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## MUMBAI CITY AND SAMYUKAT MAHARASHTRA MOVEMENT

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It is widely acknowledged that twentieth-century India witnessed two remarkable events: the country's independence from colonial rule and the reorganization of states. After gaining independence, India faced a critical issue regarding the state reorganization movement. This was a burning issue that demanded urgent attention and resolution. The state reorganization movement in India brought about remarkable changes not only in terms of administrative and political boundaries but also on a deeper level of thinking. It challenged traditional notions of identity and belonging. The Marathi-speaking people of Maharashtra demanded a separate state for themselves during the state reorganization movement. This demand was eventually fulfilled with the formation of the state of Maharashtra in 1960, which paved the way for a more nuanced understanding of regional diversity and cultural pluralism.

At the same time as the Marathi-speaking people of Maharashtra were demanding a separate state, the Gujarati-speaking people of Bombay (now Mumbai) also launched a movement for a separate state for themselves. This demand

was eventually met with the formation of the state of Gujarat in 1960.

During the state reorganization movement, two different language-speaking groups made demands for separate states within India. This was in response to the presence of mixed-language populations in certain regions, which led to a need for greater linguistic and cultural autonomy. The demand for state reorganization was particularly strong in Bombay, which was a crucial region for commercial activities in India. The presence of a diverse population with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds made it a prime site for the state reorganization movement.

Based on this review, it seems that arguments are being made by both Gujarati and Marathi-speaking people regarding Bombay's inclusion as a part of their respective language areas. In 1948, the Dar Commission was established, and the Gujarati and Marathi people began arguments about Bombay as part of their respective languages. highlights the ongoing tensions and debates surrounding linguistic and cultural identities in India.

The leaders of the two linguistic groups were very vocal about their opinions on the inclusion of Bombay City in their respective linguistic states. The Indian government established the JVP Commission, followed by the Dar Commission, and finally the SRC. However, initially, the JVP Commission's arguments did not fulfil the demands of the two language-speaking people.

In 1948, the Dar Commission was established, and the Gujarati and Marathi people began arguments about Bombay as part of their respective languages.

The Dar Commission received the first memorandum from the Gujarati group, which was led by "The Bombay Committee," led by Shri Purushottam Thakurdas, and presented their memorandum on September 23, 1948.

The leaders of two linguistic groups strongly expressed their views about the inclusion of Bombay City in their linguistic states. Firstly, the Gujarati group presented a memorandum to the Dar Commission. The Indian Merchant Chamber founded "The Bombay Committee. This committee presented the memorandum on September 23, 1948, under the leadership of Shri Purushottam Thakurdas.

The Bombay committee expressed some points on the Bombay issue. They said that

*Lastly, if for any reason the splitting up of the present province of Bombay into separate provincial units is unfortunately deemed incapable, then the city of Bombay, with its suburbs, should be constituted into a separate province*  
*Dr. Mali Bharatbhushan Shamshon*

*with all the powers, rights, privileges and obligations common under the existing framework to the other provinces.*

Another point raised by the committee is that,

*"In the opinion of my committee, the rationale of the grouping of provinces or delimitations of the administrative areas will have to be reviewed in the context of recent developments, and that can be done only after the country has achieved a fair measure of stabilization and can be said to have succeeded in its efforts to consolidate its position and the status of an independent nation.*

The committee again talked about the originality of Bombay City. According to them, Bombay's original name, 'Mumba Aie', was the fisherman colony. Bombay was an undeveloped area that was developed by the Gujaratis.<sup>3</sup>

The Congress Party developed provincial committees like the Gujarati Provincial Congress, Karnataka Provincial Congress, and Mumbai Provincial Congress, so that, naturally, Bombay became a separate part of the Marathi linguistic area.

From an economic point of view, they talked about Bombay Harbor, airways, and railways, which are the most important for the nation. The commission also touched on the point about the census and said that only one lakh Marathi people are living in Bombay.

*'Thus, there was a clear addition of non-Maharashtrian population by about six lakh. On the above basis of calculation, the Marathi-speaking population in Greater Bombay in 1946 must have been*

*about ten lakhs or 38 per cent of the total population.'* <sup>4</sup>

Another point they made was about the multicultural scene at Mumbai University.

*'But the main point is that language is hardly a rational basis for the distribution of areas. It is not even the sole determinant of culture. The city and culture of Bombay are essentially cosmopolitan, and Maharashtra can claim no particular affinity with them. Even the Maharashtrian element of the population is inextricably interwoven in the texture of the pattern of living that distinctly bears the stamp of Bombay'...* <sup>5</sup>

Then the question remains: who were the masters of Bombay?

*The above arguments about the 'Bombay Committee' about the mastery of Bombay were challenged by Mr. Y. K. Sovani and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedekar.*

Mr. Sovani wrote two articles on the creation of Samyukta Maharashtra. In December 1947, Navbharat' published his article entitled '*Samyukat Maharashtra Arthik Darshan* ' and another article in September 1948. That article was on the '*Mumbai Maharashtra Chich*.

The above articles made a demand for Samyukta Maharashtra. The second article criticized the demands of the Gujarati people. He said that the 'Dar Commission' created a critical situation about the Bombay issue because the Dar Commission included the question of Bombay in their questionnaires'.

Mr. Sovani expressed his views based on historical perspectives. He said that '*Marathi rajya* means the state of *Dr. Mali Bharatbhushan Shamshon*

*yadvas*'. *The Yadavas* inscriptions and the *Marathi mythology of Bimbakhyan* show that Bombay City belongs to Marathi *Rajya*. <sup>6</sup>

According to him, 'after the defeat of the Yadavas, the ruler of the *Yadavas*, *Bhimdev*, or the *Bimbdev*, founded his capital, *Mahim* of Bombay. He called the people belonging to the *Paithan* to Mumbai. He was the person who founded the temple of *Praba Devi*, after this deity, known as *Prabha Devi*. So he was the ruler who founded Mumbai.

Mr. Sovani again said that 'Mumbadevi' was the deity of the fisherman. In *Bimbakhyan*, there was a reference to *Mumba Devi*. That temple was near the *Fansi* pound.

The temple of the Mumba Devi was built in 1737 by Pandurang *Shivaji*, who was a goldsmith. So on the historical level, Mumbai belongs to the Marathi-speaking people. <sup>7</sup>

He agreed that the scenario in Bombay City is multicultural. But how does this city become multicultural? He said that the English power made an agreement with the Gujarati *Baniya* and *Mahajan* for commercial activities.

Due to this, the population of Bombay City increased. Another reason for the increasing population of Mumbai was the Industrial Revolution in England and the famine in Gujarat. In that period, a lot of people belonging to Gujarat migrated to Bombay. So the population of Bombay increased, and that is why it became multicultural.

Again, he said that Bombay City's transfer to a separate state is anti-constitution. The

constitution of India accepted the homogeneity of the states. And if Bombay became a separate state, it would be anti-constitution.

He again talked about the census of 1881–1931. The percentage of Marathi-speaking people was more than 51%. The census of 1941 was indefinite, and there was no *Marathi* language-speaking percentage. The percentage of Marathi people decreased, but other language people were not more than 21%. Even he said that the culture of Bombay City is Marathi culture. Newspapers, book publications, and the *Marathi* theatre of drama show the Marathi culture.

His argument about the two points was that one was about who made Bombay glorious, and the other was about the report of the inquiry committee of 1939.

Gujarati people said that they made Bombay glorious. Mr. Sovani asked them, when they came to Bombay, would they bring natural resources to Bombay?

The merchants of Gujarat used the natural resources of Bombay. *Marathi* people worked as clerks or labourers, and they made Bombay glorious.

The report of the inquiry committee of 1939 said something about the plebiscite. According to this report, it's very critical to have a plebiscite. People belonging to other states came and settled in Bombay. The report also marked the reason why the population of Bombay increased.

Another scholar, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, presented his memorandum to the Dar Commission. Firstly, he criticized the meeting of Gujarati capitalists. He also *Dr. Mali Bharatbhushan Shamshon*

criticized English newspapers like the Free Journal, the Bombay Chronicle, and the Times of India. The meeting of the Bombay Marchant Chamber was greatly appreciated by the above papers.

Dr. Ambedkar shows that this meeting was supported by eminent professors like Prof. Dantwala, Prof. Gheewala, and Prof. N. C. Vakil of Bombay University.

He asked nine questions about the Bombay issue to support his arguments. The arguments relate to three basic points. One was on historical background, the second was on commercial activities, and the third was on the Marathi-lingual people in Bombay City.

He said that Maratha power never created dominance in Mumbai because the Maratha army used the land war system, not the naval war system.

They used their power to occupy the coastal area. That is why Maratha's power did not occupy Bombay.<sup>8</sup>

The second argument was based on the commercial views of the Gujarati people

He said that if the Gujarati people belonged to Gujarat, then how did they come to Bombay? What were the sources of their trade?

He clarified that the East India Company gave some commercial concessions to these people. For this argument, he gave the example of *Neema Parekh*, who was a Gujarati trader. *Neema Parekh* asked for a lot of facilities, which were refused by the British Government in April 1677.<sup>9</sup>

The third argument he made was about the Marathi-speaking people. Generally, it was said that Marathi people were in the minority in Bombay. He argued on this point and showed *Prof. Gadgil's* arguments about the census. *Prof. Gadgil* said that the percentage of Marathi-speaking people was 51%, but *Prof. Gheewala* apposed and said it was up to 41%. Again, *Prof. Vakil* made it up to 39%. Dr. Ambedekar said that both professors made untruthful arguments.<sup>10</sup>

The arguments for Mumbai started in 1948. The Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad began the struggle on the Bombay issue. Morarjibhai Desai and S. K. Patil opposed this struggle. On this critical situation, Annu Guruji of Belgum also opposed and said that 'to support the Gujarati people on the Bombay issue means to oppose the Marathi people on the border issue.'<sup>11</sup>

The statement on the Bombay issue created a critical situation. Later on, the movement became very strong, and in 1960, the state of Maharashtra came into existence with Mumbai.

### Conclusion:

In the mid-20th century, the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement emerged with a primary aim: the creation of a separate state for Marathi-speaking people. The movement was spearheaded initially by the *Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad* and later formalized as the *Samiti*, working actively on three major fronts: formation of Marathi speaking state second is inclusion of Bombay in Marathi

State, and third about inclusion of Belgum in Maharashtra.

A significant point of contention was the status of Bombay. While Marathi people viewed it as an integral part of their homeland, Gujarati traders and certain non-Marathi elites had a different perspective.

Many Gujarati traders were keen on retaining Bombay as a separate entity or attaching it to a bilingual Bombay state. However, this demand was largely economically motivated. Their interest was focused on trade, commerce, and capital gains, not on preserving or nurturing the cultural identity of the region. This led to criticism of a self-serving attitude, prioritizing profit over cultural integration or social development.

Gujarati industrialists often argued that Bombay became prosperous because of trade and industry, not due to its original inhabitants, such as the Kolis (fishermen) or rural Marathi populations. However, historical records show that Mumbai (formerly Bombay) was originally Marathi land, inhabited by local communities who played a crucial role in its early development, even providing support to traders during the British period.

Therefore, the notion that only traders were responsible for the city's growth is historically incomplete. Mumbai's evolution was the result of a synergistic relationship between local Marathi people and incoming traders. A just and respectful approach would have been to honor the cultural roots and social fabric of the region.

Interestingly, this economic vs cultural debate also split the intelligentsia. Some intellectuals from Bombay University supported the trader class, seeing Mumbai as a cosmopolitan and commercial hub rather than a culturally rooted city. But many Marathi intellectuals stood firmly with the movement, backing the "sons of the soil" right to have their rightful place and recognition in their homeland.

As the movement gained momentum, it saw massive public support, including satyagrahas (non-violent protests), where thousands of Marathi-speaking people rallied for their rights. It became a people's movement, not just a political negotiation.

Despite the resistance, the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement succeeded. On May 1, 1960, the state of Maharashtra was formed, and Bombay was officially included in it a powerful recognition of the Marathi identity of the city.

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