

## Research Paper

## Leadership of Yashwantrao Chavan in Modern Maharashtra: historical review

DR. Bhavana Patole

Head, department of history  
Elphinestone college, Mumbai-32

### Introduction

*After the decolonization of British India, the nation voted for the formation of Republic of India. It was a groundbreaking transformation from an oppressive regime to a democratic set up. The society was set in transition may it be living style, education or employment. The nation-state was developing with an amazing speed. Maharashtra was one of the major states of the nation in this process also due to its geography and history. With the formation of Maharashtra on the basis of language, new challenges arose. The identity of this modern state was yet to be developed.*

The state was to become a modern one with a strong Industrial economy. But at the same time democratization of entire society was required. Modernization does not mean only material progress but it is a wider phenomenon involving a change in ideas and values. Masses were an integral part of this process. Hence the role played by leaders of masses was crucial not only for them but to the state and the entire nation. In this context emergence of mass leadership is one of the important milestones in the History of Maharashtra. Here lies the significance of Yashwantrao Chavan. Yashwantrao's presence was felt in social, political, economic and cultural spheres of newly born state of Maharashtra.

### 3 Leadership of Y.B. Chavan in Maharashtra

On 16 October 1956, in a straight contest for Chief ministership against Hiray, Yashwantrao Chavan won by a very big margin. He secured 333 votes as against 111 of Hiray. 1 Y. B. Chavan's name was suggested in the party meeting and recommended to Nehru for his ability and intelligence by his mentor Morarji Desai. When Chavan took the charge as a chief minister of the bilingual state the situation was critical. Y. D. Phadake remarks that, "Chavan and his colleagues were openly denounced as traitors and were contemptuously described as mere stooges or pawns in the hands of the Gujarat Congress leaders. With the second General Elections round the corner, their position was not merely unenviable but also pitiable and precarious. Yet Chavan's election as the leader of the L.C.P. did mark a significant departure from Bombay's past. Not only the state had the youngest Chief Minister in its history but it also had, for the first time one who belonged to the majority caste cluster known as the Marathas in Maharashtra.... It considerably hastened the process of ending the hegemony of the Brahmins in the

1 .Anantrao patil, Yashwantrao Chavan, Yashwantrao Chavan Pratishthan, Mumbai, 1997, P.69.

4

organisation – wing of the Congress in both Western Maharashtra and Marathawada." 2 Chavan wanted to give the bilingual state as a trial. He travelled most of the parts of the Gujarat and Maharashtra. His hard work had given the Congress majority in the elections of 1957 in the legislature. He was the youngest chief

minister of Bombay, the second largest state of India. Consequently, it was a challenging leadership in the eyes of the senior Congressmen of the nation. As a chief minister of the Bombay state he accepted the principles of the decentralization of power, integration of services and the unification of laws as the state policy. His intervention in labor disputes produced satisfactory results. He ended many strikes in the state. The policy of the Maharashtra State, as enunciated by him on several occasions, was to strive for an industrial truce. He was able to solve the problems of the mill workers. Many industrial disputes were settled under his leadership. The Government ensured provisions in the plan for education, irrigation, establishment of medical colleges, construction of parks, gardens etc. The funds were also provided in the plan for Poona Milk supply scheme, organization of co-operative industrial housing in Bombay, for the Koyana project Y.D. Phadke, "samyukta Maharashtra Movement and the Congress party", unpublished ph.D. thesis, Mumbai university, Mumbai, 1973, P.397. 5 and the upliftment of Harijans. His community development programme was based on the principle of 'Sarvodaya'. 3 He promoted the principle of the importance of the satisfaction of the people

on the minds of the government officials. One of his major contributions in the field of the social life of Maharashtra is the abolition of Mahar Vatan. The Mahar Vatan was akin to the slavery. On 28th July 1958 he brought the bill in the Bombay Legislative Assembly for the abolition of the Mahar Vatan and 'Bombay Inferior Village Vatan Abolition Act of 1958' came into being. 4 The Mahar community was freed from the slavery and the living condition of the Mahar workers was changed drastically. This was appreciated in the class of the Harijans. He personally instructed to the police officers in the meetings to look after the incidents of the attacks on Harijans carefully. When the Republican Party had launched an agitation for land to the landless, his balanced attitude and the way of giving solution was appreciated by the leaders of the Republican Party. A special provision was made in case of any complaint about Harijans, Neo-Buddhists, Scheduled Castes and tribes. 5 According to this provision the highest police officer of the district was ordered to investigate the matter. He had given the economic concessions and facilities to the backward class.

His government worked to remove the disparity from the society. He had mentioned the spirit of co-operation among all the classes of the village and tried to eradicate the casteism in the society. The agricultural sector and the conditions of the farmers was his main concern. To solve the problems in the agriculture he introduced many plans in the farming such as irrigation projects for the supply of the water, the bunding schemes, and construction of Wells. He introduced number of irrigation projects in Maharashtra, which includes major projects on rivers like Purna and Koyana. The Koyana project was completed during his tenure. It ushered in a new era in Maharashtra and promoted the agriculture and industry of the state. Land reforms like tenancy laws and consolidation and fragmentation laws by the Bombay government brought a revolutionary change in the rights of owners of land and gave a boost to the growth in the produce of the agriculture. Y.B. Chavan's attitude and attempt to spread the mass education in the state reflects the qualities of the new leadership in the state. He had motivated the economically backward class by encouraging the free education to those having annual income below Rs. 900.<sup>6</sup> His government paid attention to the neglected areas like Marathwada and Vidharbha. This attempt brought the major change in 6 Ibid, p.105.

7 the education of the masses. He encouraged running the secondary school education by providing special grants for the interested ones. His decision about the establishment of the Marathwada University had provided the facility of higher education and resulted into the total growth of the educated masses in the Marathawada region. He encouraged the technical education in the state of Maharashtra. Welles Hangen observed that, "Chavan was not only the Chief Minister of the State but assumed a definite role in the public life of the bilingual state as a leader to whom the people both in Maharashtra and Gujarat looked for guidance. He initiated programmes of socio-economic department and directed the energies of purposeful welfare activity. The result was that an impressive movement of development was launched and the administration and the people worked in close and constant collaboration."<sup>7</sup> Marathi became the state's official language with a Directorate of languages. Y.B. Chavan tried to safeguard the interests of the people of Vidarbha, Marathwada, Konkan and other areas of the state. Further, he concentrated his efforts for the integration of various regions and groups. As a home minister he was sympathetic towards the problems of the police force. The departments of agriculture, co-operation, industries and education were particularly strengthened. 7 Welles Hangen, After Nehru who?, London, 1963,p.406.

He motivated the official machinery for the welfare of the mass. He tried to activate human face in the minds of the officers of the state. Democratic decentralization was the main principle in the government machinery. Chavan felt it necessary to set a system suitable for the state of Maharashtra. The distinctive feature of the decentralization was the establishment of strong and effective Zilla Parishads at district level. To root out the corruption from the administration; an independent Anti-Corruption Bureau was established to meet the needs of the situation. This Bureau was independent of the police. He undertook the experiment of creation of Agro-Industrial Society to bring about all round development of the people in general and farmers in particular. He saw cooperative movement as an instrument to eradicate poverty and generate more opportunities for the employment. As a Chief Minister of the state he maintained healthy interaction with the

people. By introducing the industrial policy to benefit the state as a whole, he concentrated his efforts to cover the neglected areas of the state. The purpose of the policy was to reduce the disparities in levels of development between different regions. While planning for industrialization, he introduced various policies that worked for availability of power, water supply and transport facilities, and the supply of necessary raw materials and other natural resources. His policies encouraged an all-round industrial development in the private as well as the public sector. A considerably large part of the industrial development in the Third Plan was in the hands of the private sector. He utilized the private capital to invest in industries for the expansion. The Maharashtra Government enacted laws pertaining to both the management and labor. His government also took the important step of the donation of the piece of land to the Buddha Maha-Sabha.<sup>8</sup> To strengthen the co-operative movement in Maharashtra government he passed 'Maharashtra co-operative Societies Act, 1960' which came into force on 26th January 1962. The act worked to attain orderly development of the cooperative movement in Maharashtra. For the industrial advancement Chavan recommended Co-operative movement and introduced Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (M.I.D.C.). It indeed increased the growth of Industrial sector and met the needs of the industrial sector. He specifically promoted the industrial development in the backward regions like Vidarbha, Marathwada and Konkan. As a youngest chief minister he led the bilingual Bombay state in the most critical political situation. Then, as a chief minister of the new Maharashtra, he successfully managed to lead the state in a progressive manner. Chavan with his 8 . Yashwantrao Chavan, Sayadrichae Vare, Maharashtra government publicity department, Mumbai, 1962,p.286.

dynamism and pragmatic approach laid the solid foundation of agricultural and industrial transformation in Maharashtra. He played an imperative role in the social and cultural life of Maharashtra. In order to bring the changes in the different directions he took sincere measures to avoid the delay in the administrative matters, eradication of corruption, and the social issues like Family Planning, liquor prohibition among others. His progressive measures like democratic decentralization, Agro-industrial policy, formation of the Co-operative factories brought the major change in the life of the peasants from the villages of Maharashtra. The scheme of the free education for the economically backward classes, establishment of the Universities like Marathwada University and Shivaji University and different measures in the field of the education resulted in the tremendous growth in the field of education. When he was working as a Chief Minister, he always consulted the opposition leaders before making the crucial decisions. Senior opposition leaders like S. M. Joshi and Acharya Atre also appreciated the qualities of his personality. His democratic spirit was reflected in his administration. His legislative and parliamentary speeches show that he was not only a good debater, but also a mature political statesman. His ability to establish quick rapport with any one whether an officer, political worker, artist, businessmen or writer proved to be great asset of his distinguished personality. On the critical situation his calmness and balanced state of mind was rewarding and he was also titled as the 'Man of Crisis'.

Yashwantrao Chavan in Central Government

The affinity with the centre was the noteworthy quality of Y. B. Chavan. He occupied the most important portfolios of Defence, Home, Finance, and External Affairs at the centre. His balanced judgment in many national crises proved to be effective. He led the Indian delegation to the United Nations and attended different national and international conferences. He was the president of the Institutes of Defence Studies and Analysis besides being associated with a number of voluntary social, educational and other organizations. After examining the chances of eight potential claimants to the prime ministership of India, Welles Hagen stated, "Chavan has a more balanced combination of political attributes than any other Indian leader I met except Nehru. All things being equal – which they rarely are in politics – I think Chavan has better chance than any other politician now in the running to become a durable and distinguished prime minister of India."<sup>9</sup> The political future of his prospective leadership was stated at the international level. But his service to the nation was limited to his post as Deputy Prime minister. His conflicting loyalties during the split in the Congress in 1969 had a far-reaching adverse effect on his political <sup>9</sup> Welles Hagen, op.cit,p.406.

12  
career. He was unable to perform with zeal in the later period of his political career. The political situation was changed in the Indian scenario and the equations for the political power for Y.B. Chavan too. When he passed away in 1984, he was the chairman of the Eighth Finance commission of India.

#### **Conclusion**

Y.B. Chavan proved to be one of the successful mass leaders from Maharashtra and added new features in the areas of the leadership. The striking feature of his leadership was his deep concern for the poverty in the society and his constructive efforts to work for the common man. He was a great visionary of the strong, independent, democratic and Socialistic India. He did hard-press on the importance of the democracy, Socialism and planning in his tenure. He brought out integration in the state in the Indian nation without any fissure. It did give strength to the nation if we account for the various disruptive forces that are affecting Indian nation. He not only brought out the Maharashtra state in the forefront but also encompassed that ordinary folk to become a part of this democratization. These traits signify the constructive leadership of Yashwantrao B. Chavan. He truly represented a new trend in the evolution of leadership in Maharashtra that was a broad-based and mass-oriented trend.