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The Role of Marathi Newspapers in Samyukta Maharashtra Movement

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Abstract

Samyukta Maharashtra Movement was the most powerful movement after independence. The movement received active support from Maharashtra 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, mouthpiece, 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.

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.

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 Seetaramayya was formed in the Jaipur session of the Indian National Congress. Even the JVP Committee also refused the idea of Maharashtra along with Mumbai.

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.

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

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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.

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 1st May 1960.

4. Role of Marathi Newspapers:

Marathi Newspapers played an important role in the growth of Samyukta Maharashtra Movement. The Marathi press was in the vanguard of this movement and spread the influence of the movement amongst maharashtrian people. Marathi newspaper were used to unite people for the demand Samyukta Maharashtra Movement.

The Samyukta Maharashtra Movement began as a thought and but went on to achieved the unthinkable.

In his article in "Kesari" on 17th October 1881, Lokmanya Tilak proposed state formation on the basis of languages and Kesari's then editor N.C. Kelkar demanded linguistic state formation time to time. But the credit of the dream of Samyukta Maharashtra goes to Vitthalrao Tamhankar. He wrote on the concept of Samyukta Maharashtra in his article "Three Divisions of Maharashtra" & demanded to make maharashtra including Mumbai, Vidarbha, Hyderabad, Goa & Maharashtra.

Dar and JVP Commissions denied the demand of Maharashtra State & Marathi newspapers and periodicals began to discuss the issue more aggressively.

N. G. Gore in his article "Open Letter to Thoughtful People in Maharashtra" in Mauj Magazine on 9 February 1949, urged Marathi people to come together, for the cause of samyukt Maharashtra.

Acharya Atre, in his editorial "Mumbai is indeed Maharashtra" on 21 December 1947 pressed the demand for Samyukta Maharashtra aggressively.

On 3 January 1949, Kesari published D. R. Gadgil's article "Why Should There be a Samyukta Maharashtra Province?" in which he explained the reasons behind the demands of Samyukta Maharashtra Movement.

Though Marathi Newspapers like "Prabhat", Navyug, Kesari, Mauj etc were continuously supporting the movement but the mainstream media opposed the Samyukta Maharashtra movement. So leaders of the movement felt the need for a mouthpiece for the movement & would play a major role of spreading awareness about the movement.

Senapati Bapat had suggested the name Maratha for the paper & first issue of the Newspaper was published on 15 November 1956.

Maratha played a vital role to connect people with "Samyukta Maharashtra Movement".

Dinu Randive & Ashok Paddidri started "Samyukta Maharashtra Patrika" which achieved 65,000 circulations at one point. "Har Har Mahadev" by Malati Tendulkar also achieved huge success.

"Lokmanya" a Marathi Daily supported the movement but Gujarati owner of the Newspaper decided to close the edition.

5. Conclusion

Newspapers like "Navyug, Navakal, Maratha, Prabhat, Samyukta Maharashtra Patrika, Kesari etc. supported the movement & have great contribution for the success of the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement.

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