



Role of Physical Geography of Maharashtra to Establish Swaraj

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Introduction

India has a diversify Culture, Race, Religion, Colour, Language, Dress, Manners, Customs and Physical geography. From the point of view of the geographical diversity Maharashtra has network of river and other hand total lack of rainfall. One side Maharashtra has fertilized and full of luscious Greenland and other side dry and arid. In matter of altitudes the Kalsubai is the highest peak. The coastal line of the Konkan broken by many creeks. This offered excellent shelter for the Ships and Boats. The Rocky islands near the coast presented invulnerable sites for the navel strength holds. In 17th century population of Maharashtra was very thin and it was mostly covered by forest. Western edge of Maharashtra is always suffering from heavy and uncertain rainfall. Cultivation was very poor and precarious. There were very narrow margin of rivers that peasant is not assured a good return for their labour. The Western Deccan taps very clouds of the Southwest Monsoon so heavy rain shootout at the Ghat range.

The area comprising the Peninsula south of Vindhya- Satpura mountain is called the Deccan plateau. Sahyadri range is best line for defense of the Deccan lands. Inhabitants of Sahyadri were expert in climbing hills through torrent of rain, through dense forest and difficult passes. From this area Chhatrapati Shivaji picked up his helpmates, associates and friends.. Malwa is such a kind of area Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj associated Deshmukhs and Deshpandes from Malwa and Jawali.

So many Hindu rulers tried to establish sovereign state in India but except Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj no one be successful. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj established Swaraj in Maharashtra. Physical geography of Maharashtra and it's dense forest, river system, hill area helped him. He knew the importance of that remote area and hill forts. In early stage of constructing Swaraj, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj won the Mawla and Jawali region. These regions belong from Konkan, they were covered by dense forest and sharp mountain range, people of this area where hard worker and loyal with their religion and culture. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj got benefit of that physical geography and Maratha people

belong that area to fight with Mughal and Adilshaha.

In 1656 Shivaji conquered Malva region After that he subjugated Konkan in 1659 by killing Afzal Khan at Pratapgad. He had immense support from this area to adventure against superior power especially against Mughal. Maratha warriors were excellent in fighting with enemies. They got best lesson from their past experience to fight with a superior enemies. They had art of overcoming biggest enemy with the help of their surrounding geographical area.

Use of Hill Forts:-

Chhatrapati Shivaji was well known for his forts. Many like Panhala, Raigad, Vishalga, Purandar, Chakan, Shinhgad etc. existed before him. He subjugated them from Adilshaha and Mughal. Pratapgad, Rajgad, Prachandgad, Gagangad, Samangad, Bhushangad, Lohagad, and Vasantgad. were built by him. According to Sabhasad Bhakar 'Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had almost 240 forts out of them 111 forts were built by Him'. Due to these hill forts Shivaji Maharaj could established swaraj and protected it from his strongest enemies.

Raigad is one of the strongest fortresses on the Deccan Plateau. It was previously known as Rairee. It is situated

820 metres above sea Level on the Sahyadri Hills. Raigad was modified by Shivaji Maharaj as the throne or capital of the Maratha Empire. So many new constructions were built on Raigad by the Hiroji Indulkar on the order of Shivaji Maharaj. Raigad is place where shivaji was crowned. Hill forts were central to his empire and their remains are among the foremost sources of information about his rule. These all forts were put under the Havaladar with strong garrison. Strict discipline was followed. These forts proved useful during Maratha – Mughal wars.

Use Gorilla war tactics to defeat Enemies.

Muslim rulers deliberately disrespect Hindu religion, under Muslim regime Hindu religion was ruthlessly put down. Lands devastated, shrine desecrated, Idols were broken, women were violated and all the accumulated wealth of centuries drain away by them. Hinduism was the destroyed by Muslim rulers to enhance their religion. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj thought that it is his duty to preserve Hinduism as a Nobel ancient culture and learnings. He wanted to protect Hinduism and Hindu culture from destructive action of Muslim States, he wanted to established new state wherein everyone has political and religious freedom and toleration for all religion.

There were complete darkness prevails under Muslim rule. There was no enquiry, no justice. Officials do what they please. Violation of women honour, murderers and forced conversion of Hindu to Islam, Demolition of Hindus shrine, Slaughter and similar despicable atrocities prevail under Muslim government. Hindu could not lead won honorable life. Nizam openly murdered jijabai father and brother. Bajaj Nimbalkar of Phaltan was forcefully converted to Islam

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj wanted to establish won independent rule, means a compact well defined geographical unit, with clear regulations and proper gradation of officers. By getting benefit of physical geography of Maharashtra Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj wanted to established Swaraj. He used Gorilla war tactics to subjugate various part of Muslim States especially in western part of Maharashtra, without any lost of cost and bloodshed. Guerilla warfare is waged by civilian who are not member of the traditional military unit or

Gorilla combatants are fighting to overthrow or weaken ruling government or regime. Maratha warriors were expert in Guerilla warfare though it was invented by Malik Amber Chief Minister of Nizam of Ahmadnagar.

Under leadership of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Maratha warriors used this type of warfare, in which they sabotaged, ambushed and surprised raids on unsuspecting military targets. They fought to their own homeland. They use their familiarity with the local landscape and terrain to their advantages. Santaji Ghorpade and Dhanaji Jadhav were excellent in this type of tactics. After death of Chatrapati Sanbhaji Maharaj war of independence was started. Maratha rulers and military commanders defeated so many experienced military leaders of Mughal.

Navy of Shivaji Maharaj :-

Nizam Shah of Ahmednagar had established his own Navy at Janjira and placed Siddhi Yakub Khan as a commander of chief. Siddhi Came from Abyssinia of Africa. they were darling sailors and well versed in naval arts. They had given two functions.

1. Supervision of the coastal trade
2. Provide protection to Muslim pilgrims to Mecca for Hajj.

In 1656 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj subjugated Jawli so his boundary extended to Western coast of Present Maharashtra which is known as Konkan. There were three navel power. They were Siddhi, Portuguese and British. Siddhi was orthodox for their religion. They always followed Islam and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and his followers gave priority to Hinduism so conflict took place between these two powers. After subjugated North Konkan Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj aware about his necessity to form his own Navy to check the activities of Siddhi and straighten his own power on the west coastal Maharashtra as a main base of his power. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj wanted to subjugate island and itself Janjira which was controlled by Siddhi for that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj fought with them. But Shivaji could not win it. To strengthen the Maratha naval power he built four naval Forts to Western coastal area, those were Sindhudurg, Vijaydurg, suvarnadurga and Colaba. The Mughal Empire had criminally neglected this vital subject that is navy.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj used geographical benefit to defeat Muslim States. He took benefit of dense forest and share hill range of Pratapgarh to defeat Afzal Khan. Pratapgarh was perched on accessible narrow hilltop. It was not suited for an open fight which was Afzal Khan wanted. Even surrounding area of Pratapgarh not allowed to move large enemy to plan against Shivaji. Shivaji remained entirely on the defensive security. He sat on the hilltop of Pratapgadh like the eagle wanted for the opportunity.

Shivaji try to defend Swaraj against superior enemies by using Gorilla war as well as forts. He used hill forts to preserve the acquisitions.

Naval Forts-

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj built four naval forts on difficult rocks on the sea coast but main forts are on the top of the Sahyadri range. after killing Afzal Khan in 1659 Shivaji's boundary reached to Western coastal area, that time, he visualized that the necessity of a strong Navy with suitable based for its location to protect his newly formed Kingdom. First Navy fort he built it was Vijaydurga, next was the Suvarnadurga. After that he built Sindhudurg and Kulaba. Once Shivaji Maharaj secured his position in Konkan he realized the necessity of strong fighting fleets. Shindudurg was built in order to control attacks by Portuguese and Sidhi.

Construction of Forts -

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj knew the importance of the forts to establish Swaraj. He captured most of the forts of Maharashtra from Adil Shah and few were constructed on important place. he followed from basic principles while constructing forts. In early stage he found out places where forts could be constructed. Difficult passages, hill tops, places surrounded by dense forest were given priority. Principal entrance of the forts were secularly closed and graded so no enemy can reached the inside easily. Guns, Ammunition grain and other requisitions were stored in the fort. A plentiful supply of water inside the fort was first necessity in the construction of fort. There were natural springs upon most of the hills while elsewhere special tanks were constructed. He neither destroys the forest surrounding forts nor changes the physical geographical condition. He respected environment and its superiority.

Forts were built on adjunct to his main fighting forces. Main force had only two branches.

1. Troopers. 2. Foot soldiers.

Others were Garrisoning to the forts. In which most of the backward caste people were recruited.

Conclusion:-

In 17th century so many Hindu rulers tried to establish sovereign state in India but except Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj no one be successful. Physical geography of Maharashtra and its dense forest, river system, sharp mountain ranges and hill forts and independent nature of inhabitant helped him. Muslim state like Mughal and Adilshah were not used to geographical challenges in Maharashtra. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj got benefit it and defeated them most of the time. Gorilla war tactics was used to defeat strong or superior enemies. Chhatrapati Shivaji respected nature and its delicate balance. He respected environment. He neither destroys forest nor mold river flow while constructing forts. Shivaji Maharaj built four Naval forts on western coastal area to protect his Navy in critical war situation and strengthen his power on this region.

During the Crisis Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj took refuge in the hill forts in Sahyadri. Because of these hill forts Shivaji Maharaj Could be successful to fight with the superior enemies like Mughal and Nizam. With the help of Pratapgad which is one of the remote hill forts, Shivaji defeated Afzal Khan. The independence war of the Maratha was going on during the 1681 to 1707. Aurangzeb attracted with strong military to ruin the Swaraj but he could not become of Successful because of Competent leadership of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and his successor as well as Physical geography of Maharashtra and Independent Nature of inhabitants. In the end we would conclude that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj established Swaraj of Independent Hindu state in Maharashtra in 17th century with the help of Physical Geography of Maharashtra. Without this special privilege Maharaj might not establish independent Hindu state. So many Hindu leaders tried to form separate state in north India such as Chhatrasaal Bundela of Bundelkhand but he couldn't be successful because he didn't have benefit of Physical Geography.

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