

THE MARATHA RESERVATION ISSUE

SYBA- SOCIOLOGY PAPER II

Marathas, who have historically dominated politics, are feeling threatened in the new economic order, where education and jobs matter more than farm incomes.

What explains this intermittent flare-up among the Marathas in Maharashtra?

The short answer is growing socio-economic insecurity within the state's dominant caste group. Marathas have a large share in the state's population, they own large tracts of land and have enjoyed dominance in the realm of politics. But this traditional dominance is being threatened in the new economic order where educations and jobs matter more than farm incomes.

Who are the Marathas?

- There has been no caste census in India after 1932.
- Different reports quote share of Maratha population in Maharashtra differently ranging from 32 per cent to 35 per cent.
- Kunbis have an estimated 19 per cent share in the state population.
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- Marathas have been a dominant caste in Maharashtra.
- Marathas own over 75 per cent of land in Maharashtra Marathas own 86 of 105 sugar factories in Maharashtra besides controlling about 55 per cent educational institutions and over 70 per cent of cooperative bodies.
- Marathas have dominated the political landscape of Maharashtra with 12 of 18 chief ministers having come from the community.
- Over 60 per cent of all the MLAs of Maharashtra have been Marathas since 1962.

- Demand for reservation for Marathas under OBC (Other Backward Classes) category first came up during 1990s.
- First major Maratha agitation for reservation in government jobs and educational institutions was organised in 1997 by the Maratha Mahasangh and the Maratha Seva Sangh.
- The agitators said that Marathas were not upper caste people but essentially Kunbis, the name that has been in use in western part to identify members of agrarian communities.

MARATHA RESERVATION TIMELINE

2008-09: Former CMs - Sharad Pawar, Vilasrao Deshmukh lends support to the demand

2009-14: Political parties, organisations come out in support of the demand for reservation to the Marathas

25 June, 2014: The Congress-NCP Democratic Front government then headed by Prithviraj Chavan, approves a proposal to reserve 16% of government jobs and seats in educational institutions for Marathas and 5% for Muslims.

31 October, 2014: Devendra Fadnavis sworn in CM of Maharashtra of BJP government with indirect support of NCP.

5 December, 2014: Shiv Sena joins the BJP government, offers stability.

14 November, 2014: Bombay High Court stays the decision of the previous Democratic Front government to provide 16 per cent reservations to Marathas in government jobs and educational institutions.

15 November, 2014: BJP-Sena government decides to move Supreme Court.

18 December, 2014: Supreme Court refuses to vacate the Bombay High Court's interim order staying reservation for Maratha community in public employment in Maharashtra.

6 January, 2015: Government decides to tender additional information in the Bombay High Court for supporting reservations to Marathas

13 July, 2016: Rape and murder of a Maratha girl at Kopardi in Ahmednagar district that fuels the demand of rights of the community

9 August, 2016: First Maratha Kranti Morcha held in Aurangabad

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5 December 2016: Maharashtra government files an affidavit to justify the reservation for Marathas as legal and that it did not violate constitutional provisions.

14 December, 2016: Maratha morcha held in Nagpur when the winter session of Maharashtra legislature was in progress

June 2017: Maharashtra government constitutes State Backward Class Commission to study the social, financial and educational status of Maratha community.

9 August 2017: Massive Maratha morcha held in Mumbai
November, 2017: All accused in Kopardi case sentenced to death by a Sessions Court in Ahmednagar.

July, 2018: Maratha reservations issue rocks the monsoon session of Maharashtra legislature in Nagpur

17 July, 2018: Maratha associations meet in Pandharpur, decides not to allow CM Devendra Fadnavis to hold puja of Lord Vitthal-Rukmini on ashadi ekadashi on 23 July

22 July, 2018: CM cancels trip to Pandharpur, says his govt supports demand for reservation to Maratha but ball in court

23 July, 2018: Youth jumps into Godavari river in Aurangabad to demand reservation to Maratha community

November 15, 2018: Commission submits its report to the Maharashtra government.

November 30, 2018: Maharashtra legislature passes a bill proposing 16 per cent reservation in education and government jobs for Maratha community, declared as socially and educationally backward class by the government.

December 3, 2018: Bunch of petitions filed in Bombay High Court challenging the quota decision, and terms it as violative of the Supreme Court orders which says that reservation in any state should not exceed over 50 per cent.

December 5, 2018: Bombay High Court refuses to grant interim stay on the quota decision but posts petitions for final hearing.

January 18, 2019: Maharashtra government files affidavit, standing by its decision to grant reservation to the Maratha community, and says it was meant to alleviate the “socially and economically” backward class.

February 6, 2019: A division bench of Justices Ranjit More and Bharati Dangre commences final hearing into all petitions pertaining to the Maratha reservation issue.

March 26, 2019: HC concludes hearing arguments in the petitions. Reserves its judgment.

June 24, 2019: HC says it would pronounce its verdict on the petitions on June 27.

June 27, 2019: HC upholds constitutional validity of reservation for the Maratha community, but asks the government to reduce it from 16 per cent to 12 to 13 per cent, as recommended by the State Backward Classes Commission.

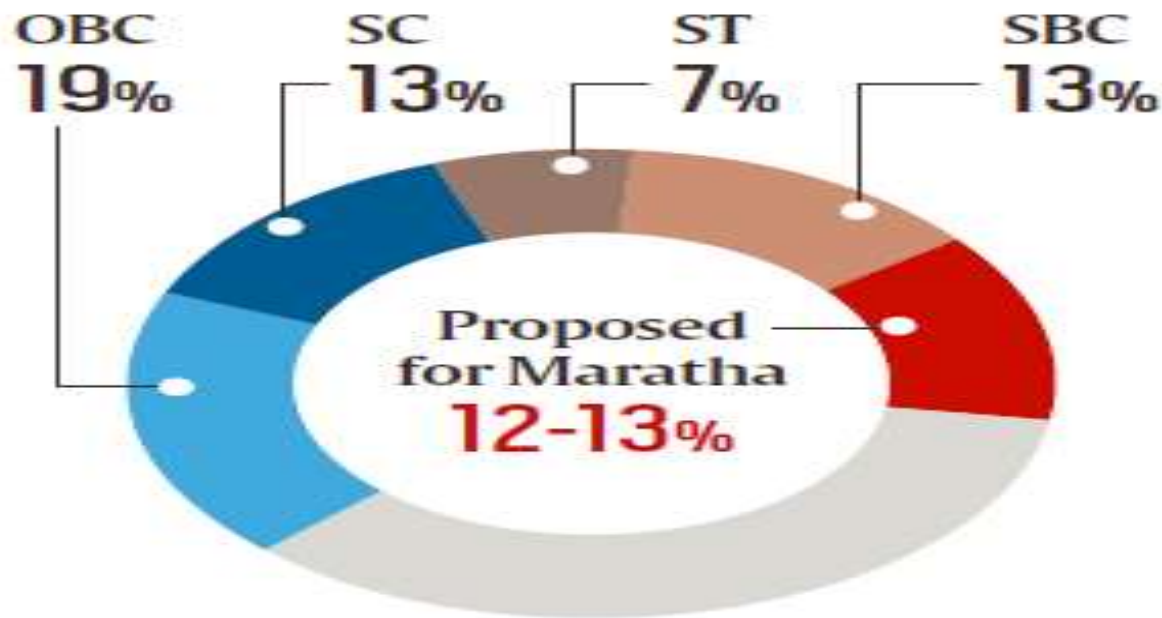
MAHARASHTRA BREAKUP

52%

Existing reservation

64-65%

Reservation once Maratha quota is implemented. Government proposed 16% but HC saw merit in panel report that recommended 12% for education and 13% for jobs.



Social backwardness

- Findings of Gaikwad Commission found that 76.86% of Maratha families are engaged in agriculture and agricultural labour,
- around 70% live in kachcha dwellings,
- only 35.39% have personal tap water connections.

Educational backwardness,

- 13.42% of Marathas are illiterate,
- 35.31% primary educated,
- 43.79% HSC and SSC,
- 6.71% undergraduates and
- just 0.77% postgraduates and professionally qualified.

Economic backwardness,

- the Commission found that 93% Maratha families have an annual income of Rs 1 lakh;
- 37.38% families are Below Poverty Line against the state average of 24.2%,
- 71% own less than 2.5 acres land.

“The Indian state, no matter which party is in power, presents itself as mai-baap to its citizens. It, however, does not have the resources at its command to meet the demands raised by multiple and often competing groups. When these demands are not satisfied on favourable terms, it often takes organised action in the form of protests (and sometimes violence), for the state to respond. Over time this process has become ritualised into three distinct phases. A group’s demands are not heard or met. The group organises to protest, often violently. The state responds favourably.”