

The socio-economic life on the eve of Sangli State's inception was much more similar to that of other parts of the Maratha Country under the Peshwas. Broadly speaking, in the Sangli State there were five classes of the society viz., the members of the ruling class, the intelligentsia, the artisans, the peasants and the landless labourers. These five fold groups in the society played their respective roles for social cause and wellbeing of the society. Majority of the people in the State were followers of Hinduism, then came the people of Islam, Jainism and Lingayat one after the other in their respective numbers in the society. In each religion there were their respective castes and sub-castes among the people. It was not a harmonious group of people but was a conglomeration of the various people and religions. However all of them were loyal to the ruler and no one threatened the power of the ruler on the strength of religion. Generally the social life in the Sangli State was quite similar to the life in other parts of the Maratha Country under the Peshwa and all the people followed freely all the customs and usages of their respective religions without any threat or fear from the Rulers.

The economic condition of the people on the eve of Sangli State's inception was depended on agriculture, trade, commerce and village industries. The manufacturers, the labourers, the money lenders and professional classes also played an important

role in the economic life of the state. Modernity was not born at the time of Sangli State's inception and old practices of economic life were generally followed every where.

The Rulers of Sangli State and Their Policies

The Sangli State was ruled by three rulers, namely, Chintamanrao Appasaheb-I (1783 to 1851 A.D.), Dhundirao Tatyasaheb (1859 to 1901 A.D.) and Chintamanrao Dhundirao alias Appasaheb Patwardhan (1910 to 1948 A.D.). The short account of these three rulers can be given as follows:

Chintamanrao Appasaheb-I (1783 to 1851 A.D.)

Chintamanrao Appasaheb-I was invested with Saranjam Jagir at Miraj on 6th February 1783 A.D. when he was a boy of 8 years only. This ruler of Miraj due to family feuds claimed separate and independent Jagir from the Miraj State. It was after the partition of the Miraj State, the Sangli State came into being and he became the founder and the first ruler of the Sangli State.

Chintamanrao ruled the Sangli State under the British regime from 1818 A.D. to 1851 A.D. He was an able and competent ruler. He possessed all the traits of a soldier, a prince and an able administrator.¹ After giving an account of his career, captain West turned to narrate his character in his own "Memoirs" and concluded that "To the last he (Chintamanrao) had a somewhat

overweening sense of his won dignity and importance and kept up a State beyond his means, but his faults were for the most part of noble nature, and he inspired respect in all with whom he had to deal. His "great superiority morally and intellectually, to all the other Sirdars of the Southern Maratha Country," was generally acknowledged and his frankness of manner and intelligence struck all who were brought into contact with him. He was a liberal landlord, and always showed himself solicitous to secure the comfort of his subjects, with which view he constructed numerous tanks, wells and other work of irrigation. He also took great interest in horticulture and prided himself much on the beauty of his gardens and the number of exotic plants he had introduced into the country. He prided himself especially as being a soldier, but he was in later years a most bigoted conserver of all Hindoo prejudices.² Though an active ruler he was by no means a good financial administrator and allowed his Karbharies to settle his monetary affairs much as they pleased". He was lavish in his expenditure and fond of military display.³

Mr. Townsend, who was for many years the Political Agent in the Karnatic and who knew Chintamanrao Appasaheb intimately paid a very rich tribute to his virtues. While reviewing his career in 1851, Mr. Townsend told - "His character was marked by any integrity of a high order, by a desire to do absolutely

equal handed justice between man and man, and by whole hearted affection both for the rich and the poor. He possessed great wealth and power, but his greatness was due solely to his virtues. He always considered that the Jagir was a trust with him for the good of the people. How he discharged the trust can best be known by the prosperity of his Jagir".⁴ Mr. Townsend again paid a glowing tribute to the memory of Chintamanrao through a letter written to his son Dhundirao Tatyasaheb on 21st January 1860 that - "Chintamanrao was feared for his valour in War and respected for his justice in peace. He was faithful ally of the British Government and the companion in War of the great Lord Wellesley. He treated his ryots with justice and kindness."⁵

Chintamanrao Appasaheb thus proved himself an able and benevolent Ruler, and really helped the socio-economic upliftment of his subjects.

Dhundirao Tatyasaheb (1859 to 1901 A.D.)

In between the period from the death of Chintamanrao Appasaheb to the completion of minority age of his son Dhundirao Tatyasaheb, the administration of Sangli was assigned to a Board of three Karbharis. Then the rule of Dhundirao Tatyasaheb started as an heir to the Sangli State from 12th July 1859 A.D.

on that occasion the young ruler promised to promote the welfare of his people, particularly of the agricultural classes, and to protect his subjects against injustice and misrule. But with all his good intentions and benevolent impulses, his inexperience led to laxity in the administration. The administrative laxity was also due to his character. Besides from his young days he was surrounded by bad characters and evil influences.⁶ In addition to that he had not the strength of character to withstand evil influences. He lacked alike the consummate knowledge of men and affairs, the practical force, the mental vigour which alone could have brought the realization of the high aims he said he had in view. He was poorly educated and his natural powers were of mediocre quality. Nor had he the capacity for using greater minds than his own by which he could have managed to conceal his own defects and successfully administer the affairs of the State.⁷ In this connection Major F.J. Oldfield, Acting Assistant Political Agent, Kolhapur and Southern Maratha Country in his Annual Report for the Southern Maratha Country, forwarded to Political Agent, Kolhapur and S.M.C. States wrote - "Though by no means deficient in intelligence, nor ill-informed as to what is passing around him, the chief continues entirely under the influence, of his favourite Ann Patwardhan, who is the real ruler of the Jagheer, and the sole confidential adviser of the chief in every measure

or occurrence, whether domestic or political, that takes place in Sangli. This arises more from the indolent and facile disposition of the Chief than from any other cause. Though personally amiable and popular he is singularly deficient in strength of will and has all his life been accustomed to lean upon the advice and influence of others".⁸

In order to remedy this state of affairs British Government made arrangement for the joint administration of the State for a period of three years from 1873 A.D. and it was extended later on upto 1887 A.D.⁹

Dhundirao Tatyasaheb was restored to full powers and authority in 1887 A.D. He ruled for the next 14 years with great benevolence. During the famine years (1890-1900) and the early visitation of the disastrous bubonic plague he spent freely from his treasury to carry help and comfort to the people. He was as keen as his father, Chintamanrao Appasaheb-I, on promoting trade and industry within the State. The Kakadwadi water works was constructed by him in 1896 for the supply of water to Swanand Bhuvan and from there to Sangli Town. The Water Works at Terdal was also constructed during his period.¹⁰

Col. W.B. Ferris, Political Agent, Kolhapur and S.M.C. States on the occasion of succession Durbar held at Sangli on 15th June 1903 A.D., told about the achievements of Dhundirao

Tatyasaheb as - "during his 42 years rule including 14 years of joint administration, the state has been developed, communications had been opened, railways established, public buildings constructed, revenue settlement effected and every branch of administration brought to the standard of modern requirements."¹¹

This remark, naturally proves as to how a progress was brought by Dhundirao Tatyasaheb in the socio-economic life of the Sangli State.

Chintamanrao Dhundirao alias Appasaheb Patwardhan-II
(1910 A.D. to 1948 A.D.)

The third and the last ruler of the Sangli State, Shrimant Chintamanrao Appasaheb-II was in fact not the natural heir to the seat of the Sangli State. He was adopted in the royal house as an heir and ruler of the State. He was enlightened and intelligent ruler. He devoted his personal attention to every branch of administration with considerable success and tried to maintain a high standard of efficiency in it.

Regarding his administration, Justice M.C. Chagla, the Chief Justice of Bombay High Court, during his visit to Sangli on 12th January 1952 remarked -

"Outside the State-limits the administration of Sangli

enjoyed a reputation for modernity, efficiency and benevolence, and the chief credit for its progressive and democratic character was freely given to the ruler." Further he added, "it is quite clear to me that the administration of Sangli was modern in the best sense of the term, in the sense that the wishes and aspirations of the people and the welfare of the common man received the best attention of the government of the State. Speaking of the judicial department of the State, in particular, I can say with confidence that when we look over the judicial administration of Sangli after it's merger with the Bombay State, we found that administration to be in almost complete conformity with ours. There was very little for us to improve. Your Judges were appointed from among the veteran and efficient judges from Bombay State service, and hence justice was fairly and ably administered. I was assured on every hand, that there never was any the least suspicion of official interference with the normal course of justice."¹² This was high praise indeed, and the last ruler of Sangli deserved it in the fullest measure. And as observed by Sir C.V. Raman, it was held in high esteem that the rule of the last ruler that lasted for about 40 years -

"will remain one of the brightest spots in the history of princely India".¹³

The way of Chintamanrao Appasaheb-II of Sangli, in the words of Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya was that of "constant and conscientious endeavours throughout his long period of reign had been to advance the moral and material well-being of his state and his subjects by every means within his capacity and power."¹⁴

According to B.N. De, of Calcutta, "The high standards of administration, it's efficiency, it's modernity, it's progressive and democratic character and it's achievements would do credit to a state with larger resources. The secret of the success of the administration lay in the Rajasaheb's selflessness, patriotism, and placing the interests of the people above his own to the last moment of his rule."¹⁵

Chintamanrao Appasaheb-II, as a foresighted statesman envisaged that the agitation for political reforms in the neighbouring British India had its own repercussions in the minds of the people of Indian States and being gratified with the working of the then existing Rayat Assembly in the State, he made an important announcement of Reforms in the State in 1930 A.D. and enlarged the scope of people's association with the Government and with that object in view widened the powers of Assembly. Further about the year 1933 A.D., he granted another

instalment of political reforms, comparatively far more progressive and advanced. As a result political leaders in India paid glowing tributes to him.¹⁶ It was thus Chintamanrao Appasaheb-II, was the foremost ruler in granting full responsible Government to his people and setting forth a noble example of a democratic rule in 1946 A.D.¹⁷

It was because of the enlightened and free atmosphere in the Sangli State that the Deccan States People's Conferences were held in Sangli under the leadership of stalwart nationalist Congress leaders like the late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and the late Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Even prior to that, leaders like Lokamanya Tilak or Mahatma Gandhi who were dubbed as seditious by the foreign British Government, visited Sangli State and expressed their views in public meeting because of the liberal policy of the Ruler of Sangli State.¹⁸ During his period Sangli was practically the home of the nationalist movement. Even in the Quit India Movement of 1942 A.D., a number of underground nationalists sought shelter in the Sangli State of Chintamanrao Appasaheb-II,¹⁹ and the King as a patriot of India, tolerated in his State the stay of the underground workers. Then after the Independence of India he visualised that with the advent of freedom in India and with the intensive wave of democracy, it was not possible for smaller states like

his own to survive any longer. As such, he felt that the princely States in India should cease to exist, and he himself willingly offered to merge his Sangli State in the Indian Union without any disappointment or distress.²⁰

Religious Policy

The Rulers of Sangli State were staunch followers of Hinduism. During their regime, the Brahminical customs, traditions, usages and practices like worship of Gram Devata, worship of popular deities and carrying on Japa, Tapa, Mantra, Tantra, Abhisekha, Anusthans, Shantikarma, sacrifices, Mahurta, Brahmin dinner parties, Dakshina to Brahmins etc. were not only continued but also practised by the Rulers themselves. The Brahmins therefore got an important place and prestige in the religious life as being the Brahmins they were privileged to head the religious functions and perform worship to gods.

Chintamanrao Appasaheb-I the first ruler of the Sangli State constructed a temple in Sangli Town and installed therein his family idol of Shri Ganapati and helped for the maintenance and upkeep of the Hindu, religious rituals and traditions.²¹

Chintamanrao Appasaheb-II, the third ruler of Sangli State, abandoned the practice of killing of cows through a special ordinance of 1919 A.D.²² as cow was sacred to the Hindus.

In spite of the fact that the rulers of the Sangli State belonged to the Brahmin Caste, that is the highest caste among the Hindus, they observed religious tolerance and allowed the people of other religions for continuation of their religious beliefs, customs practices etc. Chintamanrao Appasaheb-I granted lands for religious and charitable purposes to all creeds of people without distinction of their faiths. He subscribed liberally for the famine stricken people without any consideration of religious motive. This had proved to conclude that the Ruler of the Sangli State followed religious tolerance policy and maintained goodwill between all the sections of their subjects.

Social Policy of the Rulers

The social policy of the Rulers of the Sangli State was based on their conservative attitude. We found that among the Hindus, the Brahmins were in a better position, chiefly because the Rulers themselves belonged to the Brahmin caste. The Brahmins in the Sangli State had better opportunities in the State administration and in other walks of life. They enjoyed dominant position and prestige in the social and religious life of the Hindus. But lower castes of the Hindus remained neglected and backward. The position of untouchables in the Sangli State was very bad as in other parts of Maharashtra. They were treated as

ex-communicated by other caste Hindus. The Rulers of the State also did not try for the eradication of this evil custom of untouchability. Therefore the practice of untouchability continued in the Sangli State till 1947 A.D. In that year an Act was passed by State Legislative Assembly for removal of social disabilities of Harijans, although, the performance of worship by a Harijan in any temple or an access to it was not allowed.

Next to Hindus, the Muslim was another important community in the Sangli State. From the contemporary records it seems that the relations between the Hindus and the Muslims were on certain problems not cordial. However the Rulers as were prudent to maintain religious peace in their State an impartial religious and social policy was followed and practised by them.

So far as the position of women was concerned, in the Sangli State there were no new reforms and women suffered as they were suffering in other parts of the Maratha country. They were victims of numerous evil customs, superstitions and prejudices such as early marriage, dowry system, polygamy, practice of Sati, practice of Devadasi, widow-hood, illiteracy etc. As the rulers were the Brahmins, and as the Brahmin caste followed anti-reform policy in case of the women nothing good happened in the Sangli State.

Economic Policy

The economic life of the people in the Sangli State was mainly dependent on agriculture. Trade, commerce and village industries were also sources of livelihood of the people and all the methods of medieval life were followed till the time of Second World War.

Although the peasants or cultivators were supporters of the whole society, their economic position at the beginning was far from satisfactory level. The agriculture was backward and depended on rainfall, Chintamanrao Appasaheb-I, could do nothing to improve agriculture/^{as}well as position of cultivators except construction of some tanks, wells and other work of irrigation.²³

During the regime of Dhundirao Tatyasaheb some attempts were made to improve the agriculture as well as the position of cultivators. He prohibited oppression and severity in the realization of revenue and did away with the punishment of imprisonment for non-payment of revenue. In the year 1863 A.D. a proclamation was issued to the effect that, if Jirayat lands were converted into Bagayat, the Jirayat rates only would be charged for at least twenty years.²⁴

During the regime of Chintamanrao Appasaheb-II, efforts were made to introduce improved methods of agriculture and induce people to take new methods. This was being done through

the agency of an expert who was styled as the Agricultural Inspector of the State. Efforts were also systematically made to popularise and propagate scientific agricultural practices.²⁵ In order to provide to the farmers improved seeds and modern technic of agriculture and thereby to increase the agricultural production, a number of co-operative institutions were established in the Sangli State. In this way Chintamanrao Appasaheb-II tried to improve the condition of agriculture and agricultural communities in the State.

The encouragement to trade was a cordial feature of the economic policy of the rulers of the Sangli State. The trade of Sangli Town began to outgrow the capacity of Ganapati Peth and overflowed into the empty spaces to the east. The State Railway opened for traffic in 1907 A.D. hastened this process. Besides the amenities of railway transport and water supply made easy way for the trading prosperity of Sangli. It was thus encouragement to trade and security to the traders made Sangli prosperous and the State economically sound.

Education Policy

As the traditions in India tell, the item of education as a State subject remained most neglected in India. The Sangli State was not also an exception. But after the contacts with the British a new kind of change took place in the educational

outlook and education policy of the State. Dhundirao Tatyasaheb took lively interests in the cause of education and laid down the foundation of Modern Education in the Sangli State. At the beginning, an Anglo-Vernacular School was established at Sangli in 1863 A.D. and a suitable school house for it was constructed at a cost of Rupees 12,000/-. However there were no schools for untouchable pupils. In regard to Primary Education, Chintamanrao Appasaheb-II, pursued the policy of free and compulsory education which had been adopted in 1908 A.D. During his regime separate schools were established for girls, night school for adults and Low Caste Schools for untouchables.

In order to encourage the higher education of the State subjects, Dhundirao Tatyasaheb, the second ruler of the State, instituted two scholarships for the students from the Sangli State. Chintamanrao Appasaheb-II increased the number of State Scholarships upto 16 Taluka Scholarships, one College scholarship and four Girl Scholarships and 14 Depressed Classes Scholarships.

In 1942 A.D. a Training College was opened to train the teachers in Primary Schools. He gave munificent donations to Willingdon College and the New Engineering College Sangli. In this way Chintamanrao Appasaheb-II tried for all round progress of education in the Sangli State.

Encouragement to Arts and Literature

Chintamanrao Appasaheb-I was a patron of arts and letters. He had in his service Bhiva Sutar, a well known sculptor. His beautiful work in marble - the image of the god Ganapati at Sangli, is a notable example of his highly developed art. The other noteworthy artist who was brought by Chintamanrao to Sangli was Kumari, who introduced the art of making beautiful brass and silver pots for which Sangli was famous for many years. The famous dramatist, Vishnupant Bhave, who may be styled the father of the Marathi drama, was a resident of Sangli and was patronised by Chintamanrao Appasaheb-I. On account of these and many other fine qualities, Chintamanrao Appasaheb-I was considered to be an accomplished and popular ruler.²⁶

During the regime of Dhundirao Tatyasaheb the other dramatist known as Govind Ballal Deval rose to fame. He wrote many famous dramas like "Sanshaya Kallol, Sharada, Zunzarrao" etc.²⁷

Due to the cordial policy of Chintamanrao Appasaheb-II many persons rose up in the literary fields and in different arts and only distinguished persons can be mentioned such as Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar, a well known dramatist, Ganpatrao Bodas and Dinanath Mangeshkar actors and musicians etc.²⁸

In brief it can be said safely that the Sangli State in regard to economic and political life was normal as other princely states in Maharashtra and socially it remained backward. However all the new trends in the modern life were slowly followed and their progress grew steadily to improve socio-economic life of the people in the Sangli State.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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- 3 Ibid., p. 25.
- 4 D.B. Parasnis., Op. cit., pp. 61-62.
- 5 R.C. Burke., Op. cit., p. 24.
- 6 Ibid., p. 32.
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