

## Linguistic states and formation of Samyukta Maharashtra

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### Abstract

"The language and culture of an area have an undoubted importance as they represent a pattern of living which is common in that area." - Resolution of the Government of India relating to the State Reorganization Commission, 1953

According to historical records, during the British rule, India was divided into about "600 princely states and provinces". Language is a major aspect of national consolidation and integration. The reorganization of the states based on the language came to the fore almost immediately after independence.

Samyukta Maharashtra Movement was the most powerful movement after independence. The movement received active support from Maharashtrian people. The inclusion of Bombay in the Maharashtra state is considered as the victory of the movement. Marathi Newspapers "Navyug", Maratha, Samyukta Maharashtra Patrika, Prabhat, Belgaon Samachar, Navakal etc. played a key role to make this movement more mass base. "Maratha" was considered as the mouthpiece of the movement. Marathi Newspapers spearheaded the demand for the creation of a separate Marathi-speaking state with the city of Bombay as its capital.

**Keywords:** Movement, Language, spearheaded.

### 1. Introduction

The rise and growth of the Samyukta Maharashtra movement must be studied not merely in the general context of the country-wide agitation for linguistic States but also in the particular context of the society and politics in Maharashtra. Language is closely related to culture and therefore to the customs of people. Besides, the massive spread of education and growth of mass literacy can only occur through the medium of the mother tongue.

The history of Samyukta Maharashtra movement can be stretched back to 1920s. Lokmanya Tilak expressed the need to impart national education through mother tongue. Gandhiji himself proposed recreation of States along the linguistic lines in the Nagpur Session in 1921. In 1928 the Workers' and Farmers' Party made a presentation before the Motilal Nehru Committee for reorganization of States and demanded a separate State of Maharashtra. The Nehru Committee sanctioned the demand.

Mahatma Gandhi called linguistic formation necessary because it permitted people to speak the same language to live together as a single political unit and conduct their affairs autonomously in their own language. He believed that the people into such homogenous and autonomous units will took full participation in the freedom struggle; that is why he structured the Congress in this manner. It was one of the major articles of the Swaraj Scheme of 1924, where Mahatma Gandhi asserted, "There should be re-distribution of provinces on a linguistic basis with as complete autonomy as possible for every province for its internal administration and growth."

A resolution was passed that a single State be formed of all the regions where the Marathi language is spoken, and named 'Samyukta Maharashtra' in the 1939 *Sahitya Sammelan* in Ahmednagar. The term 'Samyukta Maharashtra' used for the first time in this Sammelan. Ramrao Deshmukh, the member of C.P. and Berar Legislative Assembly, founded

the *Sanyukta Maharashtra Sabha* in Mumbai to sustain the demand for independent Vidarbha.

In 1928, Nehru Committee consisting under Chairmanship Motilal Nehru alongwith Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Ali Imam, Subhash Chandra Bose etc strongly recommended the formation of states on linguistic basis. "Partly geographical and partly economic and financial, but the main considerations must necessarily be the wishes of the people and the linguistic unity of the area concerned...Hence, it becomes most desirable for provinces to be regrouped on a linguistic basis."

### 2. Dar Commission and JVP Committee

A commission under the chairmanship of Justice S.K. Dar was appointed by Dr. Rajendra Prasad to judge the feasibility of reorganization of States along linguistic lines. On December 1948 the Dar Commission published its report in which Commission refused the right of Maharashtra over Mumbai. There was a strong reaction against the Dar Commission Report. So a JVP Committee consisting of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabh Bhai Patel and Pattabhi Sektaramayya was formed in the Jaipur session of the Indian National Congress. Even the JVP Committee also refused the idea of Maharashtra along with Mumbai.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in his statement presented on 14 October 1948 to the Linguistic Provinces Commission expressed his views on reorganization of states on linguistic basis. He said that the main advantage of the scheme of Linguistic Provinces which appeals to me quite strongly is that Linguistic Provinces would make democracy work better than it would in mixed Provinces. A Linguistic Province produces what democracy needs, namely, social homogeneity. Now the homogeneity of a people depends upon their having a belief in a common origin, in the possession of a common language and literature, in their pride in a common historic tradition, community of social customs, etc. is a proposition which no student of sociology can

dispute. The absence of a social homogeneity in a State creates a dangerous situation especially where such a State is raised on a democratic structure. History shows that democracy cannot work in a State where the population is not homogeneous. In a heterogeneous population divided into groups which are hostile and anti-social towards one another the working of democracy is bound to give rise to cases of discrimination, neglect, partiality, suppression of the interests of one group at the hands of another group which happens to capture political power. The reason why in an heterogeneous society, democracy cannot succeed is because power instead of being used impartially and on merits and for the benefit of all is used for the aggrandisement of one group and to the detriment of another. On the other hand, a state which is homogeneous in its population can work for the true ends of democracy, for there are no artificial barriers or social antipathies which lead to the misuse of political power.

In August 1953, Nehru appointed the States Reorganization Commission (SRC), with Justice Fazi Ali, K.M. Panikkar and Hridaynath Kunzru as members, to examine 'objectively and dispassionately' the entire question of the reorganization of the states of the union.

States Reorganization Commission published its report on 30 September 1955. It proposed fourteen states and six centrally administered territories. The Telengana area of Hyderabad state was transferred to Andhra; merging the Malabar district of the old Madras Presidency with Travancore-Cochin created Kerala. Certain Kannada-speaking areas of the states of Bombay, Madras, Hyderabad and Coorg were added to the Mysore state. Merging the states of Kutch and Saurashtra and the Marathi-speaking areas of Hyderabad with it enlarged Bombay state.

The strongest reaction against the SRC's report and the States Reorganization Act came from Maharashtra where widespread rioting broke out and eighty people were killed in Bombay city in police firings in January 1956. The opposition parties supported by a wide spectrum of public opinion students, farmers, workers, artists, and businesspersons organized a powerful protest movement. Under pressure, the government decided in June 1956 to divide the Bombay state into two linguistic states of Maharashtra and Gujarat with Bombay city forming a separate, centrally administered state. This move was also strongly opposed by the maharashtrian peoples. The movement spread throughout the state.

### 3. Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti

The Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti was founded on 6 February 1956 under the leadership of Keshavrao Jedhe with prominent leaders like S.M. Joshi, Acharya Atre, Prabodhankar Thakare, Senapati, Bapat Dhananjay Gadgil, Shripad Amrit Dange, N.G. Gore etc.

The movement got momentum when the then Finance Minister in the central cabinet under Nehru, Mr. C. D. Deshmukh, resigned and announced his joining the United Maharashtra Movement.

In 1959 Indira Gandhi became the president of Indian National Congress. She reviewed the situation in Maharashtra and came to the conclusion that such a bilingual State is not sustainable. She appointed a nine members committee to study the issue. This committee recommended dismantling of the bilingual State and creation of separate Gujarat state. Indira Gandhi accepted that Mumbai be given to Maharashtra.

Finally, the state of Maharashtra, which included the western Maharashtra, Vidarbha and the Marathwada was born on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1960.

### 4. Conclusion

Samyukta Maharashtra Movement was the massive popular movement was launched for the creation of a state for the Marathi-speaking people. Movement was fought on the ideology of the preservation of Marathi Language, Maratha Culture, and progress of the Marathi people.

"Samyukta Maharashtra Chalwal" was the movement for assertion of the rights of majority language group - Marathi, and thus the inclusion of Bombay in the Maharashtra state is considered as the victory of the movement.

"The Samyukta Maharashtra movement actually led the movements for linguistic states in India. This is a vital chapter in the history of India" [Times of India, Apr 30, 2010]

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