

CHAPTER VII

BOMBAY

402. The formation of the proposed Karnataka State involves the separation of the Karnataka districts of the existing Bombay State. We now consider the important question whether there is a case for recommending a further disintegration of this State in order that separate Maharashtra and Gujarat States may be formed.

403. We should like to make a few preliminary observations regarding the existing Bombay State before the case for breaking it up is discussed in detail. Although it has been contended that in multilingual areas the stress of internal friction within the administration retards efficiency, Bombay is undoubtedly one of the best-administered States of the Indian Union. It has the highest percentage of literacy amongst the Part A States and has made a promising start in introducing compulsory primary education, and judged by the measure of success it has achieved in enforcing land reforms and ameliorative legislation, it must rank amongst the most progressive States in the country.

404. It is also noteworthy that its financial position continues to be sound and satisfactory, in spite of the heavy development expenditure which the State has incurred in recent years. The question, therefore, of further disintegration of this State which, on the whole, has done so well must receive very serious thought.

405. The urge for further disintegration of the State comes firstly from the sponsors of the movement for Samyukta Maharashtra and secondly from a section of the Gujarati-speaking population.

406. Though not as old as the demand for Andhra and Karnataka, nor even as old as the movement for Maha Vidarbha, the demand for a United Maharashtra comprising the Marathi-speaking areas of the existing States of Bombay, Madhya Pradesh and Hyderabad, with the city of Bombay as its integral part, has, of late, gathered considerable momentum and has been pressed with great vigour by influential sections of the Marathi-speaking people.

407. Alongside the Samyukta Maharashtra movement there has also grown up a demand for the formation of Maha Gujarat by uniting the States of Saurashtra and Kutch with the Gujarati-speaking areas of Bombay. This demand, however, cannot be regarded as

pressing, because, by and large, the Gujarati-speaking people would now seem to be content to remain in the composite State of Bombay, if it continues more or less as at present constituted.

408. Linked with these two important demands is the future of the following areas:

- (i) the Marathwada areas of Hyderabad;
- (ii) the eight Marathi-speaking districts of Madhya Pradesh;
- (iii) the city of Bombay, where, owing to its multilingual character and its importance as the nerve-centre of trade and business, the question requires serious thought and consideration; and
- (iv) the Saurashtra and Kutch States.

409. The demand for the separation of the Marathi-speaking areas and their consolidation into one administrative unit rests on the arguments which are generally advanced against the continuance of composite States and in favour of the formation of linguistic States. These are internal tension, discriminatory and unequal distribution of development expenditure and favouritism in services. Finally, it is emphasised that the Marathi-speaking people, who are claimed to be a distinct cultural group with a common historical tradition and political and economic interests, can legitimately claim a State of their own.

410. As we have observed earlier, we are not inclined to concede any demand on the sole ground of language. We have, therefore, to weigh the linguistic factor with other relevant considerations bearing on the well-being of the people of this region.

411. We are conscious of the fact that opinion in the northern and southern Maharashtra districts in general seems to be in favour of the creation of the United Maharashtra State. At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that important sections of public opinion in the Marathi-speaking districts of Madhya Pradesh do not subscribe to the ideal of Samyukta Maharashtra. We deal separately in the next Chapter with the merits of the demand for the formation of a separate State of Maha Vidarbha and with the reasons for which we recommend the formation of such a State. Here we refer to it only to indicate that Maharashtra opinion is by no means unanimous on the formation of Samyukta Maharashtra.

412. The most difficult problem, however, which the separation of the Maharashtrian and Gujarati regions of Bombay would pose is the future of the city of Bombay.

413. The case for and against the integration of the city in Samyukta Maharashtra was presented to us by the contending parties very ably and in great detail. The case for the integration of Greater Bombay in Maharashtra briefly is that it does not deserve to be treated differently from other important multilingual cities like Madras; that it is geographically an integral part of Maharashtra; that if it is deprived of its hinterland its further growth would be arrested; and that as a separate State it will become an arena of ideological and political conflicts. On the other hand, it is argued that the case of Bombay city stands by itself; that it is not a predominantly Marathi-speaking unit; that it has acquired its present commanding position by the joint endeavour of the different language groups and that it cannot legitimately be claimed by one language group; and that its integration in Maharashtra will lead to a rapid decline in its importance.

414. The Dar Commission and the J.V.P. Committee, it may be recalled, paid particular attention to the future of the Bombay city and came to the conclusion that in the event of the disintegration of the Bombay State, Bombay city should be constituted into a separate unit. The conclusions arrived at by them are summed up in the following extracts:

“The city of Bombay stands in special relation to Maharashtra, Gujarat, and to India as a whole . . . Industrially and commercially, it is the hub of India’s financial and industrial activity. And altogether it excites some of the deepest emotions in Marhatha and Gujarati hearts, and its failure is the thorniest problem which the linguistic provinces are required to solve.

In all the non-Maharashtrian evidence that came before us there was practical unanimity that the city of Bombay should be formed into a separate province, either Centrally administered or with a Government of its own and in no case should it be placed under a unilingual Government. Some expert evidence was also led before us to show how the commercial and financial interests of the Bombay City and of India as a whole would be affected by a sudden change in the form of the government in Bombay.

The best fortune that we can see for the city of Bombay is that it should continue as it is today, the meeting-place of all communities, their source of pride and affection and

a convenient centre for their joint labour and enterprise. It will be incongruous to make this multi-lingual, cosmopolitan city the capital of a unilingual province." (Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission, paras. 57, 65 and 67.)

The question of the City of Bombay has not only risen but has been fiercely debated. And yet in our opinion, there can be little room for argument about this great city. It is not only one of the greatest cities of India but is essentially a cosmopolitan multi-lingual city, the nerve-centre of our trade and commerce, and our biggest window to the outside world. It is quite impossible for us to entertain any idea or any proposal which might injure the many-sided life and activity of this great city, which has been built up by the labour of all kinds of people and communities. We cannot consider it as belonging to any one linguistic group and attach it to a purely linguistic province. That would undoubtedly mean its rapid deterioration from its present commanding position. The population of Bombay has grown rapidly during the past years. It is very much a mixed population and there can be little doubt the Maharashtrians in Bombay are a minority of the population. But even if they were in a slight majority, that would not take away in the least from the cosmopolitan character of the city. We are, therefore, of opinion that, in case the present province of Bombay is split up, and separate Maharashtra province is formed, the City of Bombay should be constituted into a separate political unit. It should be remembered that the Congress even when it formed the Maharashtra, Gujerat and Karnataka Provincial Congress Committees, made Bombay City a separate Provincial Congress Committee.

We feel, therefore, that it should be stated clearly and emphatically that Greater Bombay will not become just a part of a purely linguistic province, and that if such linguistic provinces are formed out of the present Bombay Province, the area of Greater Bombay will have to be constituted as a separate unit." (Report of the Linguistic Provinces Committee, Congress, pp. 12, 13.)

415. It would be generally agreed that these weighty expressions of opinion could not be easily disregarded.

416. During the course of our enquiry, a vast majority of persons who appeared before us and did not belong to either of the two contending language groups expressed themselves strongly in favour of placing the Bombay city under a separate administration in the event of the disintegration of the State. We also noticed serious misgivings in the minds of large sections of the inhabitants of Bombay as well as persons outside about the future of the city, if it formed part of a unilingual State.

417. It has been argued before us that all this may be irrelevant to the main issue, namely, whether Greater Bombay should merge in Maharashtra. Constitutional provisions, it has been stated, will ensure that there will be freedom of trade, commerce and intercourse between Greater Bombay and the other areas of the Indian Union. Discriminatory treatment of minorities is also forbidden by the Constitution, and there may be no particular reason to expect that any future government of Maharashtra will be so short-sighted as to create an atmosphere of tension, suspicion and unrest thereby injuring its own long-term interests.

418. We are impressed by the cogency of these arguments, but we cannot lightly brush aside the fears of the other communities. The Maharashtrians in the city, according to the 1951 Census, still remain a minority, being only 43.6 per cent of the population. The position of the city, therefore, is different from that of Madras and Calcutta, where the dominant language groups account for about two-thirds of the population. After taking into account the mixed population of the city, the fact that its future development depends on the co-operation of the different language groups, and the views and apprehensions of the minor language groups even though these may appear to be exaggerated, we have come to the conclusion that its special position should be recognised.

419. The alternative suggested by the Dar Commission and the J. V. P. Committee, namely, the constitution of Greater Bombay into a separate administrative unit will also not be free from serious difficulties. Having regard to the population and the size of the area as well as the fact that it is primarily a city unit, it will not, in our opinion, be entitled to be treated as a full State of the Union. On the other hand, Greater Bombay has been the hub of the political life of a democratically advanced State and its administration as a central enclave may be regarded as a retrograde step.

420. Another point to bear in mind is that Greater Bombay now depends for power and water supplies, no less than for its further

expansion, on the Maharashtra areas. The natural links of the city with its hinterland in Maharashtra are, therefore, another argument for not constituting Greater Bombay into a separate administration.

421. If the separation of the city from Maharashtra is administratively not desirable, the effects on the growth and development of the city in future may prove to be equally adverse, if Greater Bombay were to form part of Maharashtra, but were administratively independent of Gujarat. The likely psychological dissatisfaction of the Gujarati and other communities, in the event of Greater Bombay forming part of Maharashtra, may be very great, and it will be unwise to hope that the industrial and commercial life of the area will remain unaffected. We feel that the importance of Greater Bombay is such and the possible loss either to Gujarat or to Maharashtra considered individually and to the country as a whole might be so great that it would be prudent not to take any risks.

422. A very important factor bearing on the question of the separation of Greater Bombay from Maharashtra and Gujarat is the dependence of both the Marathi and Gujarati-speaking regions on the financial surplus of Greater Bombay.

423. The figures published by the Bombay Government indicate that Greater Bombay's average surplus during the three years ending March, 1953, was of the order of Rs. 12 crores. It is probable that this surplus will increase rather than diminish in future.

424. It has been stated that this somewhat embarrassing surplus of Greater Bombay and the equally embarrassing deficits of the other areas may be corrected in the normal course in the event of the separation of Greater Bombay. It has been pointed out in this connection that some portion of the tax on sales for export from Greater Bombay may cease to be available to the city. It has also been suggested that in the event of the separation of Greater Bombay, it may, in view of its unique financial position, allot a portion of its surplus or relieve the deficit areas of a major share of their debt and interest-bearing liabilities, by means of an *ad hoc* settlement which may form part of the scheme of separation.

425. On an examination of these suggestions we feel that it will be difficult to devise in practice satisfactory arrangements for the routing of Greater Bombay's surplus to the deficit areas of Gujarat and Maharashtra.

426. We are so greatly impressed on the one hand by the difficulties of making Greater Bombay's surplus available to the deficit areas of Gujarat and Western Maharashtra or Samyukta Maharashtra and on the other hand by the argument that Western Maharashtra and Gujarat, if they are constituted, will themselves be deficit respectively to the extent of about Rs. 6.0 crores and Rs. 2.5 crores or more, that, on financial grounds alone, we would view with concern the separation of Greater Bombay from the other two regions of the State.

427. A number of suggestions were made to us for finding a solution of the financial problem which we have just discussed and for reconciling conflicting interests in this area. These include the constitution of three sub-States, representing Bombay-Maharashtra, Bombay-Gujarat and Greater Bombay within a composite State; joint administration of Greater Bombay by Maharashtra and Gujarat; and enhancement of the powers of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. We have examined all these proposals with the care they deserve, but have come to the conclusion that any improvised devices which depart from the normal constitutional pattern may create more difficulties than they may solve and in the conditions in which such expedients are sought to be tried may not achieve the object in view. The conclusion is, therefore, forced on us that no alternative can really be so conducive to the welfare of all the people of the State as the maintenance of its composite character.

428. We recommend, therefore, that the reconstituted State of Bombay may comprise the areas of the existing Bombay State *minus* the Abu Road taluk of the Banaskantha district, the Karnataka districts of Dharwar, Bijapur, North Kanara and the district of Belgaum (except the Chandgad taluk), *plus* the following areas:

- (i) Osmanabad, Bhir, Aurangabad, Parbhani and Nanded districts of the existing Hyderabad State;
- (ii) Saurashtra; and
- (iii) Kutch.

429. The integration of Marathwada with Bombay follows necessarily from our proposals in regard to Hyderabad. We considered the possibility of the northern part of these areas being joined with Vidarbha but popular sentiment is strongly in favour of integration with Bombay, and as there is no over-riding administrative and economic objection to such integration we see no reason why the wishes of the people should not be respected in this case.

430. Saurashtra, a Part B State, is, to our mind, too small a unit to be treated as a State of the Union. The covenant establishing Saurashtra itself provided that the formation of this State was not intended to prevent it from negotiating a union with other Gujarati-speaking areas. Important sections of public opinion in Saurashtra State have expressed themselves in favour of joining the Bombay State.

431. Kutch is a small Part C State, which was placed under Central control because of its economic backwardness and geographical position. For the reasons we have discussed in Chapter I of this part of our report we do not consider it necessary that this unit should continue to be a separate centrally-administered area. We, however, regard the State as one of the units to which the safeguards which we have proposed for some of the centrally-administered areas like a special development board may be extended.

432. The State thus reconstituted will have an area of about 151,360 sq. miles with a population of 40.2 millions.

433. In arriving at this conclusion we have carefully considered how far the proposals which we are making will give satisfaction to the Marathi and the Gujarati-speaking peoples. The Maharashtrians are a virile and patriotic people with a past in which they take legitimate pride. Their achievements form an important chapter in the history of India. We have been anxious to ensure that their legitimate aspirations are met. The present position is that while they are the largest single language group in the existing State of Bombay, with a percentage of 44, in the other two States in which they are to be found in substantial numbers, namely, Hyderabad and Madhya Pradesh, they constitute the second largest language group with a percentage of 24 and 29, respectively. The proposals which we are making will have the effect of bringing into existence a new unit, namely, Vidarbha, in which the Maharashtrians will be the predominant linguistic group with a percentage of 75; and of consolidating the rest of them in the new Bombay State (of which Greater Bombay will form an integral part) where their percentage would increase to about 48. Further, it may be noted that the population of the predominantly Marathi-speaking districts of the proposed Bombay State will be 21.3 millions out of the total population of 40.2 millions. The Maharashtrians will, therefore, enjoy a position of some advantage in the proposed State.

434. The case of the Maharashtrians is very different from that of the Kannadigas who, as we have already stated, are at present

dispersed over a number of States, constituting ineffective minorities in all except one of them. We hope that when all the facts mentioned by us are fully considered, public opinion in Maharashtra will find in the arrangements we have proposed a substantial fulfilment of their aspirations.

435. What we have stated in the preceding paragraphs might seem to be unsatisfactory, from the point of view of the Gujarati-speaking people. These proposals, it may appear, constitute a total and summary rejection of the case for Maha Gujarat. It is not that we have not weighed carefully the merits and demerits of our proposals regarding Bombay from the point of view of the Gujarati people. Our assessment of Gujarati sentiment, as has been mentioned earlier, however, is that influential sections amongst the Gujaratis would prefer to stay in a composite State even after the separation of the Karnataka districts. We are strengthened in this belief by the categorical assurance of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee to the effect that important elements amongst the Gujarati-speaking people would be prepared to live and to work together in one State with their Maharashtrian brethren in the larger national interests, as also in the interests of the city of Bombay, to which they seem to be greatly attached.

436. Our own view of the prospective development of the Bombay State does not lend support to the fear that the two linguistic areas which will be left in the State after the separation of the Karnataka districts will not receive fair and equal treatment. On an unbiassed view of the relevant facts the existing State of Bombay cannot, in our opinion, be accused of having been partial to the interests of any particular area or group to such an extent as to justify its being broken up. We feel, therefore, that both the Gujarati-speaking and the Marathi-speaking people would, after a careful consideration of our proposal, realise that it is to their mutual advantage to be partners in a great co-operative venture.

437. In the Chapter dealing with language we have expressed the view that where satisfactory conditions exist and economic and administrative considerations favour composite States, these States should be continued, with such safeguards as may be necessary to ensure that all sections enjoy equal rights and opportunities. Bombay, in our opinion, is a State which undoubtedly fulfils these conditions.

438. We have recommended elsewhere an agency to be set up to go into the question of fair and equitable distribution of develop-

ment expenditure in the different areas of the proposed States. To remove all suspicion of possible neglect, the agency we contemplate, should take special note of the requirements of the two important regions of the new State and see that development plans are equitably distributed. We also hope that the Government of the State will devise suitable means of adequately safeguarding the special interests of its two regions.

439. Having regard to these recommendations and to the traditions of tolerance which have so far been characteristic of the existing Bombay State, the arrangements proposed by us, which bring together all the Gujarati-speaking people and also a great majority of the Marathi-speaking people will, we hope, be worked in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and goodwill.