

: CHAPTER - IV :

Emergence of Agro-industrial Society and
Political Development in Maharashtra.

- 1) Changing nature of Politics of Maharashtra.
- 2) Emergence of new leadership in Maharashtra.
- 3) Emergence of new class in rural areas.
- 4) Changing nature of the Congress party.
- 5) Sugar co-operatives and political development
in Maharashtra.

4.1 THE CHANGING NATURE OF POLITICS OF MAHARASHTRA :

Y. B. Chavan's political ideas and policies were responsible for the political development in the state as the new leadership and new classes emerged on the political scene. It is rightly pointed out that after this politics was divided between three sectors (1) State Sector (2) Co-operative Sector and (3) Panchayati Raj Sector. The rural political institutions like sugar co-operatives and Panchayati Raj bodies have become sinews of political power.¹ In the present chapter an attempt is made to study impact of the policies of Y. B. Chavan on political development in Maharashtra.

The creation of new state of Maharashtra was the result of continuous and the united efforts and struggle of Marathi speaking people under the leadership of Samyukta Maharashtra movement. The Samyukta Maharashtra movement was guided by radical ideas as most of the parties that constituted the Samiti were leftist in character and ideology. When Y. B. Chavan took over as the Chief Minister of New state, he had difficult task to defeating the samiti and he knew that the samiti especially the parties like the C P I and P W P and the P S P could only be defeated by pursuing new policy. The main thrust of this policy was the establishment of new

agro-industrial society in the state. Hence, Y. B. Chavan undertook the experiment of creation of agro-industrial society so as to bring about all round development of the people in general and farmers in particular. This was required because Maharashtra was a predominantly agrarian state. Consequently majority of Marathi people lived in rural areas and were engaged in agriculture. In order to transform rural society into dynamic one there was need to develop agro-linked industries and to use modern technology in agriculture. A network of institutions of sale and purchase of agricultural produce by the farmers themselves through their market committee based on principles of co-operation was established. Decentralization of power was carried out by establishing Zilla Parishads , Grampanchayats as to involve a large number of local people in the developmental activities. The Land Tenancy Act of 1948 and 1957, the Land ceiling Act, Land Consolidation Act were passed and implemented. All these development led to bring about change in politics of Maharashtra.

Maharashtra emerged through the struggle of the Marathi people. But subsequently there occurred qualitative and quantitative change in politics of the state. The agro-industrial policy and the programmes of the Panchayati Raj had greater share in bringing about the new change.²

The Congress party held that the creation of Maharashtra was the result of statesmanship of Y. B. Chavan. The objectives of the Congress party were to :

i) Fortify power in the state by securing wide support of the Marathi speaking people who were disintegrated for long time.

ii) Assist the emergence of new capitalist industrial power to act - against the existing capitalists belonging to non-Maharashtrian group.

iii) The special plan of Panchayati raj institutions and agro-industrial society was designed and carried out in order to show that unique experiments were carried out in Maharashtra.

The constituent parties of Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti aimed at creating egalitarian society on the strength of popular support they got during, the movement. But there was difference of opinion and its two major partners the P S P and the C P I were hardening their attitudes towards each others. But after the inauguration of new policies that aimed at establishment of Agro-industrial society, many prominent wealthy farmers working in the samyukta Maharashtra samiti which mainly constituted of the peasants workers party. The praja socialist party and the communist party resigned from

their respective parties and joined the Congress party. Thus, the power and influence of Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti eventually waned in the political life of Maharashtra.³

The Samyukta Maharashtra movement succeeded in bringing about unity between the caste Hindus and depressed classes. The veteran leaders like Krantisingha Nana Patil and Karmveer B. K. Gaikwad tried to unite workers and the depressed classes. The significance of this unity was not properly realised by the leftist parties. However, the shrewd statesman like Y. B. Chavan realised the significance of this unity and he succeeded in dividing them by giving special consideration to depressed classes. His plan was highly successful and consequently, the leftist parties lost their influence and the Republican party of India, which was bigger and stronger group among the dalits got politically weakened and remained disorganised due to the split.⁴

In the rural areas, a new class consisting of landless labour and small farmers emerged due to the complex process of development in general and the policy of agro-industrial society in particular. Their quantitative strength gave them greater importance in Politics. Formerly big industrial centres namely Bombay, Thane, Poona and Kolhapur were the political battle fields of capitalists and workers in Maharashtra. But in changed situation, other areas of the

state are also becoming important. Thus, the workers gave more importance to their economic welfare than political ideals. This was set back for the leftist parties predominantly based on the strength of workers and peasants.⁵ Thus, after 1960, Y. B. Chavan successfully defeated the weak challenge of the divided Samiti and the state entered into new era when the new leadership and new organisations sprang up from the rural areas.

4.2 EMERGENCE OF NEW LEADERSHIP :

Along with sprouting out of new organisations in the state, the new leadership also emerged as the old congress leadership mostly coming from the urban areas of the city and drawn from the upper castes and classes of the society declined. This process began within the Congress since 1957 as most of the old Congress leaders were defeated in the elections. Chavan carefully reorganised the organisational setup of the party so that it could successfully absorb the new leadership that was emerging fast as a result of expansion and development of education and co-operative movement in the state.

The national and social movements of pre-independence period the co-operative movements during post-independence period together with establishment of Panchayati raj according to the principle of decentralization of power etc.

were the stimulating factors for creating network of trained and devoted workers and leaders in the rural areas. This gave rise to new leadership in rural areas. It can be said that due to these developments, the dominance of upper caste and urban politicians declined which was so conspicuous during 1952-56. These classes paved the way for the leadership of middle peasant castes which was benefitted by land reforms development of co-operative institutions and Panchayati Raj Bodies.⁶

This new leadership in rural Maharashtra was self-confident efficient and pragmatic hence it could provide leadership to the state and the party. Yashwantrao Chavan then the Chief Minister of Maharashtra had successfully nursed and brought up the new leadership in rural Maharashtra and shaped it properly by giving systematic training to the leaders.

The educational movement launched by Shañu Maharaj, Bhaurao Patil and Panjabrao Deshmukh gave encouragement and training to new leaders from the rural areas. Y. B. Chavan extended educational facilities to the rural areas and tapped promising leadership through co-operative institutions and Panchayati Raj bodies. The rural leadership from all the 4 regions of the state started asserting their influence.

It must be noted that this leadership represented a different class in the state that emerged as a result of planning and development.

4.3 EMERGENCE OF NEW CLASS IN RURAL AREAS :

Maharashtra is a predominantly agrarian state and about 47% of the cultivators are " Small holders ". The small holders are not in a position to avail of various concessions available for cultivation and allied agricultural activities from the various sources due to their non-credit worthiness. Their own resources are also meagre because of their small holding so the Maharashtra state has started co-operative movement by establishing co-operative credit societies in villages. D C C banks and state co-operative banks which provided financial credit facilities at moderate rate of interest to ' small holders ' with the result the state has made good progress in the agricultural field.

The govt. succeeded in bringing about quantitative and qualitative changes in the economic activities and the class relationships through the medium of the agro-industrial society, particularly in rural areas of Maharashtra. This gave rise to new class of the progressive farmers who began to use modern technology and knowledge of science instead of traditional methods of cultivation to increase their agricultural production. Application of modern technology in

agricultural field led to lessen dependence on unskilled man power and to increase skilled trained and semi-skilled workers. The new colonies of permanent and temporary migrated, semiskilled farm labours and workers were established the campus and out skirts of the agro-industrial centres. Some of these colonies are permanent and others are temporary. Generally the life of peoples in the colonies is cosmopolitan. However, the sense of distinction is still dominant in the minds of land lords (agro-industrialist). Because majority of them are wealthy and belong to the upper caste Marathas, Jains, Lingayats and Brahmins. This new class of agro-industrialists concentrated huge economic and political power in their hands. Thus the agro-industrial economy created mainly two classes viz. the progressive farmers on the one hand and landless labourers and workers on the other hand in rural areas.⁷

The labours are dependent on the progressive farmers. Similarly, the ' Small holders ' have to seek co-operation from the progressive farmers. Because the progressive farmers have controlled all the power centres and institutions. Growing of cash crops has made the position of small holders and labours much more difficult. The new class of agro-industrialists has reaped the advantage of increased production. They are now able to control rural politics because they can use their institutions both co-operative and Panchayati Raj

bodies as support structures in winning elections at all levels. At the local level, new leadership has emerged. They have also begun to maintain good relations with industrialists and businessmen in cities with a view to fortifying their positions to further their economic interests.⁸

This new class of the progressive farmers and bagayatdars captured most of the positions of power and profit and the new leadership sprang up from this class. This class did not snap its links with the farmers and provide leadership to them. Y. B. Chavan's strategy of development and politics was mainly dependent upon this class.

4.4. CHANING NATURE OF THE CONGRESS PARTY OF MAHARASHTRA :

While studying the politics of Maharashtra one has to take into consideration its economic and social structure. The political organization the administration of political institutions, leadership and allied political activities are directly connected with the changeing economic and social environment.

After 1960 Y. B. Chavan as a Chief Minister of Maharashtra successfully tried to groom the new political leaders in rural areas of Maharashtra and changed the nature of the congress party. The Congress party before 1960 was dominated by the Gujrati and Marwadi capitalists and the upper caste leaders.

Hence, after 1960 also the Congress party in Maharashtra state had two separate congress committees the Bombay Pradesh Congress committee and Maharashtra Pradesh Congress committee. After 1960 the M P C C was under going change as under Y. B. Chavan's leadership new leaders sprang up and started occupying key-positions. This had happened because of development of sugar co-operatives and Panchayati Raj institutions in the state.

The middle and wealthy farmers, capitalists and rich sections joined the Congress in large numbers and strengthened the power of the Congress party in the rural area. This process of assimilation started long before the general elections of 1962 and it gave great impetus in the following years so much so that when the Congress party was defeated in 8 states in 1967 elections, the strength of the Congress party in Maharashtra remain intact. Y. B. Chavan successfully consolidated political power of middle peasant castes in Maharashtra and provided the state with the leadership.⁹

4.5 SUGAR CO-OPERATIVES AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN MAHARASHTRA :

Maharashtra is drought prone area and the failure of rains and consequent famines are a regular occurrence. Successive failure of crops during the second half of the last

century led to a great deal of hardships to the peasant cultivators who were heavily indebted to the money lenders and traders. Many peasants lost their lands to the money lenders. The discontent among the peasants exploded in the well-known " Deccan Riots " of the 1870. The commission appointed to enquire the riots recommended that the river irrigation projects be constructed to improve the conditions of the peasants. After that a number of canal irrigation projects were taken up by the government.

After overcoming a number of difficulties, they succeeded in starting a co-operative sugar factory at Pravaranagar in 1951. This was the first successful co-operative sugar factory in the country.¹⁰

The success of first co-operative sugar factory at Pravaranagar prompted the government to encourage the formation of similar co-operatives in Maharashtra and other parts of the country. During the fifties and sixties a large number of such co-operatives were established. Maharashtra alone had 77 sugar factories 67 of them co-operatives. Maharashtra alone contributed 33% of the total production of sugar, the largest among the state.

Sugar co-operatives in Maharashtra are essentially processing and marketing organizations. Cane-growers in a given area say 50 to 100 villages form a co-operative. The

members cultivate cane of their own lands. The co-operatives provide a number of services, they guarantee crop loans and provided automatic repayment, they help to establish lift irrigation societies, poultry co-operatives etc. They distribute hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers and research information and provide soil testing services, they process the cane into sugar and they market the sugar distribute the profits in the form of high cane prices to farmer members.¹¹

It is rightly pointed out that sugar co-operatives in the state are an essay in inter governmental co-operation. The co-operative sugar factories were ^{financed by} the state and district co-operative banks and their primary units. The essence of scheme of the co-operative sugar factories lay in the democratic and autonomous character of the co-operative institution.¹²

It is the opinion of Dr. B. S. Baviskar that there is symbiotic relationship between politics and sugar co-operatives in rural Maharashtra.¹³ The two are inter-twined in several ways so much so that you can not understand one without the other. As one leaders put it, " You can not understand our sugar co-operatives without understanding our politics, nor can you understand our politics without understanding our sugar co-operatives." ¹⁴

The co-operative sugar factories are but one structure of power at the local, district level. They are closely linked with other co-operatives village level - multi purpose societies,

the taluka level sale and purchase unions and the district level central co-operative banks. Another structure of power is constituted by the Panchayati Raj institutions : Grampanchayat, Taluka Panchayat Samitis and Zilla Parishadas. The party organization constitutes another structure of power. These three structures of power constitute the real stuff of politics at the local level. Thus, these institutions at the local levels are institutionalising politics and encouraging political development in the state, Y. B. Chavan's role in this sphere can not be.

Thus the sugar co-operatives in particular and the co-operative movement in general greatly influenced political developments in Maharashtra after 1960. The co-operative politics has become the third arena of politics and along with Panchayati Raj bodies it tries to influence state politics in a very big way. Hence it is rightly pointed out by Baviskar that the sugar co-operatives have begun politics of development.¹⁵

Y. B. Chavan had a clear vision and the necessary ideology of political development when he became Chief Minister of Maharashtra. He had put before the people perfect ' utopia ' that took into account all aspects of social and cultural development.¹⁶ He sought to bring about the basic

change in the rural areas and the emergence of agro-industrial society and consequent political development in some areas of the state is the result of it.

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