1978. In 19 other constituencies too, a candidate of the same caste has been elected since 1978. Thus in one-fourth of the constituencies, the caste of the MLAs has been the same since 1978.

Agris always get elected from Raigad district. Leva Patil from Jalgaon district, Telis from Wardha and Bhandara districts, Lingayats from Solapur and Kolhapur district, Malls from Amravati, Banjaras from Pusad.

#### **3.3.4 Construction of regionally dominant caste:**

Dr. Palshikar in his study argues that localized concentration lead to localised domination and possibilities of representation. On the other hand, throughout the twentieth century; certain jatis evolved into castes spread over a large territory. This gave rise to the regionally dominant castes. From 1950's onwards, politics in most states including Maharashtra centred around one ( or two) regionally dominant castes. The reason for this development may be attributed to the non-Brahman movements in Maharashtra and in south India. The movement was concerned with creating 'regional', non-Brahmin identities. In Maharashtra, the invocation of Shivaji and Maratha rule was crucial in bringing various peasant castes together. The movement also facilitated the emergence of Maratha politics on a larger scale geographically.

#### **3.3.5 Collaboration between upper and middle class ;**

If a caste claims that it represents the regional culture better than others, it follows that there will be a strong connection between such dominant castes and regional movements. Several patterns of relations between caste and regional identity is observed across the country. The upper caste find it convenient to collaborate with middle castes. As far as collaboration between the upper and middle castes is concerned, Maharashtra is best example. Maratha-Brahmin collaboration is the famous example in Maharashtra. Although the non-brahman movement had villainised Brahmans, the Samyukta Maharashtra movement saw the Brahmans and sections of Marathas collaborating and mobilising the masses.

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### **3.4 THE DOMINANT CASTE PHENOMENON**

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The theory of dominant caste was propounded by M. N. Srinivas. Examination of this theory with regard to Maharashtra reveals that it is Maratha Caste which is dominant. There are several factors which can be attributed to, Maratha caste, getting the status of dominant caste.

### **3.4.1 M. N. Srinivas:**

He coined the term 'dominant caste' to interpret the new mode of power relationship. There are four variables of dominance, they are substantial and better quality of agricultural level, ritual rank, numerical strength, and the willingness to use the strength to assert dominance. And this dominant caste thesis correctly, describes some contemporary facets of the Maratha caste cluster.

### **3.4.2 Jayant Lela:**

While commenting on the dominant caste phenomenon, Lela has said that the ruling elite of the so called dominant caste maintain their dominance over the unprivileged members of their own caste, and other subordinate castes, but manipulating established political institutions and regimes and if necessary, by changing them so as to conform to their interests.

### **3.4.3. Attributes or bases of dominant caste:**

#### **3.4.3.1 Substantial quality of Agricultural land :**

This is one of the most important attribute of dominant caste. In a pre-dominantly rural economy, the pattern of land holding is an indication of the economic well-being. In Maharashtra such land holdings are concentrated in the hands of the top layer of Maratha caste. The roots of what is commonly described as 'Maratha' caste dominance lie in the agrarian social order that came into existence in the early centuries of Christian era. The Maratha elites in all parts of Maharashtra concentrated their efforts on maintaining economic and political dominance through a policy of collaboration with the state. The intervention of the state in the agricultural sector, had not only redressed their economic grievances, but it also opened, for many of the cash crop and market oriented rich and middle peasants, novel opportunities for gaining access to the resources that the state was not ready to make available for rural development.

Strategic use of the state machinery, initiation of the policies of green revolution, expansion of irrigation, provision of subsidised fertilizers, improved seeds and farm machinery etc. helped the rich Maratha Peasantry in consolidating its position. Considerable funds were pumped into the rural areas through developmental schemes have largely helped the rich peasant. The success story of the State in the field of sugarcane cultivation and sugar factories is yet another instance of the consolidation of ruling class strength. The ruling class bias in the implementation of rurally oriented policies is evident from the pattern of sugarcane production.

### 3.4.3.2 Ritual Rank and Status:

In Maharashtra the Maratha caste through years, have acquired a higher rank in ritual status. In no other state do we find an ideologically guided and economically differentiated caste cluster of this size. Maratha caste, which is included in the Kshatriya caste group enjoys the status of ruling class. In the Varna system they were included in the second category of Kshatriyan and therefore enjoyed the highest ritual status. Even during colonial period in ryotwari areas the Brahman (Kulkarni) and Marathas (Patil) link with the regional state was accepted by the company through its own intermediary officials. Thus the hereditary rights and status was maintained by the Britishers. The elites of the dominant Maratha-Kunbi caste cluster belonging to the patil lineages continued to hold property rights to the largest and the most productive parcels of land only on the basis of its ritual status. Moreover, Maratha pride was further nourished with the glorification of the rulers like Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Chatrapati Shahu Maharaj. Thus Maratha caste claimed of being 'ruling class in Maharashtra for our three centuries.

### 3.4.3.3. Numerical Strength:

This aspect is explored and discussed in length by Dr. Rajendra Vora in his article 'Maratha Dominance', Nature and Limitations. He says that a survey and study of social characteristics of legislators in Maharashtra reveals the fact that Maratha caste has through years maintained its numerical strength in the legislature. It has been observed that, in 51 constituencies in Maharashtra, the elected candidate had been a Maratha for six consecutive elections since 1978. Thus it is observed that in one-fourth of the constituencies, the caste of the MLA has been the same since 1978: Maratha-Kunbi caste cluster constitute about 31% of the total population in Maharashtra, but it controls 50% of electoral seats in Maharashtra Legislative Assembly.

In his study Dr. Vora has given three reasons for such dominance they are as follows

- A) Firstly in Maharashtra, Maratha, caste is spread all across the state. This is a rare example, since in the states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, there are several Kshatriya castes, scattered in several parts of the state. And these castes tend to compete and fight with each other for regional domination, since no other caste is dominant in that particular region. This prevents formation of one caste-cluster. But this is not the case in Maharashtra. Maratha caste exists in almost all parts of Maharashtra and therefore it maintains its dominant position intact.
- B) Dominance in the rural areas, may be, cited as the second reason for Maratha dominance. In one of the studies undertaken

in 1967, it was revealed that the percentage of rural Maratha elite is around 77%. It can be further argued that control over agricultural land is the only reason why they are recognised as powerful and dominant in rural areas.

- C) The third reason is the development of the network of co-operative institutions. A separate research on cooperative institutions like Banks, Credit Society, sugar factories etc. has revealed that in almost all these institutional structures, the higher position i.e. of chairman's office is held by a person from Maratha Caste. In fact almost 60 to 70% of these organisations are owned by Maratha castes.

#### **3.4.3.4 Assertion of dominance through Education:**

Education in earlier period was the privilege of fortunate few. During early twentieth century as a result of non-Brahmin movement and reformative activities the educational opportunities were thrown open to a large chunk of middle caste population. Maratha caste was foremost among them. Best e.g. is of Bhaurao Patil, who have spread education among the 'Bahujan Samaj' by establishing educational institutions in the rural areas. Today every Taluka place and even smaller towns, have institutions of higher learning. In the due course of time, educational barons, emerged in the state, which established their hegemony in educational field with numerical strength enabled the Maratha caste to acquire the nomenclature of dominant caste.

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### **3.5. OBC POLITICS IN MAHARASHTRA**

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OBC i.e. other backward classes may be described as those caste, which form the middle ranks of caste hierarchy. In the caste hierarchy the Brahmans and the Marathas constitute the upper caste group while the castes which were associated with several services were recognized as other backward castes. In other words the castes which were involved in trading activities or service giving activities are recognised as other backward castes groups. e.g. Blacksmiths, Goldsmith, Mali, Kunbi, Agri, Tell, Sali Bhandari, Shimpi, Kumbhar etc. These caste groups are recognised as other backward caste, other than scheduled caste (SC) and schedule Tribes.

#### **3.5.1 Confusion in defining the terminology :**

According to Dr. Palshikar. The OBC category, though a convenient shorthand for a large mass, is not very definitive. It includes, formally, castes listed by governments in the state lists as other backward classes. As such, the question, who are the OBCs? Is itself a controversial question. Inclusion or exclusion in

the OBC list is often a matter of politics for those caste who have attained adequate political skills. for eg. the Jats in Rajasthan and the Vokkaligas and Lingayats in Kamatak have demanded that, they should be included in the category of OBC. This gives the mass called OBCs an amorphous character and moreover, produces tensions within between the more and the less deprived settings.

### **3.5.2 Reservation for OBC:**

A wave of controversy and excitement rocked the country when V. P. Singh, then Prime Minister of India in 1989, announced his intention to implement the Mandel Report on OBC reservation. A small fragment of the report was, in fact implemented by the Government order, providing for the benefits and reservation in Central Government and public sector jobs to those groups which appeared in the list of various states, and in the list of Mandal Commission, as socially and educationally backward classes.

Much mobilisation on the Mandel platform took place in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Compared to these north Indian States, there was no such mobilisation observed in Maharashtra. The politics of backward castes did not become activated in a substantial manner in the states like Maharashtra, Orissa or Andhra Pradesh. And therefore it can be said that the north Indian States remained as the main theatre of OBC politics. Though there were few incidences of agitation, Maharashtra compared to U. P. or Bihar remained less agitative.

### **3.5.3. Internal stratification among OBC:**

The internal stratification among the OBC is basic reason why OBC politics was not successful in Maharashtra. The internal stratification among OBCs is an important matter where state-specific issues come to the forefront. The identification of some caste as OBC is itself state-specific. Even when the issue of identification is resolved, the question of the share of different castes and caste groups continues to pose a challenge.

### **3.5.4 The question of power sharing:**

Besides reservations, the question of power sharing is also one of the important issues, so far as politics of OBC is concerned. Various backward castes in Maharashtra not only want to be included in the apparatus of power, they hope to use power to their advantage and if, possible, again controlling shores in power. Negatively put, backward caste's push for the exclusion of the upper castes so that the complexion and content of power may change substantively.

These claims bring a double conflict into focus. There is a conflict between the already established dominant caste and the aspiring caste or caste-group. The constellations of these

conflicts are again state-specific because the ideological battle line of upper vs backward translates differently in each state. In Maharashtra, where Maratha domination is sought to be challenged, Kunbis included in the list of OBCs would pose a problem. The Maratha caste cluster includes Kunbis. Thus, the battle is between the dominant caste and a section of OBC vs other OBCs.

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### **3.6 DALIT POLITICS IN MAHARASHTRA**

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Dalits, especially in Maharashtra, have been launching various protest movements on every possible front, which have resulted in their gaining confidence to fight collectively for their genuine demands. Thus, the protest movement is considered as one of the factors to bring about social change and political awareness among the Dalits in Maharashtra. Dalit politics in Maharashtra actually carries the legacy of the protest movement was an attack on the privileged section in an intellectual and organised way. As a matter of fact, the quest of the Dalit Movement is the leveling up the status of people and it is the real manifestation of a new consciousness among them.

#### **3.6.1 Initial efforts to mobilize Dalits:**

Revolutionary work of Mahatma Phule during nineteenth century for the first time in history of India, generated an unprecedented stir in the minds of Dalits. Regarding their right. Phule advised Shudras and antishudras to close the ranks, take up a struggle for education against the Brahmanical oppression. It is due to his influence and inspiration that, the first chunk of Dalit leadership started to assert their influence in the public sphere. Gopal Baba Walangkar, Shivram Janaba Kamble, Kisan Fagoji Bansode, F. D. Shinde and K. Nandgavali were prominent among them.

#### **3.6.2 Gopal Baba Walangkar:**

Gopal Baba Walangkar had a background of military service and he was well versed in English and Marathi language. He was influenced by the ideas of Mahatma Phule and made it clear in his writings that untouchability did not have any divine basis or sanction and it was solely treated to cater to the interest of the Brahmans. To prove his thesis, he published a book titled 'Vithal Vidhvansak'. He even formed Anarya Doshpariharak Mandali (Non Aryan Group of Removal of wrong) at Dapoli. With the work of Walangkar, a new era had emerged for the untouchables. He has roused these people to fight against economic, social and religious disabilities.

### **3.6.3 Shivram Janaba Kamble :**

S. J. Kamble played an important role in pre-Ambedkar Oak Movement in Mumbai region as he convened the first all India conference of untouchables. He also formed the oppressed India Association in Nagpur. He became the acknowledged leader of the untouchables in Poona, and started a Marathi newspaper, 'Somvanshi Mitra' in Poona to educate the masses. He started the struggle from within the fold of untouchables to do away with the customs of Devdasi and Potraj prevailing among the Mahars and Mangs.

### **3.6.4 Kisan Fagoji Bansode:**

Pre-Ambedkar Dalit movement saw the emergence of a spokesman like K. F. Bansode. from Nagpur. He started a press which enabled him to print various newspapers, brochures and books related to the reform of the untouchables. The aims of the various societies formed by Bansode and the resolutions of the various conferences provide a perspective about his programme for the upliftment of the untouchables. Like Kamble, Bansode focused upon bringing about internal reforms among untouchables.

### **3.6.5 Ambedkar era:**

Dr. Ambedkar's entry into the public life was an epoch making event as far as the depressed classes were concerned as he was their most capable leaders. During his lifetime Dr. Ambedkar closely observed the behaviour of caste Hindus and came to the conclusion that unless untouchables themselves fought for their rights, there was no deliverance.

Roughly, Dr. Ambedkar's leadership falls into three phases. The first phase begins from 1924 to 1930 when he acted more as a social reformer, fighting against caste system and the practice of untouchability. The second phase starts from 1930 onwards, when as a political leader he emphasised the need of acquiring political power for raising up the socio-economic status of Dalits. Towards the close of the second phase he established educational institutions as well. Finally, in the third phase he embraced Buddhism along with his followers and emerged as a religious reformer of the Dalits and led a revolt against Hinduism.

### **3.6.6 Post –Ambedkar Dalit Movement :**

Following the death of Dr. Ambedkar certain epoch making events took place in the Dalit movement one was the formation of the Republic Party of India and the other was the genesis of Dalit Panther movement. Other events were the origin of Dalit Sahitya Movement, emergence of Dalit Rangbhoomi (Dalit Theatre) BAMCEF (The All India Backward SC, ST, OBC and minority communities Employees Federation) Bahujan Samaj Party and Bhartiya Republican Party.



### 3.6.7 Republican party of India:

The Republican Party of India was formed out of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation by changing the latter's name in October 1957. After the death of Dr. Ambedkar, the founder of the party, N. Shivaji was its leader till his demise in 1964.

The RPI was formed to promote Mr. Ambedkar's ideology as well as to promote the interest of the Dalits. In spite of its proclaimed goal, the RPI has not emerged as a significant party or pressure group because of the lack of a well knit organisation, intra-party factionalism and Congress policy of co-option. The image of the party is that of a party of Neo-Buddhists. This is contrary to Dr. Ambedkar's intention of making party inclusive of all Dalit castes. This implies that any attempts at the unity of the various factions would still be unity of the Neo-Buddhists. The other Dalit castes have supported the congress and some of them had supported Shiv Sena in 1989-90.

In the course of time the RPI sustained several blows as a result of factions. It is because of this factionalism and splits that the younger dalit generation remained disillusioned with the RPI leadership.

### 3.6.8 Dalit Panther Movement:

The disintegration of the Republican Party of India, created discontent among the Dalits in general and educated youths in particular. The Dalit youths came forward and took up the task of bringing all the Schedule Castes on one platform and mobilise them for the struggle of their civil rights and justice. And thus emerged the Dalit Panther movement in 1972 in Maharashtra.

- The increasingly negative situation led a few scheduled castes youth to express their dissatisfaction through their writings and give a call for a movement. This crystallised into the Dalit Panther formed in April 1972 in Mumbai with a manifesto to combat the growing atrocities on the scheduled castes in the rural areas.
- The term dalit means 'oppressed'. They defined the term Dalit by applying a broader perspective. According to Panthers, Dalit means members of scheduled castes and tribes. Neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasant, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion. The Panthers developed hatred towards the word 'untouchables' and 'Harijans'. They wanted to be identified as Dalits.
- The name Panther was borrowed from the 'Black

Panther' of the United States of America. The name appealed to Mr. Namdeo Dhasal when he began collecting material from the American papers on the Negro's plight in the united states for his journal 'vidhorha'. Moreover, most of the Dalit leaders had read the literature of the Black Panthers leaders and were inspired by the struggles they had waged for equality and justice in America.

- The most important contribution of Dalit Panthers was that, they gave courage to fight against the ghastly incidents perpetrated on the Dalits. They exploded the myth that the untouchables are mute and passive. They also caused rumblings against the unjust caste system.

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### 3.7 SUMMARY

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From the above discussion it becomes clear that caste is an important factor in Indian Politics. In a wider range of Social *and* economic and political activity caste plays a very decisive role. In context of Maharashtra, the political profile clearly demonstrates the dominant position of Marathas, While reactionary movement has stirred and mobilised the lower castes like dalits. Thus we have seen that a caste conscious of its social stratifications strives to better its position for the sake of modernising the life of its members and saving them from the onslaught of social injustice.

- 1 We started with various theories about caste stated by eminent scholars including Rajani Kothari, Rudolph and Rudolph, M. N. Srinivas and Andre Baetille
- 2 Next we discussed the role of caste in politics of Maharashtra with the help of comments made by Jayant Lele and Suhas Palshikar.
- 3 We also discussed the dominant caste phenomenon, OBS politics, Dalit politics in Maharashtra

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### 3.8 QUESTIONS

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- 1 Explain, how 'eminent scholars have theorised the topic of caste and politics?
- 2) Write an essay on role of caste in politics of Maharashtra.
- 3) Describe the 'Dominant Caste' phenomenon in detail with reference to Maharashtra.

- 4) Evaluate 'OBC' politics in Maharashtra with suitable examples.
- 5) Explain in detail, Dalit politics in Maharashtra.

**6) Short notes :**

- a) Rajni Kothari's theory Politicisation of caste.
- b) M. N. Srinivas theory of Dominant Caste
- c) Dalit Panthers
- d) Republican Party of India.

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## ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND POLITICS

### Unit Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Ethnicity and Ethnocentrism
- 4.3 Politics of Nativism
- 4.4 Politics of Communalism
- 4.5 Majority and Minority Communalism
- 4.6 Traditional Hindu Communalism
- 4.7 Summary
- 4.8 Unit End Exercise

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### 4.1 OBJECTIVES

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This unit explains:-

- the concept of ethnicity
- discusses the politics of nativism
- analyses Communalism
- explains the meaning of Pluralism and Secularism
- and critically explains the secular and plural responses towards communal politics

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### 4.2 INTRODUCTION

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There is an intimate and cohesive relationship between Society and Politics. No doubt, it is regarded as a significant dimension in *the* analysis of political process. No study of political conditions would be complete with but an adequate reference to its social context. Political sociologists have adequately explained the close relationship between Society and Politics. They have also elaborated the dynamic interaction constantly taking place between the political system and the social structure.

while analysing the relationship between Society and Politics, it is important to understand some of the important terms like 'Society', 'Social System' etc. Often 'these terms have been loosely used by the social scientists. In the words of Talcot Parson, 'social system is a very inclusive kind of association ...and ... a political system or an economic system would be the parts of a social system.'

According to Eric Rowe, 'the political system and political activity is a special category of social category, and that, political activity at any particular time and place represents the values, beliefs and attitudes which are currently held in that society.' Thus 'political' is embedded in 'social' and influenced substantially by its social context. Similarly, 'ingredients of social system' are influenced by 'political values, beliefs and practices. Almond viewed 'political system as one that attempts to unify the society, either by transforming it into another or by maintaining the existing way of life'.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the inter-relationship between society and politics has been increasingly emphasised. This development is of more relevance to the 'Third World' countries wherein modern political process is being experimented and practiced in a society which has been generally regarded as traditional. Morris Jones' perhaps has rightly observed in this regard, 'without attention to social forces the study of politics is partial and even misleading.'

The process of identifying and emphasising the relationship is of profound relevance to the study of Indian political system which is known for its extreme diversities in form of caste, religion, cultural pattern and racial composition. These ,social diversities exist in a society .which is suffering from mass poverty, mass literacy and multitudes of traditions, religious beliefs and practices.

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## **4.2 ETHNICITY P.ND ETHNOCENTRISM**

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The word ethnicity is generally used to describe the plural character of the Indian political system. The expression 'ethnicity' is derived from the word 'ethnic' which means 'a racial group', i.e. people having similar physical characteristics, social customs and traditions, language and history. However, in Indian context the reference of the word 'ethnicity' would indicate the aspirations of the people having a common history, cultural traditions, language and literature. Ethnicity can be linked to the emergence of regionalism and regional aspirations which was clearly reflected on issues such as demand for unilingual states in India. The aspirations of the people have found expressions in the emergence of regional political parties like the Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (DMK), Telugu Desam, Shiv Sena and more recently Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS). These political formations amplify particular group's aspirations. The idea of ethnicity and the 'urge to preserve ethnic identity is manifested in the opposition of the regional groups as well as to the imposition of Hindi as the national language. Such parochial aspirations are expressed through' advocacy of the 'sons of soil' policy and preferential treatment to the

'local people' by the State Governments especially in the recruitment to the State services.

Ethnocentrism has attracted the attention of scholars all over the world. The word ethnocentrism was first used by the famous American Sociologist, William Graham Sumner in 1906. He made an attempt to define ethnocentrism as 'the tendency to view one's own group as the centre of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it.' The parochial culture often makes people view their society's ways as most normal and legitimate. Scholars are of the view that in a plural society like India, ethnocentrism cannot be avoided. It gives people of a region a sense of belonging and pride, and even willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of their region. However, ethnocentrism may prove to be harmful to the nation building process if carried to the extremes. In an enhanced form it may cause prejudices, rejection of the ideas and values of other groups. In an extreme situation it may lead to ethnic violence and sufferings of other groups. This militant form of ethnocentrism has been described as 'Nativism' by the political scientists like Myron Weiner and W.H.S. Morris Jones.

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### **4.3 POLITICS OF NATIVISM**

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In the post independence India, Jawaharlal Nehru had described the Indian Polity as 'a geographical and an economic entity, a cultural unity amidst diversity, a bundle of contradictions, held together by strong invisible threads'. These diversities are often not reconcilable. In specific sociopolitical situation they tend to give rise to conflicts among different groups. As long as such conflicts are within limits, they do not pose threat to the system. However, when disagreements assume violent forms and go beyond the constitutional parameters, they certainly endanger the system and threaten the unity and integrity of the nation.

In a multi-lingual country like India, the language has often been used as launching pad for regional assertions. The agitations on the issue of language forced the Union government in the past to yield to the pressures. It has, no doubt, undermined the authority of the State. Unfortunately, this has led to an impression that the violent agitation is an effective weapon which makes the government yield to the demands. Planned agitations, therefore, have become the tested formula for the expression of dissent. Defiance of authority has become the social norm. It has led to the weakening of the authority of the Government and that of the State. The demand for the formation of unilingual states, therefore, was the first sign of regional assertions. However, the national perspective at that time was different. In the words of V.K. Krishna

Menon, formation of the unilingual states would spell 'disintegration and the inevitable 'prospect of loss of national. sovereignty?'

The scepticism and extra-cautious approach, over the lingual politics has been viewed differently by, Mary. Katsenstein who regards the emergence, of nativism as an expression of new ethnicity. In, her view 'both in respect of national community and in furthering the representatiye institutions, , language politics.... have . provided a crucial support Language politics has proved to be. An, important political channel of pursuing political integration as well as political development.' According to this perspective, the' linguistic politics need not cause panic. Instead the spirit of accommodation and mutual. Understanding by the national and regional elite can make regionalism in general and linguistic politics in particular, pave the way towards more meaningful national unity.

Historically, regional distinctness, was firmly maintained In. India mainly due to failure of the earlier empires to establish lasting control over the whole country. However, the regional distinctness was obscured during the British period. With independence in 1947, regionalism reasserted itself. The political unity of India, according to scholars, is as fragile today as it was yesterday. Social diversities which often get reinforced by regional and linguistic differences continue to be the bane of Indian politics.

Regions of India were not particularly recognised during the British rule. The provinces were created more as administrative units. Provincial organisation was devised to uphold the authority of the British power in the areas of economic and strategic importance, In spite of this, however, regions did always exist. Each region even claims its own golden age. The people have not been able to forgive their past. The regional political parties like Shiv Sena make political use of the glory of "Shivshahi symbolised by the reverence to Chhatrpati Shivaji Maharaj. To evoke the memory of this, regional festivals are celebrated and regional politicians are especially honoured. 'Shiv-Jayanti' started by Lokmanya Tilak for national mobilisation gradually became manifestation of regional consciousness.

The- regional .consciousness.-was. first. expressed' in, form of demand for Samyukta, Maharashtra' in the 1950s. The movement led by the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti led to the' formation 'the Unilingual State of Maharashtra on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1960. Marathi was deólared as the official language of the State in 1964. Shiv Sena was formed in 1966 by Balasaheb Thatkeray initially as a pressure group to espouse the cause of the Sons of soil' with its area of Operation mostly in and around Mumbai city. This regional pressure group was a clear manifestation of emerging nativism. Morkhandikar describes the emergerice of the

Shiv Sena as eruption of sub-nationalism.' The main demand of Shiv Sena was 'preferential treatment to Maharashtrais in matters of housing and employment', It was a Movement of Protest against the dominance of non-Maharashtrians in business and governance in the city of Mumbai.

The decision of the Shiv Sena to indulge in the politics of nativism transformed it from a pressure group to a local party in the 1970s and subsequently a regional party of substance in the 1980s. Soon, it began to pose threat to the Congress Party and finally managed to wrest power in 1995. The success of Shiv Sena could be regarded as the success of politics of nativism in Maharashtra. The vacuum created by Shiv Sena's indulgence in the politics of Hindutva was filled by the dissident group led by Raj Thackeray and the formation of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) recently. The Shiv Sena while espousing the cause of the sons of the soil' in the 1970s, had directed its agitation politics against the South-Indians and later against *the* Muslims, the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena has openly opposed the migrants from UP and Bihar. The decision of the MNS to confront the North Indians has created lot of interest in the politicians from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. It has placed the MNS at the centre of politics of nativism in Maharashtra. The issue of the 'outsiders' versus 'natives' taken up by Raj Thackeray has made him more popular in selected constituencies and has also helped him reap the benefits of politics of nativism.

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#### **4.4 POLITICS OF COMMUNALISM**

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The State of Maharashtra witnessed two sets of confrontation in the 1980s; one between the Hindus and the Muslims; and the other between upper caste (savarnas) and the Scheduled Castes (Dalits). During the last decade we have witnessed growing Hindu militancy and the changing character of Hindu identity in the State. Clashes between the Savarnas and the Dalits took place even at the remote places such as Satana (Dist. Nashik; 1983, 1986). Sangli was the battle ground between the Hindus and the Jain community (1983). The Sikhs of, Nanded complained about ill-treatment meted out to them and threatened to resort to protests in October 1994. This recurring caste-communal violence has become a feature of politics in Maharashtra since 1980s. The emergence of caste-communal organisations has played a significant role in furtherance of communal politics in Maharashtra.

Hindu' unity initiated by Bhartiya Jan Sangh and strong arm treatment of those who refuse to fall in line are the striking features of the neo-Hindu organisations. They are spearheading an ideological movement with an objective to create a



homogeneous Hindu consciousness to counter the formation of class consciousness. These organizations are spreading themselves in cities and semi-rural areas with a faster pace. Their leadership has been making sustained efforts to bring about Hindu consolidation and resorting to a forceful rhetoric in favour of Hindu cultural supremacy and in favour of nation building on the basis of Hindu strength and Hindu ideas.

In the earlier days, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) were the main Hinduist organisations in the State. In the post – 1947 period and until the 1980s, the RSS was the only credible Hindu organisation. In fact, many Hinduist organizations in the State are either front-organisations of the RSS or are its offshoots. The RSS lost considerable following after the Bhartiya Jan Sangh merged its identity with the Janata Party in 1977. Many organisations picked up the Hindu cause from this point at a limited level and more significantly in a crude manner. Shiv Sena, Patit Pawan Sangathana, Hindu Ekta Andolan and the Maratha Mahasangh are regarded as more prominent among them in Maharashtra.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a frontal organisation of the RSS has been active in the cause of Hindutva. It was responsible for organizing the entire 'Janjagran Abhiyan' (mass mobilisation campaign) in 1981-84. The campaign took place in the wake of the conversion of the Dalits of Meenakshipuram (Tamilnadu) from Hinduism to Islam. The VHP described conversions as a national 'calamity'. They stirred the Hindu community by pointing out that Hindus may become a minority if such conversions continue. The VHP exhorted the people to openly claim their Hindu identity and forget their caste differences and become more sensitive to Hindu cause.

The Shiv Sena also took an initiative and formed a 'Hindu Mahasangh' in April, 1984. Apart from the Shiv Sena, the Hindu Mahasabha, Arya Samaj, Masurashram, Hindu Sena, Hindu Rashtra Sena, etc. joined the 'Mahasangh'. Among these organizations, only the Shiv Sena enjoyed the political clout. The RSS and the VHP, and other influential Hindu organisations did not join the confederation. However, the Mahasangh wanted to give the message that difference among organisations could be set aside and efforts could be made to unite all Hindus irrespective of castes, panthas (sects) and inclinations.

The Ram Janmabhumi – Babri Masjid issue provided the VHP, the ASS and other Hindu organisations with opportunities to mobilise the Hindu masses by various means, including 'Yatras' undertaken by leaders like L.K. Advani. Thus, a concerted effort was made to organise the society as a 'Hindu Society' and create and

cultivate a Hindu constituency. It was expected that once such a constituency is created, people become more susceptible to religious appeals. They would begin to look upon themselves as Hindu brethren, rather than the members of various castes/classes. The effort to super-impose the Hindu-identity succeeded to some extent in Maharashtra. As a result, the Shiv Sena- BJP alliance which stood for 'Hindutva' managed to secure power in Maharashtra in 1995.

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#### **4.5 MAJORITY AND MINORITY COMMUNALISM**

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In Maharashtra the Hindus are 'in' majority' as they constitute . 81% of the population of the State. .Muslims constitute '9.3% are 6.3% of the population of Maharashtra. Thus the Hindu communalism, as against the Muslim or neo-Buddhist or Sikh communalism, would be referred to as the communalism of the majority 'community'. There are marked, distinctions between the communalism of the majority and that of the minority. They - do , assume the Same ideological or political shape. They differ in font even though their fundamental premised and views may be the same. The 'communalists belonging to the majority community are well aware that:-the democratic principles of majority -rule could give, 'them a political- advantage which will give them opportunity to implement their cultural, religious,. social and political. programmes.. They believe that they would have obvious capacity to Corner jobs acid other economic benefits for their middle and upper caste-classes. They could, therefore, easily assume the 'nationalist' garb. Their agenda could be presented and promoted as national interests and Others program could be referred to as serving mere sectional interests. 'They could employ the authority of nationalism for achieving communal objectives.' Those who adhere to beliefs and principles of Hindutva claim to be true nationalist and question the credentials of others. They even criticise and condemn the nationalist credentials of the secular Communist parties. The minority communalists did not have such wider political advantage. They had no choice but to express themselves more explicitly on communal lines. Minority communalism, therefore, is always branded as anti-national and secessionist. The zealots of majority communalists arouse mass-frenzy against them in the name of nation-religion. From this perspective, a Muslim cannot be regarded as nationalist except for the exclusive purpose of nationalism. In an extreme situation, a minority communalist could develop the tendency of 'separatism' but a Hindu communalist would not be a 'separatist'. Thus, a Hindu communalist can be qualitatively different from a Muslim communalist. A Hindu communalist would never be inclined towards weakening the national unity and would always condemn • minority communalist and take an active stand against it. This kind of concerted attacks against minorities unleashed by majority,

communalists has forced the religious minorities to withdraw from the national mainstream. They tend to perpetually depend on the :secular parties, who in turn, exploit their fear psychosis. This has in pathetic as resulted athletic socio-economic conditions, minorities live in India today.

### **Hindu Communalism:**

There, is marked distinction between the neo communalism of the 1980s and the one projected earlier by the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha. Of course, there are some elements, of continuity, as well as. differences. The earlier, brand of Majority communalism was. "Brahminical whereas the post-1980 scenario is more dominated by the non-Brahmins.

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## **4.6 TRADITIONAL HINDU. COMMUNALISM**

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The Arya Samaj played an inspirational role in the evolutionary process of majority communalism in India. The Hindu communal politics began in the Northern India during the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its program of reconverting the converted Muslims back to the Hindu fold was, not liked by the Muslims. It actively promoted Sanskrit and Hindi and condemned Urdu and discouraged Hindustani. It was openly supported by the nobility and the middle class in the urban areas. The Hindu communalists were inspired by the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha in Maharashtra.

It is interesting to note that the traditional Hindu Communalism which was represented by Savarkar, N.C. Kelkar and 'Tilakites' was till 1937 more liberal and 'nonanti-Muslim'. In his famous book 'The Indian War of Independence, 1857', Savarkar writes, 'the nation ought to be the master and not the slave of its own history. The feeling of hatred against Mohammedans was just and necessary in the times of Shivaji, but such a feeling would be unjust and foolish if nursed now...' Thus, the traditional Hindu communalists claimed to fight for the 'legitimate' rights of the Hindus. They were, however, opposed to the Indian National Congress in general and the leadership of Gandhi in particular. It was mainly due to caste-community factors. The influx of the Bahujan Samaj into the Indian National Congress was not liked by the Brahmin castes and their leadership. They, therefore, found a vehicle for realising their aspirations, first in the Hindu Mahasabha and later in the RSS.

During the election campaign of 1937, the Hindu Mahasabha adopted a more liberal communal approach but failed miserably against the Congress. While analysing the electoral performance the Hindu Mahasabha realised that the Congress had acquired a

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mass base, and that their party would face electoral challenges and loose political significance if they did not resort to mass-based militant politics. Thus, the nature of communalism underwent a change. It acquired a more extreme form around 1937 and as a consequence, adopted fascist and irrational overtones. They began to take inspiration from fascist regimes in Italy, Germany and Spain.

Since its inception, the RSS was organised on the fascist lines. In 1937, the RSS decided to spread its organisational network outside Maharashtra. The RSS began to reach out to the urban white-collar lower middle class as the Congress had not as yet acquired firm roots among them. The Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS during their fascist phase (1937-48) had presidents who were more or less permanent and preferred to function on the Fuhrer principle and cult. Bipin Chandra describes an extreme form of communalism as 'irrational, based on fear and hatred and having a tendency to use violence and terror as a weapon against political opponents! During this phase therefore, the extent and the level of communal propaganda were intensified. The rabid language of war and enemy was increasingly used against the political opponents. The initiatives for protecting and promoting the interests of Hindus became secondary. Instead, the cries that Hindus, Hindu culture and Hindudom were in danger, of being suppressed and exterminated, were raised. The communalists, at this stage, put forward the theory that the Hindus and the Muslims, in fact, constituted separate nations. Their mutual antagonism was of permanent nature and irresolvable. The extremists among Hindu communalists defined as to 'who is an Indian?' or 'who constitutes the Indian nation?' in such a way that it excluded Muslims permanently from its ambit. Muslims were viewed as hostile and alien elements within the Indian political system. Muslims were viewed as foreigners who must live as subordinates to Hindus or cease being Muslims, failing which they should be expelled. Golwalkar in his book 'WE' observes, 'Hindustan must exist as the Hindu nation.. Muslims and other non-Hindus (who) maintain their racial, religious and cultural differences ...cannot but be only foreigners. There are only two (options) open to (them). (They) must either merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or live at the sweet will of the national race... they should claim nothing, deserve no privileges, far less any preferential treatment,. not even citizen's rights...Hindus alone are the Nation..'

The Hindu communal" organisations, namely the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS failed to evolve political thought and worthwhile programs and instead emphasised the political tactics. In the absence of any specific social, economic and political program, they adopted a negative stance on various issues and

attacked the Congress and the other communities. The Hindu communalists also defined Hindu culture and nationhood in such a way as to obfuscate their rational, historical or logical discourse. The RSS program was confined to three undefined and vague terms namely 'discipline', 'character' and 'Bhartiya culture'.

The Hindu communalists preached antagonism and hatred against Muslims. They declared that the co-existence between Hindus and the Muslims was not possible. They initiated a bitterly hostile campaign of hatred against the Muslims, Indian National Congress and other nationalist leaders. They adopted the policy of spreading falsehood and the principle of, the bigger the lie the better. Even Mahatma Gandhi and other nationalist Congress leaders were denounced as traitors, and were called enemies of the 'Hindu nation' by the Hindu communalists. The virulent campaign against 'Gandhi generated such a frenzy that a Maharashtrian Brahmin Nathuram Godse, a member of "the RSS and an associate of Savarkar, assassinated Mahatma Gandhi on 30<sup>th</sup> January, . 1948. As a consequence, the Brahminical caste as a whole was discredited and the activities of the RSS were banned. This halted temporarily the spread of the influence of both HMS and the RSS in the urban areas and among the lower-middle class youth which had 'immense liking' for the RSS.

#### **Neo-Hinduism:**

An attempt has been made by Vora and Palishkar to distinguish neo-Hinduism from the traditional Hinduism as pursued and advocated by the RSS. The points of distinction emerge through various organisations and the ideologies of both the brands. In 1970s and 1980s, as they point out, new justifications of the Hindu order and *new* patterns of Hindu mobilization have emerged. This new phenomenon has been described by them as "neo-Hinduism:" In contemporary Maharashtra, this new brand of Hinduism and its Ideology has acquired a dominant form.

#### **Characteristics of neo-Hinduism:**

The main characteristics of neo-Hinduism are as follows.

**a) Integration:** A lot of emphasis has been put on" integrating the Hindu society as a whole. Hindu unity therefore, is the main objective of neo-Hinduism. According to its beliefs, only Hinduism has the capacity and potential to unite the Hindu society. The neo-Hinduisits appeal to all Hindus to sink their differences and forge unity among themselves. Caste, however, is regarded as the main stumbling block in this endeavour of Hindu integration. As caste continues to dominate the Hindu society, efforts to unite them often proves to be very difficult. Each caste has its own history, pride and a separate identity of its own. The flea-

Hinduism, therefore, is making an attempt to popularise the integrationist interpretation of Hindu society. Attempts are made to play down the caste conflict and instances of caste-amity are highlighted. Emotional appeals are employed to mobilise all castes and bring them together. The alliance between the Brahmins and the Marathas is a remarkable example of this integration. Both Brahmins and the Marathas are viewed as the protectors of Hinduism in Maharashtra. They are regarded as the best representatives of the Hindu tradition. This alliance has acquired deep roots in the history of Maharashtra. However, despite emphasising this alliance, its advocates often tend to ignore the conflict between the two castes in the immediate past. This however, portrays the fundamental weakness of the integrationist approach of neo-Hinduism.

In order to emphasise accommodation, the neo Hinduists claim that the Hindu culture has been enriched by all castes. To signify this aspect, Hinduist organisations celebrate the birth anniversaries of B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Phule. The contributions of these, leaders are recognised. Their foresight and their role to uplift the communities are mentioned with glowing praise. Phule is hailed as 'Mahamanav' and the writings of both Phule and Chiplunkar are described as complementary and forming a common Hindu ethos. However, despite much claims on integrating the Hindu society, neo-Hinduists have not made determined efforts towards integrating the Dalits. On the contrary, organisations such as Maratha Mahasangh adopt a confrontationist and hostile posture towards the Scheduled Castes. Nevertheless, uniting the Hindu society and asserting its identity are considered to be the desirable efforts towards nation building. The neo-Hinduist ideological appeals, in this context, attach much importance to nationalism. Thus, integration and nationalism in this sense are complementary aspects of neo-Hinduism. The purpose of Hindu unity is to strengthen the nation from a particular point of view. The idea of nationalism has the ultimate value for the neo-Hinduists. In the absence of a developed sense of Hindu unity the progress of society will not take place. Diversity or plurality has no space in the ideology of nationalism as adopted by neo-Hinduists. Only the common factors among the Hindus, therefore, find favour with them. Integration and nationalism, in this sense, work in the same direction: they invent unity, they bury internal differences in the Hindu society, and they hold the individuals as prisoners of make-believe.

This world of make-believe identifies Hinduism as the basis of nationalism and therefore, non-Hindus become a threat to nationalism. So, there is nothing wrong if force is used to 'protect' the nation from 'enemies' like the Muslims and other non-Hindus. This make-believe justifies intimidation. Thus, the Hindu Ekta or Patit Pawan do not find anything wrong with violence

and strong –arm techniques. These measures are seen as necessary instruments in the cause of nationalism.

**b) Militancy:** The new Hindu offensive resorts to militancy and use of force. It adopts aggressive postures. It exhibits intolerance towards opposition. It is 'fully aware of the limitations of its integrationist approach. Its Idea of Hindu unity is based on the domination of the upper castes particularly the Brahmins and the Marathas. They are aware that all Hindus may not be willing to be part of this process. They have, therefore, supplemented integrationist strategy with militancy. This militancy finds expression in words and deeds alike. The militancy of the Thackeray variety probably surpasses all others. Utter disrespect for the non-Hindus, strong words, plain threats and abusive slogans occupy the greater part of neo-Hinduist writings and propaganda.

The lower castes and the Muslims are the chief objects of neo-Hindu militancy. The lower caste incurs the neo-Hindu wrath because of their insistence on reservation and the formation of a separate Dalit identity. Neo-Hinduists have generally opposed the recommendations of Mandal Commission and have also challenged the wisdom of reservation for the Scheduled Castes. They fear that such reservation would separate the lower caste from the higher caste. Similarly, Muslims are shown in the worst light possible, ignoring or even denying their contribution to the freedom struggle. Muslim religious fanaticism is constantly under criticism. Muslims are expected to accept the Hindu cultural framework. The typical neo-Hinduist image of a Muslim is one of an anti-national, religious fanatic, posing a threat to the unity of the country.

Neo-Hindu militancy does not hesitate in applying force to its enemies. Intimidation and repression are the purposes behind this use of force. The lower castes are forced to accept the Hindu identity because of the threatening domination of the upper caste. The Muslims are coerced into accepting a subordinate status in the Hindu society. Violence is used to exhibit the resolve of the upper caste to retain their dominant position. Thus, Hindus' muscles have been used against both the Dalits and the Muslims on a number of occasions in the eighties. It is significant to note that in cases of communal violence, the use of force is glorified. The perpetrators of violence are openly instructed to teach Muslims a lesson. Involvement in a clash with the Muslims is seen as an act of bravery, a service to the nation. All Hinduist organisations, despite protests, are engaged in spreading communal hatred in the state. It is important to note that the policy of spreading hatred benefits the neo-Hinduists politically. The spread of hate feelings bring all Hindus together, and in one camp. In such a scenario, even Hindus come to believe that they are really one.

The, use of force and intimidation, on the other hand, silences any possibility of challenge to the integrationist design.

**c) New Militant Recruits:** Hindu nationalism, historically, was advocated and practiced by the upper castes, particularly the Brahmins. The language of Hindu nationalism appealed only to the Brahmins and Hinduist organisations found the willing supporters among the Brahmins. The recent Hindu mobilization has made especial efforts to enlarge its area of influence. The integration strategy was used for this particular purpose. The neo Hinduists so far have been emphasizing the unity of all Hindus. This strategy has proved to be successful. It has led to a proliferation of Hinduist organisations and the numerical growth of their branches in different parts of the State.

As a result of the increasing acceptance of integration strategy neo-Hinduism has also embraced many non-Brahmin castes. The leadership, as well as, the active following of almost all neo-Hinduist organisations belongs to the non-Brahmin castes. In many cases, even non-Maratha castes can be seen as active supporters. These new recruits are generally young activists who are ready to use their muscle. They are youth who have hardly completed their school education. Some of them are 'just college dropouts. Their social and educational background and their unemployed status make them vulnerable to emotional appeals and militant activity.

Another important aspect of neo-Hindu expansion is its entry into the rural areas. Earlier, only the Maratha Mahasangh had rural connections. The Hindu Ekta later 'developed considerable support among the rural masses. Of late, even Shiv Sena has successfully built its bases in villages in almost all parts of Maharashtra. Many villages in the rural areas today exhibit the saffron flag. This has led to some social tension between the upper castes and the Dalits.

**a) Trans-Party Phenomena:** It is important to note that the neo-Hindu following is not restricted to any particular political party. The supporters and sympathizers of neo Hinduism exist and operate in many political parties in the State. Thus, there is considerable support for the Maratha Mahasangh among the followers of the Congress and Shetkari Sangathana. Many BJP activists and followers are sympathisers of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Patit Pawan or the Shiv Sena. Ideological bases of neo-Hinduism, too, have been laid down, not only by the followers of Savarkar, but even by 'liberals' and 'seculars' as well. These broad formulations of the neo-Hinduism and composition of its leadership has given substantial legitimacy and larger acceptance to this



ideology. Since independence this has happened for the first time that a particular form of Hinduism has gained larger acceptability in the State.

### **Muslim Communalism:**

The Muslim communalism did always exist in the Marathi speaking areas. However, it was not as vocal and pronounced as in many other parts of India. Although Mohammad Ali Jinnah operated from Bombay and the Bohra and the Khoja sects used to make substantial contribution to the Muslim League, the 'Muslim' factor was not as significant in the then Bombay province. The Razakars, of course, had created unpleasant situation for the Hindus in the Nizam's Hyderabad State. This is partly responsible for the deep rooted resentments against the Muslims and the popular response to the rhetoric of Shiv Sena in Marathwada. The Muslim population, in general, in this region has migrated to the urban areas. Thus, there is a large concentration of Muslims in cities like Aurangabad where they feel relatively 'secure' owing to their sizeable number. Once their confidence is boosted, they often fall prey to the designs of the Muslim communalists of Jamate Islami or Majlise Mushawarat brand. Those urban and semi-urban areas like Aurangabad, Bhiwandi, Malegaon, Yeola, Bombay city etc. where the Muslims are in sizeable number, the communal tension is more than in other parts of the State. In the past Muslims were accused of having 'affinity' towards Pakistan. The gestures of some elements in this regard like cracking of fire crackers when Pakistan defeats India in cricket or hockey matches, makes them suspects in the eyes of Hindus. - These incidents give the Hindu communalists an opportunity to brand the whole Muslim community as 'anti-national' and launch a 'crusade' to wipe out such elements. The Muslim communal elite who are often accused of giving provocative statements have done more disservice to the Muslim masses. In the early days, the strategy of Haji Mastan, a smuggler turned politician, to forge the unity of the Dalits and Muslims has caused unpleasant feelings. The Muslim communalism, in any case, is not as vocal and as aggressive as in Kerala or Tamilnadu. It is mainly because the Muslims constitute less than ten percent of the population of the State, and as such, their influence is confined to some urban areas. In short, though the Muslim communalism is insignificant, yet it is important enough to be an irritant and capable enough to provide handle to the Hindu communalist in Maharashtra. In the absence of suitable Muslim leadership, the masses in Maharashtra prefer a 'protective' umbrella provided by the Congress and later by the Janata Party and the Janata Dal. However, the communal leadership endorses the strategy by their brethren from Aligarh and Hyderabad to protect their interests. The Muslims, especially after the presentation of the Sachar Committee report, too, feel the need for reservation in the public services. One of their demands includes treatment at par

with the Scheduled Castes. They have asked for a fair and square deal and bargained their 'vote bank' capability to gain some concessions. Their demands, however, have always been restricted by the 'threat' posed by 'Hindu communalists'. In troubled time, as usual, they generally have no other alternatives but to support 'secular' parties. Besides the Muslim League, the Jamate Islami, Majlise Mushawarat, Tamire Millet, Ittehadul Muslemeen, Dalit Muslim unity front of Haji Mastan have scattered support among the Muslim masses. However, in any case, the minority communalism has not proved to be an important factor in the politics of Maharashtra.

### **Communal Organisations in Maharashtra:**

The political parties like the BJP, Shiv Sena, RPI and the Muslim League are known to have a communal origin. Besides them, a number of neo-Hinduist organisations operate in Maharashtra. The Muslim communal organisations are so insignificant that their existence goes unnoticed, except during the communal riots. However, a number of neo-Hindu organisations have emerged on the political scenes during the last decades. They are known to have made their presences felt.

A brief description of some of these communal organisations is given below.

#### **i) Petit Pawan Sangathna (PPS):**

The Petit Pawan Sangathana (PPS), founded in 1978, is known for its pronounced militancy and its involvement in the Pune riots of February, 1984. The PPs having a following in several districts of western Maharashtra, derives its name from Patit Pawan temple in Ratnagiri, established by Savarkar as a symbol of Hindu unity. Although PPS generally follows Savarkar's ideas, it has firm belief in a reform oriented, dynamic Hinduism. Though the organization was never part of any reform movement, it pleads for the abolition of casteism. It criticizes Hinduist organisations such as the RSS, and identifies them as conservatives who have lost their militancy. The Petit Pawan Sangathana regards Hinduism as the main cultural tradition of this country. According to PPS, this tradition must be strengthened to develop Indian identity. The lack of unity is the main threat to this Hindu identity. The PPS believes that the reform of the Hindu society is the only way to consolidate Hindu unity. According to PPS, there is threat from the Muslim community especially from its tendency to encourage separatism. It accuses Muslim community of using minority rights to strengthen separatism. The PPS believes that since the Muslims are loyal to Mecca and have soft corner for Pakistan, they can never become true Indians: The PPS therefore considers the minorities as a major threat to Indian nationalism and statehood.

Armed with such extreme communal views, the PPS adopts a militant posture to 'tame' the Muslims by using planned and calculated force against them. The organization has been involved in several attacks on tribal and Muslim community. The PPS in 1987 has strongly demanded a common civil code. It also favours change in the name of the city of Aurangabad, named after the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, to Deogiri.

What is important to note that the leadership as well as much of the following of the PPS belongs to the non-Brahmin castes. Most of the activists come from lower middle class in the urban areas. The PPS has recently begun to spread its influence in the rural areas. Thus PPS as an organization is quite different from the Brahmin dominated, urban based RSS. However, its leadership significantly has had its roots in the RSS and most critics regard it as the militant wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

#### **ii) Hindu Ekta Andolan:**

Established in 1980, Hindu Ekta Andolan (HEA) draws support primarily from non-Brahmin castes: The leadership belongs to Maratha, Mali, Burud castes. According to its leaders, no one caste dominates the organization. However, the complete absence of Brahmins in the organization is significantly visible. Most activists of the Hindu Ekta Andolan come from 'Bahujan Samar, an alternative terminology used for the non-Brahmin caste. The origin of the Hindu Ekta is linked to the 'Arab hatao' movement in Sangli in 1980. Many Arabs used to visit Miraj for medical treatment. However, they allegedly got involved in immoral acts. Shankar Parshuram Sathe, a Hindu Mahasabha leader organized a protest movement against them. Later, he broadened its stance from 'Arab Hatao' to Hindu unity. The main objective of the Hindu Ekta Andolan is to bring about unity among Hindus. It also aims to abolish caste distinction and create Hindu identity. It also aims at creating self respect among the Hindus. The Hindu Ekta Andolan is critical of the Muslim community for their refusal to accept cultural assimilation. They believe that the Muslim separatism and intolerance is wholly responsible for partition and creation of Pakistan.

As the Hindu Ekta Andolan is against caste distinction, they have been opposing caste based reservation. They adopted anti reservation Stand and opposed the recommeridatoris of the Mändal Commission. They felt that the reservation for Other Backward Castes. (OBEs) as recommended by the Mandal Commission will harm the Hindu society. They believe that the merit Will tie neglected in the caste based recruitment system. They opposed caste based reservation also because they had concerns that it would lead to division among the Hindu along caste lines.

The Hindu Ekta Andolan is also found to be involved in riots. However, the instances of their involvement in such activities are fewer than in the case of PPS. However, the organization is known for its aggressive stand against Muslims. The Hindu Ekta Andolan was supported initially by even RSS followers because of many 'specific' reasons. Many things which could not be undertaken due to the disciplined character of the RSS could be comfortably done under the banner of Hindu Ekta Andolan. Thus the organization became famous for its aggressive stance and forceful tactics. Many of their activists were arrested under National Security Act (NSA). The police have registered cases against many of the activists and leaders of the Hindu Ekta Andolan.

### iii) Maratha Mahasangh:

The Maratha Mahasangh is a caste based association of the Marathas which has its roots in an organization of Kshatriya-Marathas. Annasaheb Patil, a union leader played an important role in the formation of Akhil Bhartiya Maratha Mahasangh in 1981. The Maratha Mahasangh aims to protect the interests of the Maratha caste and strives to regain its political dominance in the State.

As Marathas have been politically dominant in the unilingual Maharashtra State, an effort was made by the Congress high command to curtail their dominance in the early 1970s. The strategy reached its climax when Abdul Rahman Antulay (a Muslim) was installed as the State Chief Minister in 1981. Resentment among the Marathas against this move was an important factor behind the formation of Maratha Mahasangh.

The Mahasangh since its formation in 1981 chose to adopt a neo Hinduist perception of politics. It has mainly focused its efforts organizing the Maratha caste. However, it also tried to foster militant spirit among its followers. Marathas, as Kshatriyas, are regarded as superior to non-Marathas 'lower' castes. As a result of this view point Mahasangh has taken anti Dalit postures. According to them, Marathas are the protectors of the nation who fought against the Muslims. This historical perception of the Maratha Mahasangh has made them antagonistic to the minorities even in the present context.

The Mahasangh does not favour the policy of reservation, for the Scheduled -Castes and other backward castes. They fear that the reservation will result in the formation of a separate Dalit identity.' The Mahasangh is also known for its pronounced position against the minority communities particularly the Muslims. It has demanded a common civil code and a ban on forced conversion of Hindus. Muslims who refuse to assimilate with the

'Indian' culture are termed as disloyal to the nation. The Government's policy to initiate any socio-economic benefits for the Muslims is termed as appeasement. They fear that the Muslim appeasement policy of the government will harm 'Hindustan'. If such policies continue India will cease to be an abode for the Hindus. Chhatrapati Shivaji is projected by them as a national leader and a protector of Hinduism. It is significant to note that the Maratha Mahasangh looks upon the Brahmins as natural allies in the cause of building a Hindu nation.

### **Plural and Secular response to communal politics and politics of nativism**

The title involves many concepts. So first of all we will try to explain these concepts. The concepts involved" are:-

- 1 . Pluralist
2. Secular
3. Their response
4. Communal politics
5. Politics of nativism

Pluralism is a democratic ideology which believes in equal status of all social, political and economic institutions in the society with that of the state. It is opposed to monism which believes that the state alone is and should be powerful than all other institutions. A pluralist is a person who believes in plural authority and plural nature of power. He doesn't believe in any single authority. He believes in collective power and diversity.

Secularism is a western concept. Its origins can be traced back to the renaissance period. In the west it meant strict separation of religion from politics. Secularism in India is different from the original western concept of total separation of religion from politics. It also doesn't mean atheism. Many secular people in India believe in God. Belief and disbelief has a very thin distinction. According to the Indian constitution it means following three things:-

1. It means India will not have any official religion
2. Indian government, will treat all religions equally and everybody will be free to follow any religion or for that matter change his religion at any time.
3. And thirdly it means special protection to minorities

There is a lot of difference between reaction and response. A reaction may be equal and opposite or more than that mainly aimed at escalating conflict and tension rather than mitigating or ending it. But a response may be wider and varied. It may be constructive and positive and aimed at resolving the conflict instead of escalating it.

Communal politics means politics based on a specific community – for example the Hindus or the Muslims or the Sikhs or the Christians. Politicians following this type of politics stick to issues important to that particular community. They view all social problems from the point of view of that community. There is always an opposing community. Communal leaders incite their followers to fight with their opponents. The roots of the communal politics can be traced back to Muslim invasion in 12<sup>th</sup> century, the defeat of local rulers. The British rulers always tried to exploit the communal hatred among Indian communities.

Politics of nativism, as earlier explained in the chapter, tries to protect regional interests.

The title of this part of the lesson also denotes two opposite camps - The communal and the secular. And also implies that the communalists have done something and the secular camp is expected to respond.

What the communal leaders have done? They have tried to increase the hatred between the warring communities. In this chapter we are expected to study whether the secular camp has responded or reacted in anyway and if yes; in what way?

At the outset we can say that the secular response to communal politics and politics of nativism was lukewarm. There was very rarely a strong secular response. There are numerous examples of communal response to communal politics but very few secular responses. For example the establishment of Hindu Sabha was a communal response to establishment of Indian Union Muslim league, which was a Muslim communal organisation.

The socialists with the help of the Rashtra Seva Dal have tried to inculcate secular cultural values in the society for years together. Veteran literary figure Vasant Bapat enthusiastically campaigned for secularism and unity among diversity. He inspired a generation of popular Marathi actors such as Nilu Phule and Dada Kondke. They also set up educational institutions such as schools and colleges.

Film producers such as Anand Patwardhan have attempted to interpret and analyse recent communal events from a secular point of view with the help of their films. Doordarshan and All India Radio have always promoted secular values and the government always insists that the private channels should restrain themselves from indulging in communal campaign. The popular Hindi cinema has always depicted a secular picture of the Indian society. The regional movies are also not an exception to this rule.

Educational institutions are controlled by the state. Special care is taken by the government to maintain the secular nature of the school syllabus so that the children are brought up with a proper attitude. Minority community schools are allowed to impart religious education as mentioned in the constitution. The Election commission in the recent years has taken a tough stand against election campaign on communal lines. It has cancelled the candidature of some candidates and also ordered re-elections in some constituencies.

The formation of Mohalla committees in the area of the police station comprising of Hindus and Muslims from the vicinity was another attempt to pacify the conflict. Senior Police officer Julien Ribero took lead in such activities. These committees try to resolve the issues peacefully.

According to constitutional guidelines the state provides equal protection to all communities. Festivals and celebrations of all communities are allowed and the state machinery makes all the necessary arrangements.

The Indian National Congress, the Socialists and the Communists and the entire left all declare themselves as secular. The Republican Party and other left organisations also declare themselves as "secular." There are many nongovernmental or voluntary organisations which promote secular values.

Academic journals such as the Samaj Prabodhan Patrika (Marathi) and the Economic and Political Weekly (English) provide thorough secular analysis of the events that take place in the society. But the readership of these journals is minimal.

Beyond all these efforts the secular forces were unable to effectively check the communal campaign or providing a fitting reply to it. The government was unable to erase the feeling among the majority community that the government always pampers the minority community. Religion is deeply rooted in the Indian psyche. Any appeal on the basis of religion is well taken. On the contrary secular values are to be deliberately cultivated in the public mind. Ever increasing population, decreasing jobs and resultant unemployment, crowded and untidy cities, slums, rising inequality and injustice, criminalisation of politics are the major hurdles in the development of secular values.

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## 4.7 SUMMARY

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1) We started with the discussion of ethnicity and ethnocentrism then we explained the politics of nativism, politics of communalism,

majority and minority communalism including neo-hinduism, Muslim communalism and briefly overviewed the communal organisations in Maharashtra.

2) Finally we discussed the plural and secular response to politics of nativism and communal politics.

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#### **4.8 QUESTIONS**

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- 1) Explain the 'concept of politics of nativism with special reference to Maharashtra.
- 2) EXPLAIN the impact of communal politics in Maharashtra
- 3) Discuss the pluralist and secular response to politics ' of nativism and communal politics,
- 4) Short notes:'
  - a. Secular oiganiaations in Maharashtra
  - b. Communal organisations in Maharashtra

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## NON-PARTY ARENA

### Unit Structure

5.0 Objectives

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Business Class in Maharashtra:

5.3 Labour: Organised and Unorganised Workers

5.4 Co-operative Sector

5.5 Farmers Agitations

5.6 Civil Society Initiatives

5.7 Summary

5.8 Unit End Exercises

### Non-Party Arena

- Business, Labour-organised, unorganised
- Co-operatives, Farmers' Agitations
- Civil Society Initiatives-Self –help Groups, Movement for alternative Development.

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### 5.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit explains us

- The world beyond political parties which includes organisations of the industrialists workers, organised and unorganised workers,
- Cooperative societies, Voluntary organisations and alternative models of development.

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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Politics in the modern times is studied as a process taking place in a social environment rather than as an aggregate of the formal institutions of the State. According to David Easton, politics is concerned with authoritative allocation of values for a society. Political parties, as ideologically organised large groups of people are directly involved in the struggle for power. Each political party tries to capture power through elections. Besides these there are

several pressure and interest groups which try to secure their interests by influencing the formulation and administration of public policy. Political participation in India has been transformed in many ways since the 1960s. New social groups have entered the political arena and begun to use their political resources to shape the political process. This chapter discusses the role of business class, trade union organisations, co-operative sector; farm res'agitations, in the political process of Maharashtra. It also examines some of the civil society initiatives in Maharashtra.

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## **5.2. BUSINESS CLASS IN MAHARASHTRA**

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Among a variety of interest groups of the business, trade and commerce are regarded as institutional interest groups, which perform the function of interest articulation, They have substantial base, enormous resources and capability to influence the decision making process. The nexus between the business class and the political class has become an established practice in liberal democracies all over the world. The elections have become expensive and require political finance and business is willing to finance elections on its own terms. The expression business class, in the traditional sense would include those engaged in trade, commerce and industry. But in the present context it also includes unorganised sector, multinational corporations and global capitalism.

### **2. Relationship between Business and, Politics:**

The relations of the business class with the political class during the colonial era were cordial.. The Marwari Rahat Sangh, The Indian Chamber of Commerce, business houses like Birla and Bajaj had expressed solidarity with the nationalist movement. However, neither had they attempted to use the Congress nor did the Congress leadership allowed the party to be used by any particular class. The pattern of relationship between the business and politics in the post-independence period has undergone significant change. The business class has emerged as an agency of political finance and thereby, breeding political corruption. Different aspects of the evolving relationship between the business and politics can be analysed in the following manner.

**a) Business as an Interest Group-**The articulation of interests is a legitimate activity undertaken by the various sections of population including the business class in a democracy. The Indian Merchants Chamber was established in Bombay in 1907 .Prominent leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, Dinshaw Wacha, Purushottam Das Thakker etc had close relations with the Indian trading community as well as the national movement. It supported the Swadeshi Movement. Besides in the Marathi speaking areas of Bombay

and CP and Berar Marwari Chamber of Commerce (1914), Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce (1927), Vidarbha Chamber of Commerce (1933) and Maratha Chamber of Commerce were working. The Act of 1935 provided 11 seats for the commercial and industrial interest in the Federal Assembly and 7 seats in the Bombay Legislative Assembly. The Indian Constitution discontinued this practice.

Maharashtra being the highly industrialised State and Mumbai being the commercial capital of India, the business community is well organised. Besides the numerous Chambers of Commerce there are more than 500 Industry Associations, Regional Associations of Trade and Industry, Export Promotional Councils and other professional bodies. The Government holds regular consultations with the business interest by appointing their nominees on the advisory committees like - Sales Tax Advisory Council. Export Import Advisory Committee etc. Before budget the chambers undertake newspaper campaigns, organise seminars and mobilize public opinion.

In Maharashtra the Association and organizations of business class are influential pressure groups. Their annual sessions are addressed by the Chief Minister, the Finance Minister, the Commerce Minister etc. Such consultations, face to face dialogue and interactions make negotiable settlement possible rather than business and trade coming out in the street.

**b) Business Class and Political Party-** After independence, the former rulers of the princely state's, the rural elite adversely affected by the Congress party's land reforms and a section of business class which advocated economic liberalisation supported the Swatantra Party, which was founded in 1956 by C Rajgopalachari. Its performance in election was poor. It was dissolved with the formation of Janata Party in 1977. In Maharashtra the Panchayati Rajya Institutions and the Congress Party (also the NCP) machinery is controlled by the sugar cooperative lobby.

**c) Business Class as Political Financer-** Political parties need money for organisation and mobilising public opinion and contesting elections. Traditionally, political parties in India have been financed through private donations. In 1985, Rajiv Gandhi Government amended the law permitting the companies to contribute up to 5% of their average three years net profits for political purposes. The Election and Other Related Laws (Amendment) Act, 2003 aimed to legitimise the political funding and to bring corporate funding and political parties under the taxation regime by offering tax incentives. However, most parties prefer to fund parties clandestinely for a variety of reasons- on account of the black economy, for fear of retribution from rival parties, and as a

bribe for favours received .Of late a further shift is seen from individual companies to the federating organisations-funds from the Indian Sugar Manufacturers Association (ISMA) rather from individual sugar mills. The multinational Corporations are fast emerging as the principal financier of political parties. There are allegations of kick back money paid for every order that is secured from the Government.

After independence the basic goals of the Indian polity included economic development with equity and social justice. The New Industrial Policy of 1991 and the subsequent emphasis on liberalisation and privatisation of essential services are indications of march towards corporate capitalism. The concept of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) is one such examples The interests of the corporates are being advanced at the cost of farmers. In Maharashtra a large number of SEZs have been approved and the Government has acquired land for their development in spite of the protests from the farmers. The builder lobby and sugar lobby have been able to protect their interests. In the era of globalisation, economic liberalisation and privatisation the corporate sector and business class are successfully influencing the political decision making process in their favour

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### **5.3 LABOUR: ORGANISED AND UNORGANISED WORKERS**

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The primary function of a trade union is to protect and fight for the rights of workers in the current norms of fairness, equality and social justice. Working class implies the wage earners who exchange their labour for the wages or salary. Article 19 of the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom to form unions. The Trade Union Act of 1926 also provides for the formation of trade unions by workers for redressal of their grievances.

#### **History:**

Narayan Meghaji Lokhande an associate of Phule in the Satya Shodhak Movement established "Mill Hands Association", the first trade union in Bombay for the welfare of the workers. National leaders like Tilak and Gandhi supported the cause of workers. Inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1917, the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was formed in 1920 under the leadership of the Congress party. It was the first national federation of trade unions. The Communist party of India was established in 1924. Its Bombay based leaders like S. A. Dange N. M. Joshi etc. were active in the textile workers unions. The Communists managed to gain control over the AITUC, as it enjoyed the support of the Proletariat class of Maharashtra.

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On the eve of independence the Congress leaders were of the view that the working class would have to play a crucial role in the planned development of the country. As a result the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) was formed in 1947. Its formation was the first step in the direction of government controlling the labour movement. In spite of good intentions; such control over trade union movement did not help the cause of workers. They became too dependent on the State for protective legislation, their implementation and even in solving their disputes.

Along with the formation of the Socialist party the Hind Majdoor Sabha was established in 1948. The Revolutionary Socialists established the United Trade Union Congress in 1949. The split in the Socialist party led to the formation of the Hind Majdoor Panchayat by the followers of Dr Lohiya. The split in the Communist Party of India (CPI) in 1964 led to the formation of the Centre for Indian Trade Union (CITU). The Bhartiya Jana Sangh had its labour front in the form of Bhartiya Majdoor Sangh. In Maharashtra the Shiv Sena a party of the sons of the soil formed its labour wing of the white collar class by the name of Sthaniya Lokadhikar Samiti and the blue collar class by the name of Bhartiya Kamgar Sena and acquired mass base among the working class of Mumbai at the cost of the Communist party. The march of Shiv Sena was halted by Dr Datta Samant by forming the Kamgar Aghadi. The strike of textile workers in Mumbai in 1982-83 was led by him and lasted for 18 months. However despite the display of unity by the workers the strike failed. The Government extended total support to the employer. There has been increase in the number of independent unions led by the leaders like Gulab Joshi and Mehta. The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena formed in 2006 also has its trade union named Maharashtra Navnirman Kamgar Sena.

#### **Nature of Trade Union Movement:**

**a)** The most important feature of the movement in the post-independence period has been the increase in their numbers. The percentage of the organised sector workers is merely 8%. The workers of small scale industries and unorganised sector have not been totally brought within the purview of the trade union. However, there are indications of workers being organized in beedi, construction, fisheries, forestry, home based workers etc., for example massive rallies being organised recently in Mumbai and Nashik for the rights of the domestic workers.

**b)** The trade union movement which was fairly united during the colonial rule stands badly divided. Very often, inter-union rivalries are stronger than the conflicts between the management and labour. The increase in their numbers makes it difficult for labour to get proper representation in the national policy making bodies such

as the Indian Labour Conference (ILC) and the Panning Commission.

**c)** A number of unions in and around Mumbai have not been affiliated to any of the central organizations. A number of industry federations maintain their independent status which include public sector industries, government employees, railways, banking, insurance, ports and docks etc.

**d)** Most unions are organised only in a single establishment or local industry. Two or more unions are permitted to engage in labour rotations in a single unit at the same time resulting in rivalries among the working class. The total membership of the various segments of the movement has always been a matter of controversy.

**e)** Despite the projected pro-labour attitude of the State (there are two hundred labour welfare laws), whenever there has been any major confrontation between labour and management, the Government has intervened on behalf of the management, for example- the strike led by Datta Samant.

#### **Relations with Political Parties:**

In India there is no labour party and therefore the major organisations tend to hold a subordinate position in relation to the political parties with which they are connected. The position of AITUC and CITU is more easily defined. Shri SA Dange was for many years the General Secretary of the AITUC as well as the national leader of the undivided CP. More than often the strikes and bandhs etc. called by the AITUC and CITU are State sponsored in West Bengal and Kerala which are ruled by the Left Front. However, the relationship between the INTUC and HMS and their political patrons is not distinct. The union expects that union leaders be given suitable political opportunities by the party and the party expects the union to honour its nominations and ensure their electoral success. The political parties maintain that there is separate identity and structure but the overlap between the party and the union is so great that union can be called the labour front of the party.

The trade unions are close to political parties and have narrow support base. There is multiplicity of unions, centralized decision making, adhoc management, personalized and power oriented leadership.

Under the economic liberalisation and privatisation, the increased economic activities with more players have caught trade unions off guard. They have been functioning in an environment of government monopoly and political party patronage. The

changed role of government, disinvestment in public sector units, and advent of MNCs have increased the ineffectiveness of traditional unions. The globalisation is a testing period for all the social partners. The unions therefore, would have to take a comprehensive approach in meeting the emerging challenges of new India. It has a responsibility to ensure the application of trade union rights on all workers, irrespective of whether they are in the organised or unorganised sector.

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## 5.4 CO-OPERATIVE SECTOR

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Co-operative movement is widespread and has a long history in Maharashtra. Politics in Maharashtra is influenced by the cooperative elites who control the different areas of rural Maharashtra with the help of co-operative institution. It is rightly pointed out that state politics, co-operative politics and the Panchayati Raj politics are closely related and influence each other. The power structure at the grassroots level and the state level controlled by the Congress party, in turn the Congress party and the NCP are controlled by the co-operative capitalists, belonging to the Maratha caste. Such complete control of the political economy of the rural sector has no other parallel in any other state.

### **Growth of Co-operative Movement:**

The co-operative sector has evolved since the enactment of the Co-operative Society's Act in 1904. The first co-operative sugar factory (first in Asia) was established by Vithalrao Vikhe Patil in 1949 in Ahmadnagar with farmers of 44 villages, However, the development of co-operative sector as a significant component of political economy is a development of the post-1960 period. The Government made special efforts to encourage the co-operative movement because the Chief Minister YB Chavan thought that through the co-operative institutions, popular support for the development activities could be mobilised and secondly, by democratising these bodies, a firm political base in the rural areas could be established. He encouraged the Congress leaders to join the Co-operative movement.

Normally two sets of co-operative institutions attracted the attention of political leaders – a) the co-operative credit societies, b) processing co-operatives such as sugar co-operatives, spinning mills and groundnut oil mills. The District Central Co-operative Bank (DCC) is a pivot of development activities in the districts They are based on primary credit societies. The DCC Bank is important in rural politics because the credit to farmers, processing units and to different development activities is supplied through the bank. The structure of the bank is democratized and the chairman of the bank is seat of power. All these banks are highly

politicized and factional leaders try their level best to establish control over them. After 1960 many leading political leaders of the state such Vasant Dada Patil, Gulabrao Patil, Bhausaheb Thorat, Kisan Veer and U Gaikwad occupied important positions in these banks.

### **Co-operative Sector and Politics:**

The co-operative movement becomes important for politics for the following reasons:

a) It is a means for political leaders to have access to the rural areas; b) through the co-operative institutions political leaders can develop a vast network of supporters and clients which would help them in elections. This network is developed through the distribution of valued good; c) co-operatives have a lot of material resources in cash and kind which can be used at the time of elections.

The State politics is important for the co-operatives because the State Government exercises ultimate control over them through the Director for Co-operatives. The Government decisions may have adverse consequences for the co-operative sector, for example, decisions during Chief Minister VP Naik in 1968 and 1974, and by SB Chavan in 1975 and 1986. There are many irregularities in the management of factories and the co-operative leaders want the Government to condone them.

### **Sugar Co-operatives and Politics:**

The sugar co-operatives of the state have proved to be more successful and have attracted the attention of rural elite. Maharashtra accounts for 30% of sugar produced in India of which 99% comes from co-operatives. Of the 212 registered sugar factories 202 are co-operatives. There is not a single co-operative that is not under political control. While 5% of sugar factories are under the control of BJP affiliated unions, 95% are under Congress control (of which 60% are under the control of the NCP).

In order to exercise influence over State politics through their pressure group tactics a large number of co-operative elites formed the sugar lobby under the leadership of Vasant Dada Patil in 1968-69. In 1977 and 1983 he became the Chief Minister of Maharashtra which was a victory of the sugar lobby. Among the present day politicians the NCP Chief Sharad Pawar and his nephew Ajit Pawar exercise control over co-operatives in Pune and Baramati. Many politicians including Vilasrao Deshmukh have made their way to politics through co-operative sector. Ranjit Mohite Patil, Head of youth wing of NCP and his father Vijay Sing Mohite Patil who has inherited the political legacy of his sugar baron father Shankarrao Mohite Patil; control a number of co-operatives in



Solapur. Balasaheb Thorat, MLA from Ahmednagar, son of. former MLA Bhausahab Thorat, Rajesh Tope upcoming politician from Marathwada who is son of Ankush Tope (who headed the all powerful Maharashtra Federation of Co-operative Sugar Factories) are examples of link between politics and co-operative sector in the recent times.

Maharashtra Sugar Co-operatives which have played the key role in state's economy and politics for fifty years are on a down trend because of corruption, mismanagement and undemocratic functioning. The strength of the movement is the involvement of farmers. Over the years this idea got corrupted and farmers, with larger holdings grew more powerful. Huge subsidies and lack of accountability have led to poor management with the result that out of 202 factories only 165 are functional. Co-operatives are running in losses. 'Private benefits at public cost' is how a World Bank Report summed up the role of co-operatives in Maharashtra. The formation of co-operative is simple. The promoter has to give 10% of the total cost; the remainder would be borne directly by the Government or through the Government guaranteed loans. Loan is to be returned but if the unit is declared sick, more money is put into it. At the end of March 2004, the outstanding guaranteed loans amounted to 665 crores. State itself is in a state of bankruptcy.

Sugar co-operatives have definitely improved the financial strength of the Congress party and the NCP and allowed the political elites to penetrate deep into the interior. But at the same time they have used their power and resources to manipulate State politics.

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## **5.5. FARMERS AGITATIONS**

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Agriculture provides the principal means of livelihood for over 60% of India's population. Despite a steady decline in its share to the gross Domestic Product (GDP) agriculture remains the largest economic sector-in the country. Low and volatile growth rates under the sector and the recent escalation of an agrarian crisis in several parts of the country remain a serious problem before the Indian economy. The State of Maharashtra with the largest domestic product roughly accounts for 13 percent of the national income, but faces serious challenges in the agricultural sector. In some regions of the State suicides by highly indebted farmers incurring heavy loss in farming have continued unabated. There is relatively low pressure group activities in the rural areas as about 70% of the landholders are small and marginal farmers. However, there have been a number of farmers' agitations during both pre-independence and post-independence period in this part of India.

### **Historical Background:**

Movements, agitations, uprisings and revolts by peasants are as old as history itself. The primary objective of the conflicts and the conquests during the period of British Rule was against the Zamindari (Landlordship) or the Ryotwari (free land-holding) land-holding system. Invasion of the Indian domestic market by cheap products of the British industry, particularly textiles, crippled the village artisans and dried up the money inflows into the village economy. Under these circumstances, levy of land-taxes payable strictly in cash, drove even the relatively well-off farmer to the wall. In due course of time, levels of indebtedness mounted and the mortgaged lands passed on to the moneylenders/zamindars. The misery and discontent of the ryot against the exploitations found expression in the Deccan Riots (1875-79), which were ruthlessly put down by the British Government.

Jyotirao Phule in his book *Shetkaryacha Asood* blamed the priests, upper castes, government officials and the moneylenders for the poverty of peasants. Tilak during the famines began a no rent campaign and gave lessons to the peasants in agitational politics. There were two significant Satyagrahas launched in the Bombay Province – Bardoli by Sardar Patel in 1927 and Muishi 411929 led by Senapati Bapat when the peasants of Mulshi Peta, near Pune, protested against the construction of a dam being built with Government support by the industrial house of the Tatas to save their ancestral lands from being submerged. During the Civil Disobedience Movement Jangal Satyagraha was launched in Vidarbha region. Farmers in general demanded a reduction in land tax, enactment of Land Tenancy Act and Debt Relief-Act: the liberal Government aid for agrarian development.' The land reform legislations were enacted by the Congress Government in 1937. The Indian National Congress established Kisan Sabha in 1934. The Bahujan Samaj leaders like Jedhe, More and Jadhav were actively associated with its activities. The peasant movement in Maharashtra was launched under the cover of national movement because there was a close interaction between the two.

### **Post-independence Period:**

In the 1960s 'Green Revolution' was launched and the Government encouraged an increase in agricultural production by providing inputs at subsidised rate, irrigation facilities, liberal loan facilities to acquire mechanised farm equipments, expenditure on research and development activities etc. Indeed the Green Revolution has increased the food production manifold but it failed to remove the misery of poor farmers. The beneficiary class was also dissatisfied as the prices offered for agricultural products were not remunerative. They pointed out that the costs of inputs fertilizer, pesticides, power, farm implements, as well as labour cost has increased manifold. The late 1970s witnessed the

emergence of a number of farmers' movement across the country. Maharashtra was no exception to it.

### **Shetkari Sangathan:**

It was established in 1978 to realise two fold demands; i.e. lowering of the prices of inputs and increasing the prices of the agricultural outputs. Sharad Joshi a technocrat turned agriculturist is its supreme leader, the ideologue and the strategist. He put forth his theory that, the primary contradiction in the country was between "Bharat" (primarily the villages but also including the unorganized urban sector, "refugees from Bharat in the cities") and "India" (the westernised industrial bureaucratic elite, inheritors of colonial exploitation.). He collected large followers to demonstrate the strength of his organisation and to put pressure on the Government. The methods used by the Sangathan include Gherao, sit-down agitations, rail-roko, rasta-roko and fast-unto-death. Some of the agitations organised by the Sangathan are as under.

- a) **Onion Agitations, -1978, 1980** – Owing to a bumper crop the prices of the onion had crashed. The Sangathan demanded that the Government of Maharashtra supportive price of Rs 1000 per tonne and for this purpose, Pune- Nashik Highway near Chakan town was blocked by the agitating farmers. Sharad Joshi observed fast un-to- death. The Government under pressure agreed to procure onion at the price, demanded by them.
- b) **Sugarcane Agitations, 1980-81** –. The agitations demanding for more remunerative price for the sugarcane were organized in Nashik and Pune and part of Marathwada (not in . sugar belt). The agitation turned violent and the Kherwadi railway station was set to fire by the farmers .After negotiations a compromise on demands was reached.
- c) **Tobacco Agitations, 1981-82** – Nipani is the Tobacco town on the boundary between Maharashtra and Karnataka .The tobacco traders exploited the tobacco growers and thus, the agitation was directed against them.
- d) **Milk Agitations, 1982** – It took out a morcha of cattle in Dhule –Jalgaon district to demand higher price for milk. The milk co-operatives kept away from the agitation but the Government unilaterally increased the procurement price.
- e) **Cotton Agitations, 1984** – It was organised in the Vidarbha region to protest against the Government's textile policy, which provided too liberal imports of synthetic yam. The subsidies for the cotton yam were curtailed and as a result a number of cotton textile mills were closed down. On this issue Joshi

joined hands with the Bombay based trade unionist, Dr Dana Samant. The Government of India refused to change its policy and the agitation yielded no gains.

**F) Women's Rally** —It organised a huge women's rally at Chandwad village in Nashik in 1986. A women's wing, "Samagra Mahila Aghad" was appended to the organisation. This was intended to enhance the status of women.

There is no denial of the fact that the Sangathana activated the peasantry in Maharashtra and was instrumental in securing remunerative prices for the agricultural products and several other concessions. However, according to the critics Sharad Joshi was the spokesman of rich farmers and his agitations were for the cash crops sugarcane, cotton, and tobacco which widened the gap between the rich and the poor peasantry. It is one of the few farmer organisations which have supported the economic liberalisation and WTO proposals relating to the farm sector.

**Maharashtra Rajya Shetkari-Shetmajur Sangharsh Samiti:**

It is a joint struggle committee of Left-oriented peasant and agricultural workers' organisations led by the CPI (M), CPI and the Peasants and Workers Party (PWP), has organised vigorous statewide campaign on burning issues, facing the peasants and agricultural workers, like continuation of the monopoly procurement scheme for cotton, opposition to privatisation of the MSEB; end to load shedding and reduction of the electricity tariff hike; compensation for crop losses, and the provision of water, fodder and work in the drought-hit areas; regularisation of occupations of forest lands, grazing lands, Government wastelands and vesting them in the names of the tillers; a massive expansion of the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) etc.

**Anti-Special Economic Zones Movement of Farmers:**

Large scale land acquisition for developing industrial enclaves by corporate units with the help of state machinery has led to people's resistance around the length and breadth of the country. Maharashtra, which has the largest number of approved SEZs covering about 50000 hectares of land (most of it fertile agricultural land or eco sensitive zones), is no exception. Khed, Wagholi near Pune, Shendre near Aurangabad, Kagal Harkangale near Kolhapur or Raigad near Mumbai have witnessed protests.

One of the most controversial SEZ approved in principle by the government, in Raigad has been the Mumbai Special Economic Zone (MSEZ) promoted by Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries. It has invoked several protests ever since it was approved in 2005 by Mumbai Shetkari Sangharsh Samiti,

MSEZ Virodhi Sangharsh Samiti, Jagatikaran Virodhi Kruti Samiti, Peasants and Workers Party, National Alliance for Peoples Movement, Left Progressive and Workers Union, Chaubis Gaon SEZ Virodhi Sangharsh Samiti, Lok Sashan Andolan, Panchkosi khar Bhumi Kheti Bachao Samiti and other concerned individuals from all over Maharashtra and the country. The strategy of the movement here consisted of morchas and rallies, burning of the land acquisition notifications, *rasta-roko* (June 2008 at Vashi Naka on Mumbai-Goa highway hundreds of farmers were arrested along with veteran leader N.D Patil) etc. Professor N.D Patil along with more than 2000 anti-SEZ activists and farmers from different parts of Maharashtra observed indefinite fast on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008 at Azad Maidan, Mumbai. Due to the protests the company has not been able to acquire land within the stipulated time and the future of the project is uncertain.

Besides the issue of land acquisition, the current challenges before the farmers movement include increasing input cost, no corresponding increase in output price, threat posed by the WTO (abolition of quota system on export/import), trap set by genetically modified seeds, negligence by the State etc. There is lack of solidarity among various farmers' organizations and there is need of visionary leadership.

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## 5.6 CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES

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Civil society is, an old concept but has recently been revived in discussions of national and international politics. Civil society actors have emerged as important non-state actors seeking to influence the governance of global and national affairs. It commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors, institutional forms such as charities, development non-government organisations, community groups, self-help groups, social movements, advocacy groups etc. Within civil society the terms NGO and social movements are popular. An NGO can be defined as an organisation with a formal structure, autonomous from the State and Market, formed by private individuals for engaging in non-profit making activities. The term social movement refers to collective mobilization for the pursuit of common goals. They are developed to bring social change. Civil society organisations contribute towards larger public good, based on values of equity, justice, peace and democracy. They offer alternative conception of development based on equity, community participation, empowerment, sustainability etc. Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs is sustainable development.

The failure of the State, the Government machine, and political mechanisms provides rationale for the emergence as well as a meaningful role for the non-political party formations.' The 1970s decade saw the emergence of a number of ISMs and social movements in India addressing issues like protection of human rights, environment, sustainable development, women empowerment etc. According to a recent study commissioned by the Government the number of NGOs (registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 or the Mumbai Public Trust Act and its variants in other states) is 3.3 million. which raise anywhere between Rs 40000 to Rs 80000 crores funds. The largest number of NGOs is registered in *Maharashtra (4.8 lakh)*.

Some of the outstanding civil society initiatives in the area of alternative development strategy are as under:

**a) Ralegaon-Siddi Experiment** – In the village of Ralegaon-Siddi, located at Parner Taluka of Ahmednagar District (drought prone region), one of the most successful watershed development programmes was undertaken under the leadership of Anna Hazare. He gave emphasis on organised efforts and to implement all Government schemes for economic development. The land was surveyed and four watershed areas were demarcated in 1985. The total area of 604 hectares of land was contour-bunded, 181 hectares were shaped and graded, 20 new wells were made and seven of these were reserved, for community" use. About two lakh Saplings were planted Under the Social Forestry PrOgrainthe. 28 Gobar Gas plants were constructed and 130 smokeless- chubs were distributed. The development expenditure of six lakh rupees was met from the Employment Guarantee Scheme of Government of Maharashtra, and another four lakh "rupees were 'contributed" by the villagers by way of 'Shramadan A co-operative marketing society was established to secure fair prices for the agribultural produce. Besides the primary'edUcation to the children, 'the' adult literacy, programme was also started. REitegaon- Siddi has become 'the role model for the 'rural development and was adopted in other villages as well.

**B) Adgaon Project'** – This project in the Aurangabad district was undertaken by the *Marethwada Shetkari Sahayak Mandel (MSSM)*, under the guidance of Vijay Anna Borade and JM Gandhi. The blueprint of the micro-watershed programme was devised and implemented with the active involvement of the villagers for a period of three years, The plan consisted of seven check-bunds, with a total cost of 5.5 lakh rupees which was contributed by the villagers in the form of voluntary labour. The availability of water made the double cropping possible and also solved the problem of drinking water.

**C)Pani Panchayat Experiment** – This novel experiment was initiated by Vilasrao Balwant Salunkhe in the drought affected Naigaon village in Purandar Taluka of Pune in 1974. He formed a *Gram Gourav Pratishthan* and persuaded the residents to donate 40 acres of land belonging to the village temple. He started a modest water conservation project and built a percolation tank. He started a movement with the co-operation of the local farmers, named as *Pani Panchayat*, to put into practice the equitable distribution of power and collective farming.

**D)Gokul Pratishthan** – It was initiated by Vasant Gangawane in 'O<sup>o</sup>a' Taluka of Sindhudurg District. It involved the construction of 43 embankments on the streams that ran between the two hills in Vilve village. This ended the water scarcity in the area and helped the large scale horticulture activity in the village. It also started a computer training programme in Sangameshwar and two other villages in Ratnagiri. A Cultural Centre was set up in Pinguli to preserve the *Chitra-Katha* tradition.

**E)Manavlok** It is a voluntary organisation located at Ambejogai Taluka of Beed District in Marathwada. It was launched in 1982 to bring about an equitable development of the marginalised sections of society.. Its grassroots level operational entity is *Krishak Panchayat*, which consists of small and marginal farmers, the landless agricultural workers, women and other economically weaker sections who come and work together for their comprehensive development. Agriculture and allied activities constitute the local point of its activities. Employment for Community: Development (EFCD) Programme has been initiated by it to generate employment, opportunities.

**F)Narmada Bachao Andolon** - It was set up in 1986 under the leadership of Medha Patkar. It aims mainly to educate those directly affected by large development projects, such as tribals, on the social and environmental impact of, such projects, to protest against the construction of dams in the Narmada Valley in general; struggling towards a right, to information and new environmentally sustainable water policy, to help the tribals get a substantial share of the government's development schemes/services and to enable them to undertake development activities themselves. They mainly educate, mobilize and organise residents of the Narmada-Valley on human rights and justice, alternative development policies, environmental issues related to big dam in general and the Narmada project in particular. They are fighting against displacement and disregard of the rights of the people.

**G)Vanarai** - It is based in Pune and was first set up in 1982 to promote environmental protection and afforestation and sustainable integrated rural development. Their activities are spread over the

states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan. They are working in the area of environmental education for school children and teachers and help them in forming eco clubs. They have led agitations to prevent the felling of trees in the Konkan region; taken active interest in soil and water conservation through simple technologies; promoted smokeless chullas and gobar gas plants; constructed low cost toilets in the rural areas and have worked in afforestation programme.

The civil society organisations and the grassroots movements are an attempt at redefining politics as distinct from electoral and legislative politics. They have helped the marginalized sections of the society to fight for their basic rights and participate in the political process.

### **Self-Help Groups (SHGs):**

It is a village-based financial intermediary usually composed of between 10-15 local women. Members make small regular savings contributions over a few months until there is enough capital in the group to begin lending. Funds may then be lent back to the members or to others in the village without insisting on any collateral security for the purpose of encouraging them to enter into entrepreneurial activities. Micro-enterprises, with micro-finance and micro-credit, operated by the SHGs is the emerging strategy of poverty reduction and a viable alternative to achieve the rural development through community participation in the developing countries in the past quarter century. Bangladesh has been acknowledged as a pioneer in the field of micro-finance. Dr. Mehmud Yunus, Professor of Economics in Chittagong University of Bangladesh (winner of the Nobel Prize) developed this novel method of poverty eradication. The Grameen Bank provides loans to the landless poor, particularly women, to promote self-employment. The ideals of individual and community empowerment are integrated into the programme design of the bank. These concepts are operationalised through client ownership of the bank, a code of conduct for individuals, peer group lending and member funds. In addition, each member commits to abide by *its Sixteen Decisions* which include creation of home gardens, education of children, family planning etc. By establishing these guidelines the Grameen model moved beyond economic catalyst into the broader field of social development.

### **Indian Scenario:**

India has adopted the Bangladesh's model in a modified form. To alleviate the poverty and to empower the women, the micro-finance has emerged as a powerful instrument in the economy. In 1970, Ilaben Bhat, founder member of 'SEWA' (Self Employed Women's Association) in Ahmedabad, had developed a concept of 'women and micro-finance'. The Annapurna Mahila Mandal' in



Maharashtra and 'Working Women's Forum' in Tamilnadu and many National Banks for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)-sponsored groups have followed the path laid down by 'SEWA'. 'SEWA' is a trade union of poor, self-employed women workers.

In the early stages NGOs played a pivotal role in developing the SHG model. In the 1980s, policy makers took notice and worked with development organisations and bankers to promote these savings and credit groups. By the 1990s, SHGs were viewed to be more than just a financial intermediation but as a common interest group addressing social and political issues as well. Particularly during the International Year of Micro-credit 2005, significant policy announcements from the Government of India and the Reserve Bank of India have led to the rapid growth of SHGs. Today it is estimated that there are at least 2 million SHGs in India. In many states SHGs are networking themselves into federations to achieve institutional and financial sustainability. About 1.6 million SHGs have been bank linked with cumulative loans of Rs 69 billion.

#### **Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) :**

It is a major integrated programme for self employment of the rural poor which was launched in 1999 by the Government of India. The objective of the SGSY is to bring the assisted poor families above the poverty line by organizing them into SHGs, through the process of social mobilization, training, capacity building and the provision of income generating assets through a mix of bank credit and Government subsidy .The SGSY has special focus on the vulnerable groups among the rural poor, accordingly the scheduled castes/ 'scheduled tribes would account for at least 50% of the beneficiaries, women for 40% and the disabled for three percent. The SHGs should be drawn from the BPL list approved by the Gram Sabha. The SHGs broadly go through three stages of evolution, capital formation through revolving fund and skill development and taking up of economic activity for income generation.

#### **National Bank Agricultural and Rural Development and SHGs:**

In India, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), a pioneer in agriculture credit activities in the country, was the first to notice the potential of an SHG bank linkage program (SBLP). In 1996, NABARD launched a nationwide pilot project to link the SHGs to the banks. The total number of bank-linked SHGs in India grew from 4,757 in March 1996 to 1, 374,917 in March 2007. A report by NABARD (2008) suggests that by March 2008, the SBLP covered more than 7.5 million poor households across India. About 5,009,994 SHGs were maintaining savings accounts with the banking sector and about 79.6 percent

of these SHGs were all-female. India's southern region had the largest percentage of SHGs having bank savings accounts (48.0 percent), followed by the eastern region (21.4 percent), central region (12.9 percent), western region (9.4 percent), northern region (4.2 percent), and northeastern region (4.1 percent). Among the three types of banks involved in promoting and disbursing loans to SHGs in India, the commercial banks had the largest share of SHG savings accounts (56.1 percent), followed by regional rural banks with 27.7 percent and cooperative banks with 16.2 percent.

Although the SHG movement in Maharashtra is relatively weak, its significant role in poverty reduction is visible in those areas where the movement has acquired roots. It has also led to the political empowerment of women. Those women associated with the SHGs have contested and won the Panchayati Raj elections. They have contributed immensely to the civic issues ranging from building the pucca roads, building of schools, women and child health issues, prohibition on making and consumption of liquor in the villages etc.

It has also led to the social empowerment of women. They have been active in resolving the disputes between the members and the community at large. The instances of domestic violence have come down. In some instances, the SHGs have also provided leadership and played an inspirational role.

The SHG movement in Maharashtra has led to the empowerment and development of women and has paved the way for eradication of poverty through community participation.

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## 5.7 SUMMARY

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1. We started with the introduction to business class in Maharashtra and their relationship with politics. We also discussed the various avatars of the business class as the interest group, political party and political financier.
2. Next part was about organised and unorganised workers. We discussed the historical part and then the nature of the trade union movement and how all major trade unions are related or affiliated to major political parties in India and Maharashtra.
3. We discussed the cooperative sector, Sugar cooperatives, farmer agitations – particularly those led by the Shetkari Sanghatana, the Maharashtra Rajya Shetkari Shetmajur Sangharsh Samiti.
4. We also discussed the SEZ and anti SEZ agitations.

5. Finally we concentrated on the civil society initiatives. Under this we discussed the Ralegaon Siddhi experiment, Adgaon project, Pani Panchayat experiment, Gokul Pratishtan, Manavlok, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Vanarai.
6. We also explained the concept of self help groups, the Swamajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana started by the central government and the role of NABARD in rural development.

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## **5.8 QUESTIONS**

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1. Explain the relationship between business and politics in Maharashtra
2. Explain the development of Cooperative movement in Maharashtra
3. Discuss the role of NGOs in politics of Maharashtra
4. Evaluate the role of trade unions in Maharashtra
5. Discuss the role of Shetkari Sanghatana in politics of Maharashtra.



## POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

### Unit Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Political Parties and Elections
- 6.3 Era of Congress dominance
- 6.4 Emergence of coalition politics
- 6.5 Changing patterns of voting behaviour
- 6.6 Summary
- 6.7 Unit End Exercises

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### 6.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit explains us

- Brief history of the Indian National Congress
- Role of the Indian National Congress and other major parties in the politics of Maharashtra.
- The trend of coalition government
- Patterns of voting behaviour studies.

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### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Indian National Congress had been a dominant political party in Maharashtra since its inception in 1865. Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Lokmanya Tilak and many other leaders from Maharashtra contributed a lot to the growth of the Congress party. The inclusion of non-Brahman masses in the party, the cooperative movement and the panchayati raj system helped the party to consolidate its position. But later in 80s and 90s groupism and internal conflicts progressively reduced its influence in politics of Maharashtra. This gave rise to the coalition politics. Even Congress had to think about right partners to survive. The BJP-Shiv Sena alliance emerged as a powerful group. The patterns of voting behaviour were also constantly changing. Some researchers have tried to record these changes. We will discuss all these issues in this chapter.

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## 6. 2 POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

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Man is-a social animal, can't lead a lonely life, forms various groups, institutions, organisations and depends on them for personal and social development. Political parties are one of such institutions. According to Almond and Verba they perform the function of interest aggregation as against the interest groups or the pressure groups performing the function of interest articulation.

Political parties are different from pressure groups or interest groups. Trade unions, student organisations, chambers of commerce, professional unions such as the unions of doctors, lawyers and chartered accountants are pressure groups. They are institutionalised groups. They are interest articulators in the sense that they articulate the interests of the groups to which they belong. They are basically interested in furthering the interest of their group as against the overall well being of the society. More often they place exaggerated claims in favour of their groups. They are adept in the art of negotiations. They use different tactics such as lobbying with the bureaucracy, ministers, writing articles in news papers and magazines, distributing pamphlets explaining their stance, organising public meetings, agitations, marches, bands and gheraos.

Political parties on the other hand don't protect the interests of any particular section of the society. They have a comprehensive plan for the development of the society. They try to mitigate the conflicting interests of various pressure groups. They aggregate their interests and try to present an all inclusive policy.

The founding fathers of US constitution had banned the formation of political parties. George Washington, the first President of United States was particularly concerned about the role of the political parties. In his farewell address in 1796 when he retired as a President after two consecutive terms he warned the US citizens against the ill effects of the parties. He says, "Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of ,party". He was of the opinion that the parties divide the people and encourage factionalism, jealousy. They try to further their own interests even at the cost of the interests of the nation. "It serves always to distract the Public Councils, and enfeeble the Public Administration. It agitates the Community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms; kindles the animosity of one part against another, foment occasionally riot and insurrection."

The Indian constitution also does not say much about the political parties. The only reference we find about political parties in

the Indian constitution is the Tenth Schedule (Anti-defection law) added by the 52<sup>nd</sup> amended in 1985. Otherwise the Indian constitution also doesn't formally recognise the political parties.

### **Types of political parties:**

Nevertheless political parties are inevitable in democratic systems. They enrich the democratic values. There are mass parties such as the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party. Mass in the sense that normally anyone who applies for membership is admitted in the party without checking for his or her ideological credentials. On the other hand the Communist party admits limited number of people only after thorough investigation of their ideological background. Both these parties can also be classified as national parties.

The Election commission of India classifies the political parties in three major types – National, State and Registered (unrecognised) parties. Election commission of India has laid down certain minimum qualifications for a party to be recognised as a national party.

Parties having considerable operations in at least four states are known as national parties. There are regional parties restricted to a particular state or region. For example the Shiv Sena, the Maharashtra Nav Nirman Sena in Maharashtra the Telugu Desam Party, in Andhra Pradesh the National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir, the Akali Dal in Punjab and the Assam Gana Parishad in Assam.<sup>2</sup> The registered unrecognised parties are those which were unable to fetch minimum number of votes or seats. There is a fourth category known as State parties (Other states) For example the Samajwadi party is a state party in Uttar Pradesh. It also contests elections in Maharashtra, but doesn't have the state party status and is not national party – therefore it is classified as State Party (Other states)

Parties can also be classified on ideological basis such as the leftwing, rightwing and the centrist parties. The Communist Party of India, The Communist Party of India (Marxist) are leftwing parties. The Indian National Congress is a centrist party and the BJP and the Shiv Sena have some characteristics of right wing parties.

### **6.2.1 Major Political Parties in Maharashtra**

The major political parties in Maharashtra are:-

- 1 National Parties
2. Indian National Congress – INC or the Congress
3. Nationalist Congress Party - NCP

4. Bharatiya Janata Party – BJP
5. Bahujan Samaj Party - BSP
6. Communist Party of India - CPI
7. Communist Party of India (Marxist) – CPM

#### **State parties**

8. Shiv Sena – SS State Parties (Other States)
9. All India 'Forward bloc
10. Samjwadi Party
11. Janata Dal (Secular)

#### **Registered (unrecognised parties)**

12. Maharashtra Na<sup>y</sup> Nirman Sena – MNS
13. Peasants and Workers Party of India - PWPI
14. Republican Party of India - RPI
15. Bharip Bahujan Mahasangh
16. Janata Dal - JD
17. Bahujan Maha Sangh
18. Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana
19. Bahujan Vikas Aghadi
20. Swatantra Bharat Paksha

There are many other registered (unrecognised parties) listed by the election commission of India. Complete list of parties participated in 2009 Loksabha elections is available on the following page of the website of Election commission of India –

[http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main/archiveofge2009/statisticalreportaso](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/archiveofge2009/statisticalreportaso)

Another list of parties participated in 2004 Maharashtra Assembly election is available at the following address:-

[http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main/StatisticalReports/SE\\_2004/StatisticalReports\\_MH\\_2004.pdf](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/StatisticalReports/SE_2004/StatisticalReports_MH_2004.pdf)

Statistical report of '2009' assembly elections was not available on the site till the time of printing this book. Check the website for new information.

#### **6.2.2 Party. systems:**

There are three major political party systems recognised all over the world –

**One party system** – It is a political system (normally a country) where only one political party is officially recognised and allowed to function. It's always in power. The voters have no choice. Communist

systems follow this type of party system. e.g. China, erstwhile USSR, Cuba etc.

**Two party system** – a political system where two parties share the majority of votes between themselves and have the ability to form government, though other parties exist and contest elections. UK and USA are the classical examples of two party systems. This system indicates stability of the political system and a well integrated society.

**Multiparty system** — a political system where there are many political parties competing for power. It reflects the fragmentation of the society. Indian political party system in the post 1990 era can be classified as a multiparty system.

**One party dominant system** — a political system where there are many parties but only one party shares the majority of votes and has the ability to form the government. Indian party system prior to 1990 was the best example of this type of party system.

### 6.2.3 Elections:

Elections form the foundation of the democratic system. The Indian constitution declares India as a republic — which means the government is elected by the people. Right from the member of the Gram Panchayat of the village to the President of India every office bearer is elected either directly or indirectly. Periodical Elections are held for the rural and urban local self governments, the state legislatures, the Parliament (Sansad) and the posts of President and Vice President of India. The normal gap between two elections for all posts is five years. However in case of emergencies or extraordinary conditions elections can be either preponed or postponed. All citizens above the age of 18 years can cast their votes.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) and the State election commissions conduct the elections. Elections for the Parliament, state legislatures, President and the Vice President of India are conducted by the ECI whereas the state election commissions conduct and oversee the elections for rural and urban local self governments in respective states and union territories.

The number of voters participating in elections at all levels of government is largest in the world. The elections machinery faces numerous problems. The ongoing process of reforms has helped to solve some of those problems. Issuing photo identity cards to the voters, use of electronic voting machines, use of information technology (supported by National Informatics Centre — 'NIC), continuous video recording of campaigns, restrictions and monitoring of election expenditure of candidates and political



parties — all these measures have curbed malpractices to a large extent. In the recent past, particularly after Mr. T. N. Seshan was appointed as the chief election commissioner of India, the election commission is proactively chasing reforms in the election process. Ultimately the success of this process will depend mainly upon the level of enlightenment of the common people.

#### Turnout Lok Sabha Elections - 1952-2004

General Election	Year	Male	Female	Total
1st	1952	-	-	<b>66.2</b>
2nd	1957	-	-	<b>62.2</b>
3rd	1962	63.31	46.63	55.42
4th	1967	66.73	55.48	66.33
5th	1971	60.90	49.11	55.29
6th				
7th				
8th				
9th	1989	66.13	57.32	66.95
10th	1991	66.58	56.35	56.93
11th				
12th	1998	65.72	57.88	66.97
13th				
14th	2004	<b>66.66</b>	<u>53.30</u>	57.65

**Source: -**

[http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main/miscellaneous\\_statistics/votinoprecentage\\_loksabha.asp](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/miscellaneous_statistics/votinoprecentage_loksabha.asp)

#### 6.2.4 Elections in Maharashtra:

13<sup>th</sup> Elections<sup>3</sup> for the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly<sup>4</sup> were held in 2009. First elections were held in 1952. They were held for the erstwhile Bombay State. The Congress party was victorious. The PWP posed a formidable challenge to the Congress party during the campaign period – but the threat couldn't be materialised. The results of the elections were clearly in favour of the Congress party. The second elections in 1957 were fought on the issue of Samyukta Maharashtra Movement in the newly formed bilingual Bombay state. The Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti<sup>5</sup>, an alliance of 11 non-Congress parties, scored impressive gains but couldn't defeat the Congress party. From 1962 to 1990 all the seven elections were won by the Congress party. In 1978 after winning the elections the Congress lost power within a period of six months because of defection by Sharad Pawar. Pawar formed the Progressive Democratic Front with the help of some leftist

parties and became the new Chief Minister. He was ousted from power in 1980 when Mrs. Indira Gandhi regained power at the Centre. 1980 elections were again won by the Congress party. The trend continued in 1985 and 1990 elections. From 1985 onwards the Shiv Sena started gaining strength in the politics of Maharashtra – its presence was felt all over Maharashtra. The Sena forged an alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party and contested the 1990 elections with the aim of forming a first real non-congress government. But the hopes of the Shiv Sena – BJP combine to form the government were dashed and Congress maintained its hold in the state. In 1995 elections the Sena – BJP alliance was victorious. But failed to continue in 1999 elections and since then in the three elections (1999, 2004, and 2009) the Congress party has won the elections. In 2004 and 2009 elections it formed an alliance with the Nationalist Congress Party and some other parties anticipating the fact that it can't win power if it contested the elections alone.

Table showing voters and Voting percentage in Maharashtra Legislative Assembly from 1962 – 2004

Year	' No. of Voters	Actually Voted	Voting Percentage
1962	1,93,95,795	1,17,06,674	60.36
1967	2,21,47,322	1,43,59,577	64.84
1972	25,869,383	156,86,429	60.64
1978	31,014,716	2,09,64,045	67.59
1980	33,673,175	17,946,372	53.3
1985	37,781,625	22,356,632	59.17
1990	48,527,908	30,213,238	62.26
1995	55,093,862	39,498,861	76.69
1999	56,876,414	34,663,833	60.95
2004		41,845,710	63.44

Source :- Election commission of India data.

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### 6.3 ERA OF CONGRESS DOMINANCE

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As earlier stated India has a unique political, party system. It appears to be a multi-party system because of the presence of many political parties such as the Congress, RN', 'CPI, CP1(M); BSP, RPI etc. But actually it is a One Party Dominant' System (OPDS). TM 1996 with few exceptions only the Congress party was able to form government at the Central level and .1'n the 'states. Therefore it was know as the era of Congress dominance: In the Bombay state and later in Maharashtra the Congress had -a

dominant political position. In the following paragraphs we will try to analyse the causes of Congress dominance.

### **6.3.1 The Legacy of the independence movement:**

The Indian National Congress, popularly known as the Congress party or the Congress — I (after Mrs, Indira Gandhi) is dominant political force in Indian politics. It represents all sections of the Indian society and has an all India presence. The 125 year old political party established in 1885, was a brain child of some Indian leaders and liberal British officers. Initially it served as a national platform for the Indian people to discuss their problems and express their opinion.

Its origin can be traced back to the 1857 revolt. The British East India Company, ruling Indian territory since 1818, (after the defeat of the Peshwas or the fall of the Maratha Empire) suffered a lot during that revolt. It was unmanageable for them. Many officers and soldiers lost their lives and the company lost its control over major parts of the Indian territory. Finally the British government took over the rule from the Company, used its military might and crushed the revolt. The British government analysed the causes of the revolt. On the basis of the analysis they came to a conclusion that lack of a nationwide platform for the common people to express their opinion was a major drawback of the. Company rule. Because of this government was totally oblivious of the political circumstances. If there had been in the past such a platform, the government could have judged the situation in a better manner and could have succeeded in avoiding the revolt.

It was on this background that the Indian National Congress was established. Later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it took the leading role in the independence movement. In 1920, after the death of the then president, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi became the President of the Congress party. He made major, long-lasting and constructive changes to the structure and organisation of the party. As a result the party developed. It established an all India base. He also encouraged the participation of women in the political process. He involved the masses in the freedom movement. He strived for Hindu-Muslim unity and also made efforts to win the hearts, of the Dalits and the Adivasis — the Tribal people and all other minorities. The party also had good relations with the capitalist class in the country.

### **6.3.2 After Independence:**

During the first general elections the Congress secured majority of seats in the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies of almost all states and, formed the government at the Centre and in the states. stalwarts like Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, and Dr. Rajendra Prasad helped the Congress

party in gaining victory. The party involved Dr. Ambedkar in the process of making the constitution and also invited him to participate in, the government at the central level as a Minister of Law.

Throughout the Nehru era till 1964 the party remained powerful. After, the death of Nehru its influence started dwindling. In 1966 Mrs. Indira Gandhi took over the reins of the party and the government.' She had to fight hard but soon gained control over the party and the government. In 1975 the political situation was out of control for Mrs. Indira Gandhi and national emergency was declared. It was lifted in 1977. General elections were declared. The Congress party was defeated and the Janata party, formed by all major non-Congress parties came to power. Again in 1980 Mrs. Indira Gandhi came to power. In 1984, after the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi, the party won unprecedented number of seats in the Lok Sabha. Rajiv Gandhi became the Prime Minister. It was defeated in 1989 elections but regained power in 1996. It was again defeated in 1996 and 1998 and 1999 elections. But since 2004 it has won two consecutive elections and shares power with some other parties though it was unable to form the government on its own.

### **6.3.3 Congress in Bombay state:**

The Congress party in Maharashtra follows an almost same pattern as that of the national level As Prof. V. M. Sirsikar says "In Maharashtra the Congress was powerful in more senses than one." Majority of the national leaders were from Maharashtra. For example – Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Lokmanya Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale etc. They were all the founding fathers of the Indian National Congress.

Some fundamental changes were made in the leadership of the Congress party in Maharashtra. Keshavrao Jedhe, one of the famous leaders of the non-brahaman movement in the 1920s became the president of the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee. The non-brahaman movement was weakened and the masses were attracted towards the Congress party.

### **6.3.4 Impact of Samyukta Maharashtra Movement**

During the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement, in the 1950s, the Congress party lost its appeal. Majority of the Marathi speaking people went against the party and supported the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti. Due to pressure from the central leadership the regional leaders like Shankarrao Deo opposed the formation of a Marathi speaking separate state of Maharashtra including Bombay as its capital. Congress hardly survived in the Bombay state in 1957 elections. From the figures below it is clearly visible that the SMS had put forth a formidable challenge to

the Congress party and the party survived only because of the support of the Marathwada and Vidarbha regions. Public opinion in Western Maharashtra was clearly tilted towards the SMS.

### General Elections 1957: Legislative Assembly

Area	Total Seats	Congress Party		Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti (SMS)	
		No. of Seats won	%	No. of Seats won	%
Bombay City	24	13	54.5	11	45.5
Marathwada	42	35	83.3	7	16.7
Vidarbha	<b>66</b>	55	83.3	11	16.7
Western Maharashtra	135	33	24.5	102	75.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>50.9</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>49.1</b>

### General Elections 1957: Lok Sabha

Area	Total Seats	Congress Party		Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti (SMS)	
		No. of Seats won	%	No. of Seats won	%
Bombay City	4	2	50	2	50
Marathwada	6	6	100	0	0
Vidarbha	9	9	100	0	0
Western Maharashtra	22	2	9.56	<b>20</b>	90.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>54</b>

### Bombay Corporation Election (May 1957)

Party	Contested	Elected	Percentage of Seats
Congress	110	54	46.2
SMS	97	71	54.2
Independents	107	5	3.7
Lohia Socialists	5	0	0
PSP	1	1	0.9
Jana Sangh	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: - Politics of Modern Maharashtra by V. M. Sirsikar, 1995) **Role of Yeshwantrao Chavan:**

But the astute leadership of Yeshwantrao Chavan made it possible to turn the trend in its favour within a short period. After the formation of Maharashtra on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1960 Yeshwantrao Chavan became its first Chief Minister.

### General Elections 1962: Legislative Assembly

Area	Total Seats	Congress	Percentage of seats won	SMS	Percentage of seats won
Bombay City	24	22	96.8	2	8 . 2
Marathwada	42	33	78.6	9	26.4
Vidarbha	66	55	83.3	11	1 6 . 7
Western Maharashtra	138	126	96.4	12	8.6
Total	270	236	87.2	34	12.8

Yeshwantrao Chavan consolidated the base of the party at the grass root level by introducing two innovative schemes.

#### **The cooperative movement and the panchayati raj institutions:**

He started the cooperative movement and implemented the panchayati raj model of decentralisation of power at the level of rural local self government. The farmers were economically benefited by the cooperatives and also got a chance to participate in the political activities through the panchayati raj. Gram panchayats, Taluka Panchayat samitis and the Zilla Parishads were established at the village, taluka and district levels respectively. The principle of decentralisation of power was realised. Later the cooperative movement took momentum. Many, cooperative societies were established at the village level. These societies catered to the needs of the farmers, and uprooted the unjust system of the private moneylenders - The 'Seriak'ai.. 'Today most of the Sugar cooperatives, Educational controlled by the Congress party.

#### **6.3.5 Weak opposition:**

Weak opposition has been a major plus point for the Congress party in Maharashtra. The Socialists and the Communists i.e. the leftists, the Janisangh and other parties, favouring Hindutva ideology, the Republican party of India and its factions and the Peasants and Workers party were the main opposition parties.

The Leftists were unable to compete accessftilly: with the Congress party as they mainly had an urban/upper caste/upper class base. Majority of their leaders were well educated and

articulate but unable to communicate with the rural masses who formed the majority in Maharashtra. The left parties considered class as the major group in the society and neglected the caste system and its effects.

Very few people were attracted towards the Hindutva ideology in the 60s, 70s and 80s. The Hindutva parties mainly gained strength in the 1990s.

The Republican Party had many factions and infighting was common. Congress invited many dalit leaders to form an alliance and continued to have support from the Dalit masses.

The Peasants and Workers party had posed a formidable challenge to the Congress party in 1952 and 1957 but later many of its leaders joined the Congress party and it was reduced to a small party operating from Raigadh district.

However in the recent years the situation has changed. The left has lost its appeal and infighting amongst RPI groups continues, the PWP is weak but the Shiv Sena, BJP and the newly formed Maharashtra Nav Nirman Sena has put forth a strong challenge to the Congress. Besides the Congress also has infighting. The NCP defected from the party in 1999.

### **6.3.6 The role of the Maratha-Kunbi Caste Cluster:**

According to Jäyant Lele "the political elite in Maharashtra in the decade of 1960 and 1970s belonged to a section that sprang from the Maratha-Kunbi caste cluster and especially so from western Maharashtra, and continues to do so even today. This caste cluster could become a political bloc through the 'patronage system of kinship ties (called patriarchal patronage by Lele 1990: 150, 157) that it inherited since pre-colonial period. This patronage System: hitherto restricted to social and cultural levels now extended to politics and became, an instrument through which state institutions such as the CoOperatives and the panchayati raj were organised.' The 'Maratha-Kunbi' Caste bloc soon came to control the Congress Party through which the Maratha elite institutionalised its ideology of agrarian development. Additionally, through political accommodation the Maratha-Kunbi elite incorporated leaders from other castes such as malis, dhangars, telie lingayats, vanjaris, mahars among others into the Congress Party and state institutions. However it was the western Maharashtra Maratha elite who dominated 'decision and poli4-Making for the state Congress Party and on behalf Of the elite.'

## 6.4 EMERGENCE OF COALITION POLITICS

### 6.4.1 1957 Elections:

The origin of coalition politics in Maharashtra can be traced back to 1957 elections even before the formation of Maharashtra. The Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti was the first major alliance of non-Congress political parties in Bombay state. It failed to secure power, though it weakened the hold of the Congress party in Western Maharashtra. But immediately after the formation of Maharashtra the SMS was split and leaders and activists returned to their original parties. Some of the major leaders joined the Congress party.

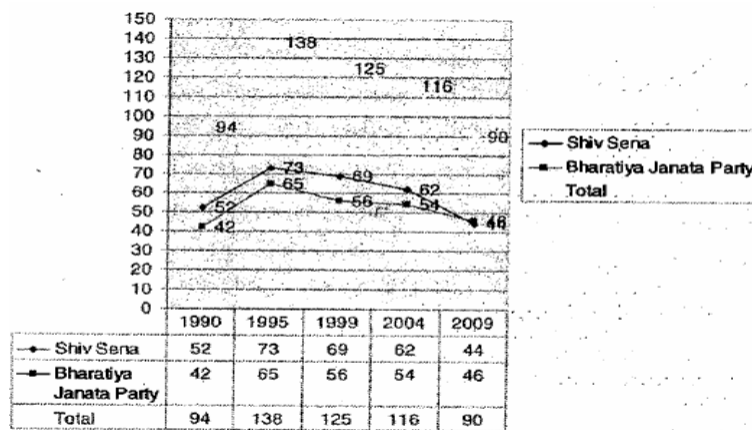
### 6.4.2 The Progressive Democratic front:

From 1960 to 1978 very few attempts were made to forge an alliance of different parties. Congress remained as the party in power. In 1978 Sharad Pawar defected from the Congress party and formed an alliance with the Socialists and the Communists. It was named as the Progressive Democratic Front (PDF). The PDF government under the leadership of Sharad Pawar came to power. This incident marked the real beginning of coalition politics in Maharashtra.

The PDF government remained in power till 1980. Later it was dismissed by the Central government and Presidential rule was imposed in Maharashtra. The PDF was unable to win the 1980 elections. Congress came back to power.

### 6.4.3 The Sena-BJP alliance:

The Sena BJP alliance was formed in 1989. Together they fought five elections their performance is as following:-



They were able to form the government only once in 1995 when they secured 138 seats together. From 1990 to 2004 the Shiv Sena had secured more seats than the BJP.



#### 6.4.4 Congress-NCP alliance:

Sharad Pawar has played an important role in the politics of Maharashtra since 1978. The Nationalist Congress Party led by Sharad Pawar was established in 1999. Mr. Pawar was the leader of one of the factions within the Congress party. Mr. Pawar defected from the Indian National Congress (the Congress Party) raising the issue of foreign nationality of Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, who was then the President of the Congress party.

Sharad Pawar started his political career with the Congress party. He revered Yeshwantrao Chavan, the first Chief Minister of Maharashtra, as his political guru (mentor). In 1978 he was a minister in the cabinet of Chief Minister Vasant Dada Patil. While in power he defected along with few other MLAs. The Congress government was in minority. Vasant Dada Patil had to resign.

Mr. Pawar joined hands with the socialist and leftist parties, formulated a progressive democratic front along with them and claimed the post of Chief Minister of Maharashtra. He was appointed as the chief minister and continued in power till 1980. In 1980 his government was dismissed and Presidential rule was imposed in Maharashtra. At that time Pawar was leading his own party – the Samajwadi Congress. The media used the term S. Congress which also meant 'Sharad Congress'.

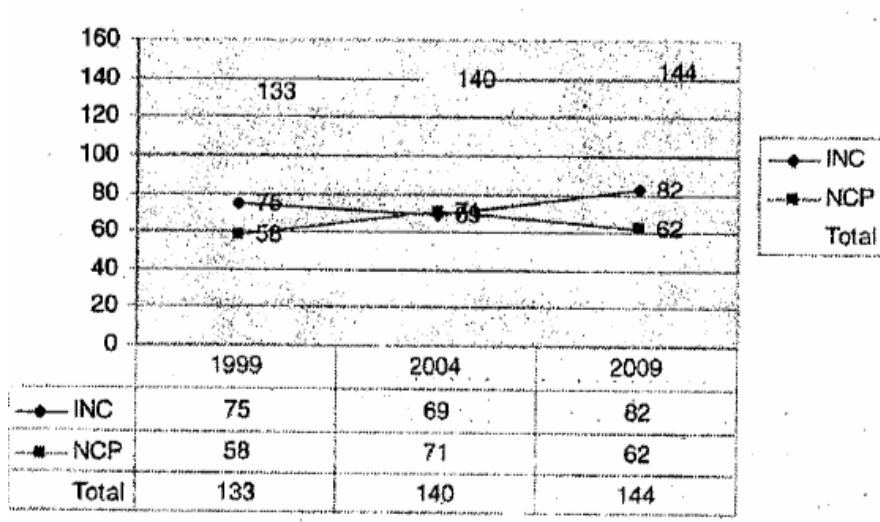
During the 1980's Mr. Pawar led the farmer's agitations along with Sharad Joshi of the Shetkari Sanghatana, a pressure group working for the benefit of peasants in Maharashtra.

In 1986 after the end of 'Indira era' and at the beginning of 'Rajiv era' Pawar returned to the Congress party. Majority of the dissatisfied followers of Sharad Pawar joined the Shiv Sena in 1986. (It is remarkable that the spread of Shiv Sena in all parts of Maharashtra coincided with this incident)

Pawar's entry in the Congress party was resisted by majority of Congressmen. In spite of resistance from leaders in Maharashtra, the Congress high command - supported Pawar and he became the chief minister of Maharashtra in 1988 and remained in that post till 1996. For a brief spell up to 1993 he joined the central ministry and national politics. He returned in Maharashtra as a chief minister in 1993. It is alleged that he engineered the defection of Chagan Bhujbal from the Shiv Sena in 1994. Bhujbal was appointed as a minister in his cabinet. The Shiv Sena suffered a great setback. Bhujbal was instrumental in mobilising the OBC masses and gaining a foothold for the Sena outside Mumbai in Thane, Nashik and Aurangabad district and later in all parts of Maharashtra.

But despite these manoeuvres Pawar and the Congress party failed to win the 1995 elections. The Shiv Sena-BJP won elections and remained in power till 1999. In 1996 parliamentary elections Pawar was able to unite all factions within the Congress party. He also successfully attempted to mitigate the differences amongst the various factions of the Republican Party of India and carved out a winning alliance with them. He was also able to muster support from the Muslims and Adivasis. But this experience was short-lived.

In 1999 Pawar left the Congress party and formed the Nationalist Congress Party. The party has its base in the southern parts of Maharashtra – Kolhapur, Satara, Sangli, Pune. It is also known as the sugar belt, consisting majority of the cooperative sugar factories in Maharashtra. The following chart shows the performance of the Congress-NCP alliance. Though the seats of the alliance are increasing the strength is the Congress party is increasing and that of the NCP shows a gradual decline in 2009.



#### 6.4.5 Third front:

In August 2009, the RLDF (Republican and Left democratic front – popularly known as रिडालोस in Marathi – रिपब्लिकन् डावे लोकशाही आघाडी) comprising following 17 parties was formed - Republican party of India United, Peasants and Workers Party, Samajwadi Party, Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Janata Dal(Secular) a party mainly influential in Karnataka founded by former Prime Minister Dave Gowda, Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana, Yuk rand, Lokbharati, Samajwadi Jan Parishad, Lok Sangharsh Morcha (Pratibha Shinde), Prahar (Bacchu Kadu), Lok Jana Shakti Party, LOk Raj Niti Manch, Rashtriya Samaj Party (Mahadeo Jankar), Satya shodhak

Communist, Vasal Sangharsh Samiti. The third front secured only two seats in the 2009 elections.

#### **6.4.6 Congress and the Dalits:**

The Indian National Congress has consistently tried to form an alliance with some or other faction formed by the Dalit leaders. Sharad Pawar forged an alliance with Ramdas Athavale's group of Republican party where as the Congress formed an alliance with the Bharatiya Republican party led by Prakash Ambedkar. This policy has helped the Congress in winning Dalit votes.

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### **6.5 CHANGING PATTERNS OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR**

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Right to vote is a precious right of the citizens in a democratic system. It symbolises the principle of popular sovereignty. The Indian constitution grants adult franchise to all its citizens that mean all citizens completing 18 years of age are eligible to vote without any discrimination on the basis of gender, language, caste, religion, educational status, profession, economic conditions, place of birth or regional differences, or ideological differences.

Voting behaviour of citizens is studied through surveys conducted by academic and other research institutes. University departments and Research institutes conduct election surveys. These are mainly sample surveys. A sample of the population is selected. The basis of selection of the sample may be different. It may be a random sample or a stratified random sample.

Pre-poll, Exit Poll and Post-Poll surveys are conducted. Pre-poll surveys are conducted 2 to 3 weeks before the elections. An attempt is made to judge the general mood of the voters. Exit polls are conducted on the Election Day itself. It's a brief survey. Some objective close ended questions are asked to the voter at the polling station after he casts his vote. Prediction is the main aim of exit poll. Post poll surveys are conducted 2 to 3 weeks after the declaration of results. Political analysis of the results is the main aim of such a survey. The Centre for the Study of developing societies (CSDS) has conducted all India surveys along with reputed Universities in respective states and Media houses such as the India Today group and the Hindu group. In Maharashtra the department of Politics and Public Administration, Pune University has conducted such surveys with the CSDS since 1995. Earlier in the 1960s and 1970s the same department had conducted election surveys though on a small scale.

India is the most populous democracy of the world with the population being 6.19 billion and voters above 700 million i.e. 70 crores. Though there is adult franchise all voters had never exercised their right to vote. In the first few elections the voting percentage at all India level ranged between 50 and 55 percent. It has never gone beyond 65 percent though at certain places a record 90 and 95 percent people have voted.

There is a feeling of apathy related to voting among certain classes in the society. Causes of apathy are different for different classes of people. All over the world rich and established people in democratic countries are less interested in voting. India and particularly Maharashtra are not an exception to this global trend. The rich and the established are less dependent on the political system for protection of their interests.

Rigging and booth capturing, distribution of money, Sarees and Dhotis and other things including liquor to lure voters towards a particular party or a candidate, terrorising voters all these tactics are used in the elections. These techniques affect the voting behaviour of the voters.

Normally percentage of women voting is less than that of men. It is a male dominated society. Number of educated and employed women is less than men. Fewer women are involved in activities other than that of the household activities. Number of women engaged in direct political activities is very less. Some surveys have concluded that even women elected on the 30 reserved seats in local self government bodies in Maharashtra are dependant on their husbands and male members of the family for decision making. In some cases virtually all business is conducted by the husband in the name of his wife. All these trends are reflected in voting behaviour pattern also.

Sometimes there is an anti-incumbency wave where the voters vote against the party in power. They are frustrated due to the role of the ruling party. They want give a chance to their opponents and hope for a change.

For some people the candidate is more important than the party. They may not like the policies of the party but they may still vote for the candidate of that party because of personal affection or other personal reasons. For example if a popular cine star is a candidate, the party and its policies become secondary. On the contrary in some other cases people may vote for a party even if the candidate is not so influential if the party has a good reputation.

Caste is an important factor influencing voting behaviour of the people. Parties have to consider caste calculations before

deciding their candidates. But current trends also show that people vote for those who promise development and deliver the goods. In Bihar for, example in the 1990s people voted on the basis of caste loyalties but recent results indicate that they have rejected caste loyalties in favour of development.

During first few elections after independence the voters were under the influence of the freedom movement and the role of Congress party and its leaders in the movement. Congress was victorious at the central and state level. Power helped further in consolidating the base of the party. In Maharashtra majority of the voters remained loyal to the Congress party till the 1977 elections except for the 1957 elections. In 1957 the issue of Samyukta Maharashtra Movement affected the prospects of the Congress party. As earlier explained in this chapter the number of seats won by the party declined sharply particularly in western Maharashtra.

In 1977 Loksabha elections and 1978 State legislative assembly elections (Vidhansabha) the public opinion tilted towards the Socialists and the leftists in general. But still the Congress party was able to form the government.

From 1985 the Shiv Sena started making inroads in the rural parts of Maharashtra, hitherto the bastion of Congress party. In 1990 the number of seats of the SS-BJP alliance increased and in 1995 they were able to form the government. Congress-NCP alliance regained power in 1999 and continued to hold power through 2004 and 2009 elections.

Table showing Maharashtra Legislative Assembly party wise seat position from 1962 – 2009. (Next page)

"---" indicates that the related party didn't participate in that particular election.





**End Notes**

[http://ecLzov.in/eci\\_mail/faq/Reeisteration Political Parties.asp](http://ecLzov.in/eci_mail/faq/Reeisteration_Political_Parties.asp)

**Q.4. What are the criteria for recognition of a party?**

**Ans.** A political party shall be treated as a recognised political party in a State, if and only if either the conditions specified in Clause (A) are, or the condition specified in Clause (B) is, fulfilled by that party and not otherwise, that is to say-

**(A) that such party –**

- has been engaged in political activity for a continuous period of five years; and
- has, at the last general election in that State to the House of the People, or, as the case may be, to the Legislative Assembly of the State, returned-

either (i) at least one member to the House of the People for every twenty-five members of that House or any fraction of that number from that State;

or (ii) at least one member to the Legislative Assembly of that State for every thirty members of that Assembly or any fraction of that number;

(B) that the total number of valid votes polled by all the contesting candidates set up by such party at the last general election in the State to the House of the People, or as the case may be, to the Legislative Assembly of the State, is not less than six per cent of the total number of valid votes polled by all the contesting candidates at such general election in the State.

2. The conditions in Clause (A) or Clause (B) above shall not be deemed to have been fulfilled by a political party, if a member of the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of the State becomes a member of that political party after his election to that House or, as the case may be, that Assembly.

3. 'State' includes the National Capital Territory of Delhi and the Union Territory of Pondicherry.

4. if a political party is treated as a recognised political party in four or more States, it shall be known as a 'National Party' throughout the whole of India, but only so long as that political party continues to fulfill thereafter the conditions for recognition in four or more States on the resultst of any subsequent general election either tothe House of the People or to the Legislative Assembly of any State.



5. If a political party is treated as a recognised political party in less than four States, it should be known as a 'State Party' in the State or States in which it is so recognised, but only so long as that political party continues to fulfill thereafter the conditions for recognition on the results of any subsequent general election to the House of the People or; as the case may be, to the Legislative Assembly of the State, in the said State or States.

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_political\\_parties\\_in\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_India)

<sup>3</sup> Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Elections – (The first election in 1952 was held for Bombay state 'and second in 1957 was held for the bilingual Bombay state formed on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1956 as per the recommendations of the States reorganization commission which was also known as the Fazal All Commission.)

1. 1951
2. 1957
3. 1962
4. 1967
5. 1972
6. 1978
7. 1980
8. 1985
9. 1990
10. 1995
11. 1999
12. 2004
13. 2009

<sup>4</sup> List of Chief Ministers of Maharashtra:

Sr. No.	Name of the Chief Minister	From	To	Political Party
1	Yeshwantrao Chavan	01-May-60	19-Nov-62	INC
2	Marutao Kannamwar	20-Nov-62	24-Nov-63	INC
3	Vasantrao Naik	05-Dec-63	01-Mar-67	INC
4	Vasantrao Naik	01-Mar-67	13-Apr-72	INC
5	Vasantrao Naik	13-Mar-72	20-Feb-75	INC
6	Shankarrao Chavan	21-Feb-75	16-Apr-77	INC

7	Vasantdada Patil	17-Apr-77	02-Mar-78	INC
8	Vasantdada Patil	07-Mar-78	18-Jul-78	INC
9	Shared Pawar	18-Jul-78	17-Feb-80	Progressive Democratic
10	President's Rule	17-Feb-80	08-Jun-80	
11	Abdul Rehman Antulay	09-Jun-80	12-Jan-82	INC
12	Babasaheb Bhosale	21-Jan-82	01-Feb-83	INC
13	Vasantdada Patil	02-Feb-83	01-Jun-85	INC
14	Shivajirao Nilangekar Pal	03-Jun-85	06-Mar-86	INC
15	Shankarrao Chavan	12-Mar-86	26-Jun-88	INC
16	Sharad Pawar	26-Jun-88	25-Jun-91	INC
17	Sudhakarrao Naik	25-Jun-91	22-Feb-93	INC
18	Sharad Pawar	06-Mar-93	14-Mar-95	INC
19	Manohar Joshi	14-Mar-95	31-Jan-99	Shiv Sena
20	Narayan Rane	01-Feb-99	17-Oct-99	Shiv Sena
21	Vilasrao Deshmukh	18-Oct-99	16-Jan-03	INC
22	Sushil Kumar Shinde	18-Jan-03	30-Oct-04	INC
23	Vilasrao Deshmukh	01-Nov-04	04-Dec-08	INC
24	Ashok Chavan	08-Dec-08	15-Oct-09	INC
25	Ashok Chavan	07-Nov-09	09-Nov-10	INC
26	Prithviraj Chavan	11-Nov -10		INC

<sup>5</sup> The constituents of the Sanyukta Maharashtra Samiti were:

1. Praja Socialist party
2. Communist party of India

3. Peasants and workers party
4. Scheduled Castes Federation
5. Maharashtrawadi Congress party
6. Janasangh
7. Lai Nishan Gat
8. And four other parties

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## **6.6 SUMMARY**

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1. We started with the meaning of political parties and then mentioned the list of the major political parties in Maharashtra given by the election commission of India.
2. Later we discussed party systems, elections and a brief history of elections in India and Maharashtra.
3. Next part was the discussion about the era of congress dominance. We discussed the various causes of the dominance of the Congress party and traversed through various events, from the establishment of the Congress Party till the current period. This included the impact of the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement.
4. Next we discussed the emergence of coalition politics and various alliances since 1957 e.g. The Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, the PDF, The Sena BJP alliance, the Congress NCP alliance, Congress and the Dalits and the third front.
5. Finally we studied the patterns of voting behaviour,

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## **6.7 QUESTIONS**

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1. Discuss the major alliances of political parties in politics of Maharashtra
2. Discuss the causes of dominance of Congress party in Maharashtra
3. Discuss the changing patterns of voting behaviour in Maharashtra.

