CHAPTER VI

BIRDS EYE VIEW OF MAHARASHTRA, MARATHWADA AND LATUR DISTRICT

About Maharashtra:

Study of leadership at any level presupposes an understanding of the socio-economic setting under which leadership operates. The socio-economic background and the historical context shaped the politics and leadership of a region. The present State of Maharashtra arose out of the re-organisation of states on the recommendation of the State Reorganisation Commission. In the first instance the bilingual State of Bombay was created by including Marathi speaking areas of the old Bombay State, Vidarbha and Marathwada along with the Gujarati speaking areas of Saurashtra and Kutch. In 1960 it was bifurcated and two unilingual states of Maharashtra and Gujarat were formed. The original multilingual Bombay Presidency was created by the British when they became undisputed masters of Western India.
**Early History:**

V. P. Dandekar\(^2\) speaks of the seventh century B.C. as the beginning of an Aryan advance into the great forest running through the peninsula of India, variously designated as Mahakantara, Dandakaranya or Mahatavi. In the third century these new-comers had already established small kingdoms, were the aboriginals in Maharashtra, e.g. the Bhils, Katakaris, Thakurs, and Kolis were already living there before the arrival of the Aryans. Scholars agree that before the advent of the Aryans, the inhabitants of the Deccan plateau were Dravidians. It would seem that at about one thousand B.C. i.e., before the Aryan penetration, one of the Dravidian peoples, the Nagas, began to establish their rule over a vast area in the Daksina Pranta.

From 321 B.C. to 184 B.C. Maharashtra was a part of the Maurya Empire. During the Maurya period Buddhism, and to a lesser extent also Jainism, took root in Maharashtra. Asoka, the greatest of the Maurya emperors, was crowned in 270 B.C. He became the protector of Buddhism in the empire and sent out missionaries from India. Inscriptions from Dambal (A.D. 1095) and Miraj (A.D. 1110) prove that at the end of the eleventh century
there were Buddhist monasteries of the west coast of India.\(^3\) Buddhism, therefore, for more than a millennium has been part of Maharashtrian history. Inscriptions in monasteries show that it had its devotees, not only amongst the monks, but also amongst rulers, guides, etc. and that it was widely accepted. But we are confronted with many unsolved questions regarding the growth and decline of Buddhism in Maharashtra, and interconnections between the Vedic and Popular Hinduism, and 'protestant' Buddhism and Jainism.

The Yadavas of Devagiri ruled Maharashtra upto 1307 A.D. Afterwards the region came under successive Mohammedan dynasties. Shivaji came on the scene in the 17th century with the rise of the Maratha Kingdom and the history of Maharashtra took a new turn. About the middle of the 18th century the Maratha Power reached its zenith under the Peshwas and its decline started rapidly after 1761 with a colossal defeat in the Third Battle of Panipat. The Peshwa rule ended in 1818 and the area was brought under the rule of the East India Company and named as Bombay Presidency.\(^4\) The Maharashtrians have always cherished the memory of Shivaji and
the Maratha Empire. This has influenced in recent times of the politics of the region.\textsuperscript{5} There had been a tendency to exploit Shivaji's name for political gains. All parties have indulged in this game.\textsuperscript{6}

The present history of Maharashtra State:

The present state of Maharashtra resembles in shape a right-angled triangle,\textsuperscript{7} but the right angle in the north-west has been broken in by the Surat District of Gujarat State and there is a sumptuous bump at the eastern extremity comprising Chanda District with its precious forests and substantial deposits of coal and manganese.\textsuperscript{8} The coast of the Arabian Sea forms the base.\textsuperscript{9} The western coast is partially a straight line and the sea, with a long range of Sahyadri nearby, has made the intervening tract of Konkan a scene of enchanting beauty. On the north side lie the Satpuda mountains and the Balaghat range which is practically a continuation of the Satmala range of Sahyadri.\textsuperscript{10} In fact, Sahyadri throws its arms across the central plateau of Maharashtra which is high land known for its salubrious climate throughout the year. The three rivers, Godavari, Bhima and Krishna,
taking their rise from Sahyadri and flowing eastwards, have been rightly described by a poet as the lines on Maharashtra's fore-head which bring it what fertility the solid Deccan trap can possess. Similarly, Wardha and Wainganga can be called the lines on Vidarbha's forehead. The Tapi, rising in the Satpuda, with Purna flowing into it, makes the Western part of Vidarbha and Khandesh a very fertile tract known for its black cotton soil.

Geographical population:

Maharashtra is one of the 25 States of the Indian Union. Maharashtra forms a major part of peninsular India and lies between 22.1 and 16.4 degrees north latitude and 72.6 and 80.9 degrees east longitude. The boundaries of the state are: the Arabian Sea in the East; Gujarat in the North-west; Madhya Pradesh in the North; Andhra Pradesh in the South-west; and Karnataka and Goa in the south. The area of the state is 3,07,690 square kilometres which is 9.36 percent of the area of India and its total population according to the Census of 1981 was 62.8 million, which was about 9 percent of the population of the whole country.
From the point of area as well as population, it is the third largest state in India of the total population of 62.6 million, the Scheduled Castes numbered 4.48 million, the Scheduled Castes numbered 4.48 million (7.1%) and Scheduled Tribes 5.77 million (9.2%). There were also about 4.06 of million (estimated) Nev-Buddhists.

According to the 1981 Census the total population of Maharashtra was 5,04,12,235 which was about one-eleventh of India's total population. This population lived in 289 towns and cities and 35,778 villages spread over 303 talukas of the 31 districts, excluding greater Bombay.

Administrative Divisions:

Maharashtra State was established on the 1st May 1960 by the bifurcation of bilingual state of Bombay and constituting the following Marathi speaking areas into a new state:

(1) 13 districts of the pre-Reorganisation State of Bombay including Greater Bombay which constitutes a separate district.
(2) 5 districts of Marathwada from the pre-Reorganisation state of Hyderabad.

(3) 8 districts of Vidarbha from the pre-Organisation State of Madhya Pradesh.

At present therefore, Maharashtra has 31 districts (including Greater Bombay) divided into 6 Revenue Divisions. These districts were sub-divided into 92 subdivisions with 303 taluks. These districts were the basic units for purposes of revenue administration and for many other administrative purposes. They were also the basic units for statistical and demographic purposes.

Social composition:

Maharashtra politics had dominated by certain castes. They were the Brahmins, Marathas and the Mahars. In the earliest stages of the freedom struggle the political leadership was in the hands of the Brahmins. During the last 30 years there has been a complete change and today the leadership has passed on to the Marathas who constitute nearly 40 percent of the total population. Mahars amongst the Scheduled Castes are politically quite conscious and during
Dr. Ambedkar's lifetime, they constituted a significant political minority. In recent times, factionalism amongst them has destroyed their political importance.

**The Maratha:**

The majority of the people of Maharashtra belonged to the different Maratha sub-castes. The word Maratha was used in three different meanings: first in its broadest sense, the secondly the word designates all those who spoke Marathi and the third who resided in Maharashtra.

The majority of the Marathas were farmers. They were hard-working and steady, simple in their habits, even to the extent of lacking refinement. They were reserved, and did not easily open up to strangers. But when they had once given friendship, they remained friends. A Chinese traveller wrote about them in the middle of the seventh century that the manners of the Marathas were simple and honest. They were proud and reserved. If any one was kind to them, he might be sure of their gratitude; but if any one injured them, they would take their revenge and risk their lives.
to wipe out dishonour. If any one indistress appealed to them, they would leave aside all thought of self in their anxiety to help. Even if they had an insult to avenge, they never failed to warn their enemy. In battle, if they pursued fugitives, they spared all who surrendered. 16

The Maratha-Kunbi complex, though neither educationally advanced nor wealthy, had always been conscious of itself as a fighting and a ruling class. This group was now dominant in the politics of the state. Moreover, it was an ascendance in the panchayati raj institutions. In addition, their caste constituted the bulk of the peasantry and they were now automatically becoming leaders in the new set up of Panchayati Raj by virtue of their majority and economic status. 18 Without accepting Prof. M. N. Shrinivas's 'dominant caste' concept, it could be stated that the Marathas have numerical strength, economic and political power, and ritual status on their side, what they lack was western education, and professions. The Marathas have occupied power positions in rural Maharashtra from historical times. They were the
police Fatils in villages. Thus most of the factors combined give to this caste group a very dominating position in the political and social life of Maharashtra specially in the rural areas.

The Brahmins:

The Brahmins in Maharashtra were few in number, but their influence, though warning, was still great. They were divided into Kokanastha Brahmins who lived in the Konkan or have migrated from the Kokan to other districts, especially to the cities of Bombay and Pune; the Karhada Brahmins who received their designation from the town of Karad about 54 Kms to the south of Satara. The non-vegetarian Sarasvata Brahmins form another important group. The Brahmanas were, by large, still the intellectual leaders of Maharashtra. Most of its modern literature had been written by them, mainly by the Kokanastha Brahmins. The Marathas, and still more the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, had not contributed their proportionate share to the intellectual life of the state.

The Brahmins were numerically a small minority of 3% in the total population of the State. However,
due to their dominant position during the Peshwa Rule and the greater part of British period they have been able to maintain their hold on professions, civil services, and in recent times the industrial and commercial bureaucracies. Compared to other caste groups the Brahmins and economically better off. The cultural superiority of this minority was strongly resented by the majority of the population. In recent times, the Brahmins have shown a tendency to withdraw from the political life of the area. This might be due to the increasing opposition from the numerically strong caste groups.

The Mahars:

The third largest group in Maharashtra belonged to the Scheduled Castes, the greatest number being Mahars. Traditionally, the Mahars have always been village servants or farm-hands. As a rule they were quick-minded and intelligent, but at times lack perservance. Among the Scheduled Castes this group was at the moment the most in ferment. Their small pieces of land called their Vatane (Sing-Vatan) i.e.
government lands given to them for cultivation in return for their hereditary service in the village, were often the very poorest fields. Few of them could earn a decent living from their lands. In recent times, at the request of their undisputed leaders, the late Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, hundreds of thousands of them abandoned Hinduism and accepted Buddhism in search of progress and uplift, pragati and Sudharana.

The Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra lived especially in the mountain areas. Educationally backward as compared to other communities, this group was realising but slowly the necessity of education.

The Economy:

Maharashtra represents a top-sided economic development. Bombay accounted mainly for its industrial development, and the other areas were predominantly agricultural. Agriculture provided employment to 66.8 percent of the population. A significant feature of the agricultural economy was the absence of zamindars or big landlords. This was due to the existence of Rayat-wari System of land tenure operative in most parts of the state.
Bombay and other industrial centres of Maharashtra contributed a significant share to the industrial and economic production of the Indian Union.

Maharashtra as a whole was the most industrialised state of the union. Bombay could be considered as the commercial and industrial capital of India. It had been in the forefront of industrial development since the middle of the 19th century. If Bombay was excluded the rest of the State seemed to be as backward as other parts of the country. Thus it could be said that Bombay distorts the economic picture of Maharashtra by constantly pushing up the indicators of economic development.

Agriculture:

Maharashtra as a whole was considered a state of unyielding soil where the hardy peasant had to secure his living by constant toil. The area under foodgrains in the state was nearly the 140 lakh hectares, which was 11 percent of the corresponding area for India.

The principal food crops were rice, jawar, bajra, and maize. Maharashtra had also valuable
cash crops like cotton, groundnut, tobacco and sugarcane. In sugarcane Maharashtra had the highest yield per acre in India.

**Industrial and Commercial position:**

In spite of its poor natural resources, Maharashtra was one of the most industrialised state in India. Against a per capita income of Rs. 2975 for the whole of India, the per capita income in Maharashtra was Rs. 3793 for the year 1986-87. The concentration of industrial and commercial activity in Greater Bombay meant an uneven distribution of the social benefits of industrialisation, though it was true that the contribution of Greater Bombay to the finances of the state was correspondingly high, and much of the contribution was utilised to promote development in the more backward areas of the state. Another factor which had to be taken into account was the cosmopolitan character of Greater Bombay. It had attracted financiers and industrial entrepreneurs from all parts of India. The people of Maharashtra we should find that there were very few indus-
trialists and business men among those who could be classified as Marathas. Except in Konkan which had some indigenous Vaishyas, there were no trading communities among the Marathas. Even in the days of Maratha rule, commercial classes were imparted into Maharashtra from Marwad and Gujarat, and the sons of the soil preferred to be busy in fighting their battles and filling the soil when time permitted them to do.

Urbanisation:

According to the Census of 1981, there were 25 cities, and 351 towns and 39,354 villages in the state. The urban population was 21.99 million (8.24 million in Greater Bombay alone), and constituted 35.03 percent of the total population of 62.8 million. Both in absolute terms and in relation to the total population, Maharashtra had the highest urban population in the country. Though more urbanised, Maharashtra had somewhat lower density of population than India as a whole, the density being 204 persons per square kilometers as compared to a density of 216 per square kilometers for the whole of India.
Languages:

According to the Census of 1981, about 77 percent of the total population had Marathi as their mother-tongue. The more important linguistic minority groups making up the remaining 23 percent of the population spoke Urdu, Hindi, Gujarathi, Kannada etc. languages.

Marathwada:

At present Marathwada is an integral part of Maharashtra. This land had played an eminent role in the history and culture of Maharashtra and the Deccan throughout the ages. Its geographical position was mainly responsible for it and probably because of this, the land nourished the earliest prehistoric cultures. During the historical period also the same tradition continued. Both the earliest Mahajanapadas of the Deccan mentioned in the Buddhist literature were situated in Marathwada. The region had in it Pratisthana, the first imperial city of the Deccan. International emporium like Tagara, Pratishthana and Bhogavardhana also flourished in this land.

During the later period also the land continued to be the nucleus of political and cultural activities.
Imperial capitals such as the early Rashtrakuta capital new Ellora, Kandharapura and Devagiri were located in this area. The others such as Manyakheta, Mayurkhandi, Badhana, and Kalyanapura were situated, just on the borders of Marathwada.

In the cultural progress of the Deccan in general and Maharashtra in particular, the region again had a lion's share. Out of the 12 Jyotirlinga seats in the country, three were located in this area. Out of the four Saktipithas of Maharashtra, Marathwada shared three. Pitalkhora and Ajanta were amongst the earliest groups of rock-cut caves and Buddhist monasteries in the Deccan. The Marathwada had preserved the masterpieces of ancient Indian art and architecture as seen at Ajanta, Ellora, Aurangabad and other cave temples. Intellectuals such as Gunadhy, Vijnaneswary and Bhaskaracharya hailed from this part of the country. Most of the Marathi saints and poets such as Dnyaneshwar, Namdeva, Ramdas Swami and Eknath belonged to this part of Maharashtra. The Mahanubhava cult cherished in this land and a number of saints and poets from this area became its pioneers.
Thus from the prehistoric times till the end of the Yadava period, Marathwada played a pivotal role in the history and culture, not only of Maharashtra, but also of the whole Deccan and some times of the whole country. Its geographical setting was a major factor for this unique position, but the same seemed to have been responsible for its destruction and disintegration during the post-Yadava period.

During the medieval period, Marathwada lost almost every thing that it had gained in the past.

After the final transfer of this part to the Nizam, its fate was completely sealed for a century and a half. The succeeding generations even forgot the heydays and the glory of the past. The region, therefore, lagged behind the other parts of Maharashtra in all fields.

Marathwada were a part of the old Hyderabad State ruled by a Muslim prince. Urdu was introduced as the language of the court and administration in old Hyderabad and this effected the development of regional languages.
Latur District:

The present Latur district was one of the tahsil-taluks of Osmanabad district.

In the year 1853 the Osmanabad district was temporarily ceded to the British Government. It was reverted to Hyderabad State in 1865. Its headquarters formerly used to be at Naldurg and the district was known as Naldurg district till 1904. The district of Naldurg was abolished and the new district of Osmanabad was formed with headquarters at Osmanabad. In 1905, two tahsils with headquarters at Wasi and Naldurg were abolished. Wasi was merged in Kalam and Naldurg in Tuljapur. Headquarters of Ausa tahsil were shifted to Latur and the tahsil was named Latur tahsil. Among the districts of Marathwada, Osmanabad had the biggest area under the Nizam's own estate called "Sarf-e-Khas."23

The Sarf-e-Khas was merged with the Government area under the Sarf-e-Khas Regulation in the year 1949. All the jagir areas were also abolished and taken over under direct Government administration in the same year. Consequent upon the integration of Sarf-e-Khas and
jagir areas, the boundaries of all the tahsils were reconstituted in the year 1950. Two new tahsils with headquarters at Ausa and Omerga and a new peta with headquarters at Bhum were created. In the same year, 11 enclave villages from Sholapur were transferred to the district and 52 villages from this district were transferred to Sholapur district. With the reorganisation of the states in 1956, the district came to be included in Bombay state. Three tahsils of Ahmedpur, Nilanga and Udgir were transferred from the adjoining district of Bidar to Osmanabad district.24

On dated 16th August 1982 new Latur district was created combining Latur, Ahmedpur, Udgir, Nilanga and Ausa tahsil, which were part of Osmanabad, 43 villages of Revapur tahsil and 11 wadis were also included in the new district. In olden days many kings made Latur their home town. Famous among them were Ratta of Rashtrakul, Vikramadithya sixth of Chalukya dynasty, his son Someshwar III, Reference was found in a "Sheelalekh" of 1128. Sultan ruled Deccan in 1317 and later on it was ruled by Nizam of Hyderabad.

Location of Latur:

The district is situated in the South-east of Maharashtra. The boundaries of the district is
adjusted to Karnataka State. The district is surrounded by Osmanabad, Parbhani and Nanded districts.

According to 1981 Census the geographical area of the district is 7371.9 square Kilometers and it is 2.40 percent of the Maharashtra State and 11.40 percent of the Aurangabad Division. The district consists of 5 talukas and two revenue division. The districts of 5 Panchayat Samitis and 650 Gram Panchayats. There are six rivers in the district. The average rainfall of the district is 749 mm. The climate of the district is pleasant. According to the 1981 Census the population of the district is 12,93,354. They are 2.06% of the population of Maharashtra.

83.53% of the population live in rural areas and remaining population i.e. 16.47% live in urban area. The scheduled caste population in the district is 19.09%. 34.62% of the people are literate in the district. The people of this district profess different religion.

Local Self Government in Latur District:

Local Self Government in the District is conducted by various statutory bodies such as municipalities,
the Zilla Parishad, the Panchayat Samitis and the Village Panchayats. These institutions have progressed in three directions. Firstly, from partially elected or nominated bodies, they have now become fully elective. Secondly, their franchise has also gone on widening from restricted franchise to the universal adult franchise. Thirdly, wider and wider powers have been gradually conferred on them.

The Dastoor-ul-amal (Regulation) of 1889 of the Hyderabad State set up district and taluka Boards in Marathwada. They were wholly nominated, with the revenue officer as the Chairman. Hyderabad District Boards "A" in (Regulation) of 1941 provided for an elective board, but no elections could take place until the reorganisation of States in 1956. The Hyderabad District Boards Act of 1955 did away with nomination and extended the right of franchise to the people.

District Boards were formed in Marathwada under the "Panchayat A" in (Regulation) of 1941, for villages with a population ranging from 2500 to 5000. The Tahsildar called a meeting of all adult residents of the village and selected a panel consisting the names twice
the number of seats, the Collector nominating the required number of persons, the Sarpanch and the Honorary Secretary from this panel. Equal representation was given on a Panchayat to Hindus and Muslims.

Under the Hyderabad Village Panchayat Act, 1951 the elective principal was applied, except in the case of two or three members, who were to be nominated. Under the Hyderabad Gram Panchayat Act 1956, the Panchayat was made entirely elective with reservations of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. After the reorganisation of States, the Bombay Village Panchayat Act 1958 was enforced in the Marathwada region also.25

In course of time it was noticed that the rate of rural development was much below the expectations of the Government. The non-participation of the villagers in the implementation of developmental schemes was found to be the main hurdle in the way of rural development. To investigate into the causes behind such a state of affairs the Government of India appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship
of Balwantrai Mehta, which later came to be known as the 'Balwantrai Mehta Committee'.

The Committee after through investigations came to the conclusion that the Government have failed in appealing and attracting the leadership of the masses in participating in the community and national development schemes. The institutions of Local Self-Government then in existence had not shown any keen interest or initiative in participating in such developmental works. The performance of the village panchayats in this sphere was also discouraging. The Government interference in the working of the local bodies was frequent. So the Committee came to the conclusion that democratic decentralisation of power and placing of the responsibility at the lower level was the only way to improve the state of affairs. The Committee therefore suggested that the responsibility for such regional and local development work should be assigned to local institutions at the district level with the Government accepting the role of guiding, supervising, and planning from a higher plan making available the required finances. The 'Balwantrai Mehta Committee'
recommended the formation of local committees on par with the block development committees to be named as Panchayat Samitis and the district level a district committee to be called the Zilla Parishad instead of the local boards in order to secure integration with the various developmental activities. Thus the decentralisation of administration was achieved with the creation of three responsible functionaries viz. the Gram Panchayats, the Panchayat Samitis and the Zilla Parishad. These institutions are entrusted with the implementation of developmental schemes.

The recommendations of the Committee were accepted by the Government and the Act known as the Maharashtra Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis Act, 1961.
References:


5. Ibid., p. 23.

6. Ibid., p. 23.


10. IIPA, 1975, p. 3.


20. According to Dr. G.H. Khare of Pune, Kashad Brahmins have been near Karad since eighth century A.D. Some of them have moved from Karad to Kolhapur and then to Ratnagiri. They have been known to be in the Kokan since the twelfth century. Interview, on November 20, 1965. Quoted by Mathew, L., *Op. Cit.*, p. 4.


