

CHAPTER-I  
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### INTRODUCTION

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#### 1.1 BRIEF HISTORY OF KOLHAPUR:

The historicity of Kolhapur could be traced back to paleolithic times. According to Rajawade, Kolhapur was a tract originally belonging to aboriginal people known as *Kol* or *Kola*, and Kolhapur was the settlement of the Kolas.<sup>1</sup> Another historian, G.H.Khare, states that the name of the town is derived from the word *Koll*, meaning a "low lying trough between mountain ranges" - a town situated in such a place being named "Kollapur" later transformed into Marathi form "Kolhapur". The town does really lie in a sort of bowl formed by the end portions of the five valleys of Kasari, Jambhali, Tulshi and Bhogavati, all flowing into the Panchaganga river before it reaches the outskirts of Kolhapur town.<sup>2</sup> Kolhapur is situated at 16°41' North latitude and 74°17' East longitude.

The rulership history of Kolhapur since antiquity is much chequered. From first century A.D. onwards, down through centuries, it has been variously ruled by Satavahanas, Badami Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Chalukyas of Kalyani, Shilaharas, and finally, the Yadavas of Devgiri, till the end of the 13th century, when they were vanquished by Delhi Sultans in 1306-07. In subsequent years, it changed hands between different Jagirdars of Adhilshahi and Bahamanshahi. The evidences of the rulership

of these different dynasties are visible in the stone inscriptions that are strewn over at numerous places in the city even today.

In 1675, Shivaji wrestled the control of Kolhapur from Bijapur Mughals and successfully defended its capture from the Mughals and the English. The succeeding period of 100 or so years is replete with Maratha's fratricidal wars to retain the control of the Maratha kingdom. After much bloodshed, scheming and plotting, Sambhaji, the grandson of Shivaji, who was utterly discomfited by his cousin, Shahu, "accepted the principality of Kolhapur as a district and an independent sovereignty, comprehending with certain restrictions, the tract of country between the Warna and Krishna rivers on the north and east, and the Tungabhadra on the south containing about 4,000 square miles and yielding a revenue of Rs.28,00,000."<sup>3</sup> The strife and bloodshed, however, could get over only in 1843, when the British appointed their Minister in Kolhapur Darbar. No significant historical development took place in the later period and the town continued to flourish under successive rulers. The State of Kolhapur was merged into the Indian Union in March 1949 and became a District in the Bombay State.

## **1.2 INDUSTRIAL PROFILE OF KOLHAPUR:**

As far back as 1854, the tentative industrial activity being carried out in the State had prompted Major Graham, a British officer attached to Kolhapur Darbar, to carry out a survey, which lists the number of people engaged in lime-

charcoal-, blanket-, paper-, carpet-, glassbangle-, bamboowork-, ink-making, oilmen, saddlers, perfumers, cloth-weavers, copper-smiths, liquor distillers, etc., divided into 20 different classifications in which were engaged about 1200 people and mentions the population of town as 43,387.<sup>4</sup> In 1926, Dr. Bal Krishna carried out *The Commercial Survey of the Kolhapur City* which also covered the industrial establishments in the town and included such activities as tanneries, edible oil presses, printing presses, motor repairs, fireworks, electric supply, (cine) film production and country liquor. Within a period of about seventifive years, manufacture in Kolhapur had indeed developed into diverse activities, leaving behind the traditional and taking up with contemporary, although the number of people engaged in these activities had increased to merely 3778.<sup>5</sup>

The foundation of the contemporary industry in Kolhapur was laid with the setting of "Shahu Chhatrapati Spinning and Weaving Mills" on 27.9.1906 as a joint-stock concern.<sup>6</sup> This was due partly to utilize the cotton being grown in about 30,000 acres in the district at that time. After several changes in its holding over the years, the Mill now operates as a Unit of Maharashtra State Textile Corporation.

Since mid-19th century, Kolhapur has had the reputation of producing quality *Gur* (jaggery) and exporting it to Kutchha, Kathiawar and Gujarat. Even during the famine-year of 1889, Kolhapur district had 9990 acres of land under sugarcane cultivation. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, the then ruler of the

Princely State, had realised that *Gur* could be harnessed beneficially for the economic development of the State and accordingly, established a separate jaggery market adjacent to the railway station. In the later years, the market prospered and now functions from an area measuring 145 acres. Side-by-side with jaggery, canesugar industry also wields significant influence on the economy of the region. "The Kolhapur Sugar Mill" was established under State patronage in 1932 to process the sugarcane left over after the production of the jaggery. The establishment of this sugar mill proved a blessing in disguise to the then infantile engineering industry in the State, because it gave an impetus to indigenous manufacture of diesel engine pumpsets used mainly for irrigating the sugarcane fields as also carrying out repairs to the imported pumpsets and agricultural implements.

The first ever cast-iron foundry in Kolhapur was set up by an enterprising individual under State patronage as far back as 1920, where he used to produce canecrushers, etc. This foundry, however, could not survive much longer. In 1941, one Shri.S.Y.Kulkarni, started yet another cast-iron foundry on a capital of Rupees.Two. He was yet another enterprising genius and in the early days of his venture, he used to give working demonstrations of his diesel engine and pumpsets to the farmers right in their villages. His zeal and selling talent boosted the sale of his products; and also made the farmers realise the potential of irrigation for harvesting the bounty of double or even triple crops, basically the sugarcane.<sup>7</sup>

Gradually, the increasing use of oil engines, power-pumps and power-crushers in sugar and jaggery industry helped to start many engineering workshops at Kolhapur, in which oil engines, gas-plants, centrifugal pumps, storage batteries, hullers, pulleys and crushers, were manufactured.

The latter-day industrial entrepreneurs in Kolhapur modelled themselves on the lines of the endeavour and tenacity displayed by the pioneers like S.Y.Kulkarni, Hemraj Samani and Mahadeo Shelke, and set up small and medium sized ventures, initially to meet the increasing demands made by the agricultural sector, and subsequently diversifying, for better capacity utilization, into engineering and automotive ancillary sectors.

As at present, Kolhapur boasts of three specially designed and developed industrial zones, namely, (1) Shivaji Udyamnagar (set up in 1947), (2) Shirol MIDC Industrial Estate (set up in 1971), and (3) Gokul-Shirgaon MIDC Industrial Estate (set up in 1982). The industry covers both jobbing and captive segments and produces numerous articles and merchandise in engineering goods, food, milk and milk products, rubber and plastics, textiles, electrical and electronic items, chemicals and fertilizers, paper and paper products, etc.

Kolhapur of today, as per the data available from Government Departments, presents a picture of pulsating, thriving and progressive industrial development; still drawing

its lifeblood of finance and manpower from the typical agrarian setting around, which has developed in its own way on cash-crops like sugarcane and tobacco.

### 1.3 GENESIS OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENT:

The trade union movement in Kolhapur owes its genesis to a fledgling movement, *Praja Parishad*, which had coalesced into an ongoing agitation in 1939 and focussed on setting up of a responsible government in the erstwhile Princely State so as to alleviate the difficulties of the farmers and students. Madhavrao Bagal and Ratnappa Kumbhar were the chief leaders of it. The movement also actively supported the national freedom struggle then raging on beyond the boundaries of the Princely State. Thus, the coloration of *Praja Parishad* was purely political; but since it was involved both in protecting and promoting the rights of the working class under the aegis of its ideology of militance, the movement could take roots amongst the industrial workers. While reminiscing about those days, Santaram Patil recollects, "People were attached to the freedom struggle first and to the trade union movement later. Thus, the working class, while struggling for national freedom, was simultaneously getting organized. This alone can be cited as a unique feature of the trade union movement in Kolhapur".<sup>8</sup>

A more detailed description of the development of trade union movement in Kolhapur is given in Chapter-IV.

#### 1.4 MAKING OF A TRADE UNION LEADER:

As formal organizations, trade unions are goal-oriented organizations and have evolved certain institutionalized practices to realize their goals. For a trade union leader, an awareness of the goals and familiarity with the techniques used to achieve them are a *sine qua non* and a process of socialization operates in order to secure the right type of leaders. Sometimes, the outsiders join unions either as social workers with a zeal to serve workers or with a desire to develop their political career or join as professional trade unionists and manage the affairs of the trade union for certain considerations. A trade union leader has a variety of tasks to perform for the union as well as for the union members besides satisfying many extra-union demands of the members. The leadership role provides both strains and gratifications, and the gains are more intangible than tangible. Mental satisfaction, self-improvement and status-enhancement are the major intangible gains.

An exhaustive discussion about the various aspects of the trade union leadership is being presented in Chapter-III.

#### 1.5 SELECTION OF TOPIC:

It is an indisputable fact that the industrial development in the erstwhile Princely State of Kolhapur could get under way only with the State patronage; but obviously,



the interests of the State and of the workers employed in the State enterprises were at loggerheads once too often on the grounds of national freedom struggle, protection of farmers' interests (because the workers themselves hailed from the farming community) and at the tertiary level, protection of the workers' own interests. Since *Praja Parishad*, which spear-headed the movement at all the three levels was political in nature, its leaders certainly desired to use industrial workforce as a strength for the cause of the movement. Conversely, the leaders of the movement, for being acceptable to the followers, had to come from the followers themselves. Thus, one witnesses the evolution of a tradition, typical to the trade union movement in Kolhapur, that the union leaders emerge from amongst the workers themselves. Naturally, when the followers know that their union leader is or had once been a worker like themselves, besides a feeling of fraternity, they also have certain expectations of him.

The researcher, therefore, was attracted towards carrying out an in-depth investigation into the past history and present state of the **trade union leadership** in Kolhapur and the vicinity, with a view to ascertain the causes that are responsible for its evolution and development and also identify such other factors which might guide and influence the future progress of the union leadership; and offer such suitable suggestions for possible improvement after drawing definitive conclusions.

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