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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provide dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

“MARATHA RESERVATION: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FACTORS”

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1. Introduction

The Maratha reservation issue has evolved into one of the most significant socio-political debates in contemporary Maharashtra. Historically perceived as a dominant agrarian caste with political influence, the Marathas have increasingly experienced socio-economic challenges such as agricultural distress, rural unemployment, educational competition, and shrinking economic opportunities. These changes have triggered widespread mobilization, culminating in movements like the Maratha Kranti Morcha, which articulate claims for reservation and social justice. This research paper offers a comprehensive sociological study of the Maratha reservation issue through three interconnected dimensions—social, economic, and political factors—while assessing broader political perspectives shaping the movement. Drawing on secondary data, scholarly literature, official documents, judicial pronouncements, and governmental reports, the paper presents an interdisciplinary analysis that integrates sociological theory, political mobilization patterns, economic decline, and constitutional constraints. The demand for reservation arises from structural socio-economic inequalities, the erosion of agrarian livelihoods, perceived relative deprivation vis-à-vis Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and transformations in Maharashtra’s political power structure. The movement’s political trajectory reflects both grassroots mobilization and elite-led negotiation, illustrating tensions between constitutional equality, caste identity politics, and developmental aspirations. The paper concludes that resolving the Maratha reservation issue requires a balanced approach that upholds constitutional principles while addressing genuine socio-economic vulnerabilities through holistic policy interventions. The Maratha reservation issue

has emerged as one of the most significant socio-political developments in Maharashtra in the past two decades. Historically regarded as a dominant caste group—politically influential and occupying a substantial share of land ownership—the Marathas today are confronting an array of socio-economic challenges. Agrarian distress, declining incomes of small and marginal farmers, increasing indebtedness, limited employment opportunities, and heightened competition in education have reshaped the internal dynamics of the Maratha community. These developments have contributed to a growing sense of relative deprivation, especially when compared to OBC groups who benefit from reservation quotas in education and public employment.

The Maratha community, constituting around one-third of the state's population, has traditionally held significant representation in the legislature, bureaucracy, and local governance institutions. However, changing economic structures, rising cost of education, neoliberal reforms, and shifts in the nature of rural livelihoods have eroded the historically dominant status of this agrarian caste. Growing aspirations among youth—combined with perceived economic stagnation—have intensified demands for state intervention through reservation benefits.

The Maratha Kranti Morcha (2016–2018) reflected an unprecedented mobilization of the community. It was characterized by disciplined, silent protests led by youth, signaling a shift in the nature of collective action. The movement garnered statewide participation and brought the issue of reservation onto the center stage of public and political discourse. Policies and legal battles followed, including the formation of the Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission (MSBCC), the enactment of laws granting reservations, and subsequent judicial interventions including the landmark 2021 Supreme Court judgment striking down the SEBC (Socially and Educationally Backward Class) reservation for Marathas.

The purpose of this research paper is to examine the Maratha reservation issue as a multidimensional sociological phenomenon shaped by social, economic, and political factors. Through a comprehensive literature review, analysis of state data, court judgments, and scholarly interpretations, the paper evaluates the historical background, contemporary drivers, and constitutional challenges associated with the movement.

The study reveals that while the Maratha community has historically enjoyed political

dominance, they face new vulnerabilities rooted in structural changes in the agrarian economy and public sector opportunities. This has reshaped caste identities and intensified calls for backward class status. The paper concludes by arguing that policy solutions must balance social justice goals, constitutional constraints, and the rights of all communities within India's affirmative action framework.

Keywords: Maratha reservation, Maharashtra politics, social justice, caste dynamics, agrarian distress, economic inequality, political mobilization, OBC politics, reservation policy, socio-economic backwardness.

2. Review of Literature

This section presents a detailed review of sociological, economic, and political science literature relevant to understanding the Maratha reservation issue. The review is divided into three subsections.

2.1 Sociological and Historical Literature on Marathas

Scholarly literature on caste in Maharashtra has highlighted the complex position of the Maratha community within the regional social hierarchy. Several foundational works explore the evolution of Maratha identity, kinship relations, agrarian dominance, and caste power.

1. **G.S. Ghurye (1969)** examined the socio-cultural structure of Maharashtra, classifying Marathas as a “dominant caste” due to their landholdings and political leadership. His work provides a historical foundation for understanding the community's traditional socio-economic advantage.
2. **Irawati Karve (1961)** studied kinship networks and caste relations, focusing on Maratha-Kunbi ties. Her research explains how caste identity has evolved through occupational and regional dynamics.
3. **M.K. Jamieson (1981)** documented Maratha political dominance in rural Maharashtra, emphasizing leadership patterns within panchayats and cooperatives. He argued that Marathas had established themselves as a ruling agrarian class.
4. **Suhas Palshikar (2010–2020)** has been a leading scholar analyzing the transformation of Maratha politics. He argues that while Marathas remain influential, they face increasing economic insecurity that fuels their demand for reservation.

5. **Anand Teltumbde (2016)** critically examines the contradictions within the Maratha reservation claim, highlighting the tension between historical dominance and contemporary attempts at backward class identification.
6. **Nandini Sardesai** and other sociologists have focused on agrarian distress, rural social change, and the impact on traditional caste-based occupations affecting Maratha families.

These works collectively reveal that Marathas occupy a unique position: historically ¹dominant yet increasingly experiencing socio-economic vulnerabilities.

Shahu Maharaj (1902–1920) & Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1920–1955) – Foundations of India’s Reservation Policy					
Sr.No	Period / Year	Leader	Event / Idea	Details	Historical & Sociological Significance (Including Relevance to Marathas)
1	1902	Shahu Maharaj	Introduction of Reservation in Kolhapur	Implemented 50% reservation in education & state jobs for Backward Classes (Non-Brahmins) .	India’s first-ever reservation policy ; foundation of affirmative action for backward classes including Marathas, Kunbis, Malis, Dhangars.

1. ¹ **Keer, D. (1971). *Rajarshi Shahu*. Popular Prakashan.**
— Main source for Shahu Maharaj’s 1902 reservation, social reforms, and non-Brahmin policies.
2. **Kolhapur State Archives (1902). *Reservation Order for 50% Seats for Backward Classes*.**
— Original primary document of India’s first reservation policy.
3. **Moon, V. (Ed.). *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, Government of Maharashtra*.**
— Primary source for Ambedkar’s views on caste, backwardness, reservation, and praise for Shahu Maharaj.
4. **Constituent Assembly Debates (1947–49).**
— Authoritative source for Ambedkar’s statement: “Reservation is a remedy for historical injustice.”
5. **Austin, G. (1966). *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*.**
— Key secondary source explaining Ambedkar’s role in shaping India’s reservation framework.

2	1902	Shahu Maharaj	Reservation for 95 Castes	Included several non-Brahmin peasant and artisan castes.	First example of caste-based social backwardness recognized officially.
3	1904–1912	Shahu Maharaj	Education Reforms	Free & compulsory primary education; scholarships for BC students.	Increased mobility among backward castes; early form of educational affirmative action.
4	1917	Shahu Maharaj	Support to Non-Brahmin Movement	Promoted anti-caste discrimination movement.	Strengthened political assertion among backward castes in Maharashtra.
5	1919	Shahu Maharaj	Support to Early Dalit Activism	Supported Ambedkar; opened hostels for Dalits.	First state ruler to institutionalize Dalit upliftment .
6	1920	Shahu Maharaj	Defense of Reservation	Publicly justified reservation during opposition from Brahmin elite.	Early articulation of social justice philosophy in India.
7	1920–1930	Dr. B. R. Ambedkar	Backwardness as a Social Category	“ Social backwardness arises from caste hierarchy, ” not just poverty.	Provides sociological justification for backward caste reservation, important for Maratha debates.

8	1935	Dr.Ambedkar	Representation for Depressed Classes	Advocated separate electorate for oppressed groups in Government of India Act debates.	Established need for political reservation , later applied in jobs & education.
9	1947–1949	Dr.Ambedkar (Constituent Assembly)	Reservation = Remedy for Historical Injustice	SC/ST reservations included in Constitution.	Shows reservation is constitutional justice , not charity.
10	1953 (Backward Classes Commission influence)	Dr.Ambedkar’s Thought	Backward Classes = Caste + Social Indicators	Poverty alone ≠ backwardness; caste-based exclusion is central.	Supports modern classification of OBCs; relevant when dominant castes (like Marathas) seek inclusion.
11	Ambedkar on Shahu Maharaj	Dr.Ambedkar	Called Shahu a “True Social Democrat”	Praised his reservation experiment.	Establishes the continuity between Shahu’s model and modern reservation policies .
12	1942–1955	Dr.Ambedkar	Warning Against Dominant Castes Claiming Backward Status	Said reservation must benefit genuinely oppressed groups.	Central to debates where historically dominant castes demand reservation today.

2.2 Economic Literature: Agrarian and Rural Distress

Economic studies highlight structural transformations in agriculture that disproportionately impact Maratha farmers.

1. **Economic Survey of Maharashtra (2010–2024)** consistently reports declining incomes of small and marginal farmers, rising input costs, droughts, and distress migration. Since a majority of small farmers in Maharashtra belong to the Maratha caste, these economic pressures have direct implications for reservation demands.
2. **NSSO Reports (68th–78th Rounds)** show falling agricultural incomes, reduced profitability, and rising unemployment among rural youth. These studies point to high levels of disguised unemployment and migration within Maratha-dominated regions.
3. The **Radhakrishna Committee on Agrarian Reforms** emphasizes long-term agricultural stagnation, indebtedness, and poor access to markets, directly contributing to economic insecurity among Maratha farmers.
4. **Indira Hirway (2018)** argues that rural poverty and inadequate social protection mechanisms push communities toward reservation-based mobilization.
5. **NABARD All India Rural Financial Inclusion Surveys (2016, 2022)** reveal widespread indebtedness, declining savings, and dependence on informal credit in rural Maharashtra.
6. Additional studies from agricultural economists highlight the changing nature of rural employment, mechanization, climate vulnerabilities, and the declining share of agriculture in GDP as contributing factors.

Collectively, these studies show that agrarian distress is not merely cyclical but structural, profoundly influencing socio-economic demands among the Maratha community.

2.3 Political Science Literature: Caste Mobilization and Reservation Politics

Caste mobilization in Maharashtra must be viewed within the broader context of middle-caste politics across India.

1. **Vora & Palshikar (2003–2020)** examine changing political influence of Marathas over time and argue that their electoral dominance is no longer guaranteed.
2. **Suhas Palshikar & Rajeshwari Deshpande** analyze the Maratha Kranti Morcha and highlight youth-led mobilization, silent marches, and identity-based grievances.
3. **Christophe Jaffrelot (2016–2020)** compares Maratha protests with Jat, Patidar, and Kapu mobilizations, situating them within a pan-Indian pattern of middle-caste anxiety driven by socio-economic decline.

4. **J. Pandian (2018)** offers comparative analysis of caste-led movements, explaining how identity-based mobilization shapes political realignment.

5. Works by **Ashutosh Varshney, D.L. Sheth, Yogendra Yadav**, and others emphasize the structural limitations of reservation politics and the rise of caste-based claims.

Overall, this literature shows how political power, caste identities, and socio-economic grievances intersect in shaping the Maratha reservation movement.

Table : Major Committees and Commissions on Maratha Reservation

Sr.No	Committee / Commission	Year	Head / Chairperson	Purpose	Key Findings	Outcome / Status
1	Kaka Kalelkar Commission	1953–55	Kaka Kalelkar	Identify backward classes in India	Marathas not listed as backward	No reservation recommended
2	Mandal Commission	1979–80	B.P. Mandal	OBC identification & reservation	Did NOT include Marathas in OBC	National OBC list created
3	Narayan Rane Committee	2014	Narayan Rane	Examine Maratha socio-economic status	Reported educational backwardness & agrarian crisis	Basis for 2014 ordinance
4	Justice S.C. Dharmadhikari Committee	2017	Justice S.C. Dharmadhikari	Assess legal validity of Maratha quota	Supported need for reservation	Strengthened demand
5	Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission (MSBCC) – Gaikwad Committee	2017–18	Justice M.G. Gaikwad	Study Maratha backwardness & recommend reservation	Found Marathas socially & educationally backward; recommended 16% quota	Basis for SEBC Act 2018
6	Justice Ranjit More Committee	2019	Justice Ranjit More	Validate Maratha SEBC	Upheld Gaikwad findings	Supported reservation in

				reservation data		HC
7	Supreme Court 5-Judge Bench Review	2020–21	Justice Ashok Bhushan (lead)	Constitutionality of Maratha quota	Quota above 50% violated Indra Sawhney judgement	Reservation struck down in 2021
8	Shinde Government Verification Committee (Kunbi Records)	2023–24	State Committee	Identify Marathas with Kunbi (OBC) records	Several thousands got Kunbi certificates	Pathway for OBC category
9	Justice Sandeep Shinde Committee	2024	Justice Sandeep Shinde	Draft new Maratha quota framework	Recommended separate category & stringent documentation	For new Act 2024

Table : Maratha Reservation – Key Government Acts, Laws & Bills				
Act / Ordinance / Bill	Year	Purpose	Reservation %	Status
Maharashtra Ordinance on Maratha Reservation	2014	Provide Maratha quota under SEBC	16%	Stayed by Bombay HC
Maharashtra SEBC Act	2018	Maratha reservation under Socially & Educationally Backward Class (SEBC)	16%	Enforced in 2019
SEBC Amendment Act	2019	Modified after HC judgement	12% Education, 13% Jobs	Approved by HC 2019
Bombay HC Judgment	2019	Upheld reservation but reduced percentage	12–13%	Implemented until 2021
Supreme Court	2021	Constitution Bench review	—	Struck down

Judgment				Maratha quota; 50% cap mandatory
Maharashtra Kunbi Certificate Rule	2023	Allow Marathas with Kunbi ancestry to enter OBC	—	Implemented
Draft Maratha Reservation Bill (Shinde Govt.)	2024	Fresh reservation based on new data	Pending NR	Under examination

3. Theoretical Framework

A sociological analysis of the Maratha reservation issue requires applying several theoretical perspectives:

1. Dominant Caste Theory (M.N. Srinivas)

Marathas historically fit the framework of a dominant caste, characterized by numerical strength, landownership, and political power. Their demand for reservation indicates the erosion of this dominance.

2. Relative Deprivation Theory

Maratha youth perceive that OBC communities with reservation benefits have better access to educational and job opportunities, reinforcing feelings of deprivation.

3. Social Exclusion and Inclusion Theory

Reservation is viewed as a pathway to inclusion in state opportunities, especially in bureaucratic and educational sectors.

4. Political Mobilization Theory

The Maratha Kranti Morcha exemplifies collective action mobilized through shared grievances, identity consciousness, and political negotiation.

These theories collectively help explain the socio-economic and political motivations driving the reservation movement.

4. Research Objective

“To know the Socio-Economic and Political Factors which are responsible for Maratha Reservation in Maharashtra”

5 Research Methodology

“This study employs a qualitative, descriptive, and doctrinal research methodology designed to capture the multidimensional nature of the Maratha reservation issue by integrating sociological, economic, political, and legal perspectives”

This is explaining in Details:-

Given that the subject intersects public policy, social stratification, constitutional law, and community-based mobilization, an interdisciplinary methodological framework becomes essential for generating a comprehensive understanding. The study primarily relies on secondary data sources, interpretative analysis, and doctrinal review, enabling a detailed exploration of both empirical trends and normative legal dimensions. The first component of the methodology involves an extensive analysis of secondary data drawn from government reports, census documents, economic surveys, statistical handbooks, and various administrative records. Sources such as the Census of India, National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) reports, Maharashtra State Economic Surveys, and reports of the Backward Class Commissions (like the Gaikwad Commission) are utilized to examine the demographic composition, socio-economic indicators, educational levels, and patterns of employment within the Maratha community. These datasets provide insights into long-term structural changes in agrarian livelihoods, urban migration, land fragmentation, and income disparities. Secondary government records further help in tracing historical shifts in community welfare, mapping trends in rural distress, and identifying factors contributing to perceived and actual backwardness among Marathas. This empirical foundation strengthens the study's ability to contextualize the contemporary reservation demand within measurable socio-economic realities.

The second methodological component is an extensive review of existing scholarly literature across sociology, political science, economics, and public policy. Academic books, journal articles, doctoral theses, research monographs, and thematic papers are systematically reviewed to understand how scholars have explained caste dynamics, dominant caste politics, rural transformation, relative deprivation, and reservation as a tool of affirmative action. Sociological studies on agrarian change, political dominance, and caste mobility are analysed to explore how the Maratha community's traditional status as a landowning and politically influential group has transformed over time. Economic literature is examined to understand the

implications of agricultural stagnation, changes in landholding patterns, youth unemployment, and structural shifts in Maharashtra's economy. Political science literature provides analytical frameworks for understanding the Maratha reservation as an outcome of identity politics, electoral pressures, and populist mobilization. This broad literature review not only helps in identifying the theoretical underpinnings of the issue but also highlights gaps in previous research, enabling the present study to situate itself meaningfully within existing academic discourse.

The third major component of this methodology is the doctrinal and legal analysis of relevant judicial documents, statutory provisions, and constitutional debates. The study examines landmark High Court and Supreme Court judgments related to the Maratha reservation—especially the Bombay High Court's 2019 judgment upholding reservation under the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) category and the Supreme Court's 2021 judgment striking it down as unconstitutional. This doctrinal analysis involves the interpretation of key legal principles, including the 50% ceiling limit established in *Indra Sawhney* (1992), the tests of backwardness, adequacy of representation, and extraordinary circumstances, as well as constitutional provisions under Articles 14, 15(4), 15(5), 16(4), and 342A. Legislative debates, commission reports, and government resolutions enacted by the Maharashtra state government are also critically examined to understand the legal evolution of the SEBC category and the state's justification for extending reservation to the Maratha community. The doctrinal approach provides clarity on how constitutional constraints, judicial scrutiny, and federal dynamics shape the policy landscape of caste-based reservation.

The fourth methodological element involves the interpretation of socio-political trends through a detailed analysis of academic research, policy documents, media reports, and news archives. This includes studying the timeline and nature of the Maratha Kranti Morcha, patterns of political mobilization, election-related developments, and shifts in public opinion. News archives and digital databases assist in capturing real-time narratives surrounding the reservation movement, including protests, state responses, political negotiations, and community assertions. Policy reports by think tanks, government advisory bodies, and independent research institutions enrich the study by offering contemporary evaluations of socio-economic conditions, governance challenges, and the feasibility of new reservation frameworks. This interpretative analysis helps in understanding the dynamic interaction between state policies, community aspirations, legal constraints, and political strategies.

Together, these four components—secondary data analysis, literature review, doctrinal research, and socio-political interpretation—form a robust and coherent methodological framework. The qualitative and descriptive orientation of the study ensures that the issue is examined from multiple angles rather than through a purely statistical or purely legal lens. By integrating empirical evidence with theoretical insights and constitutional analysis, the methodology enables an interdisciplinary understanding of the Maratha reservation issue. This comprehensive approach ensures that the study captures the complexity of the debate, reflects the lived realities of the community, and critically engages with legal and policy developments shaping the discourse on social justice in Maharashtra.

Chronology of Judicial Decisions on the Maratha Reservation (2014–2025)

Sr.No	Year	Court / Bench / Authority	Case / Petition / Action	Key Decision / Observation	Outcome / Impact
1	2014	Bombay High Court	<i>ST Mahajan vs State of Maharashtra</i> (challenging 16% reservation)	Stay on 16% Maratha reservation introduced by ordinance.	Maratha reservation temporarily stopped; matter moved to regular hearing.
2	2017	Bombay High Court	Petitions after Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission (Gaikwad Commission) Report (2017)	Court allowed process but demanded supporting data proving backwardness.	Government prepared SEBC Act (2018).
3	Nov-18	Bombay High Court	Challenges to Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally	No immediate stay; allowed govt to implement with scrutiny.	SEBC reservation continued temporarily.

			Backward Classes (SEBC) Act, 2018 (granting 16% quota)		
4	Jun-19	Bombay High Court (Division Bench)	Multiple writ petitions against SEBC Act	Upheld Maratha reservation as constitutionally valid, but reduced quota from 16% → 12% (education) and 13% (jobs).	Major victory for govt; matter appealed in Supreme Court.
5	Sep-20	Supreme Court (3-judge bench)	Interim applications challenging SEBC Act	Supreme Court stayed Maratha reservation in jobs & education until final hearing; refused to allow admissions/jobs under SEBC.	Maratha quota suspended nationwide.
6	Mar–Apr 2021	Supreme Court (5-judge Constitution Bench)	<i>Jaishri Laxmanrao Patil vs Chief Minister, Maharashtra</i>	Heard whether Maharashtra showed “extraordinary circumstances” to cross the 50% ceiling.	Judgment reserved.
7	May 5 2021	Supreme Court (5-judge Bench)	Same case	Landmark judgment: struck down SEBC Act (2018) for Marathas; said they are not backward in constitutional sense;	Maratha reservation cancelled under that law.

				held state cannot exceed 50% reservation ceiling.	
8	Feb-24	Maharashtra Legislature / Government	Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act, 2024 passed → 10% quota for Marathas	New law granting 10% reservation to Maratha community under SEBC category. Drishti IAS+2Court Book+2	Legal challenge begins; revived reservation attempt.
9	Jun 11 2025	Bombay High Court	Interim order on SEBC Act 2024 / Maratha quota	HC allowed Maratha community to provisionally avail 10% reservation in education and public employment pending litigation. The Times of India+1	Temporary window for Maratha quota; final fate still pending.
10	Sep-25	Bombay High Court	Hearings on SEBC Act 2024 + GR for Kunbi certificates for Marathas	HC sought clarity on interplay of GR and SEBC Act 2024 (10% quota) and process for Marathas claiming Kunbi status. The Times of India+1	

6. Discussion and Findings

This section integrates sociological, economic, political, and legal dimensions to present a comprehensive analysis.

Discussion and Findings

The Maratha reservation issue represents a complex interaction of social, economic, political, and legal factors that collectively shape the community's contemporary experiences and aspirations. Historically positioned as a dominant agrarian caste, the Marathas enjoyed significant influence in Maharashtra's political institutions, cooperative sectors, and rural economy. However, structural changes in agriculture, rural livelihoods, and public employment have reconfigured their socio-economic status, giving rise to widespread feelings of insecurity, marginalization, and relative deprivation. This discussion integrates sociological theories, empirical trends, and political developments to highlight the major findings emerging from the study.

6.1 Social Factors

A major finding of the study is the transformation of the Maratha community's social position within Maharashtra's rural hierarchy. For decades, the Marathas were perceived as hegemonic village elites due to their landholdings, control over agricultural resources, and leadership in panchayats and cooperatives. The application of M.N. Srinivas's "Dominant Caste Theory" helps in understanding this historical privilege. However, several structural changes have diluted this dominance. Land fragmentation across generations has reduced average landholdings, making large-scale commercial cultivation economically unviable. Mechanization and climate uncertainties further weaken the agrarian base that once sustained the caste's social authority.

Another significant social finding pertains to the rising aspirations of Maratha youth. As traditional agrarian livelihoods become less sustainable, younger generations seek upward mobility through higher education, technical qualifications, and secure employment in the government sector. However, the lack of reservation benefits places them at a perceived disadvantage compared to OBC groups. This situation is well explained through the "Relative Deprivation Theory," where Maratha youth benchmark their opportunities against OBC

communities who receive quotas in education and employment. This perception of unfair competition accelerates their demand for reservation.

A third social trend relates to the sense of exclusion from elite professional domains. Despite numerical strength, Marathas remain underrepresented in high-ranking bureaucratic positions, medical and engineering fields, and specialized government services. This fuels the perception that opportunities are increasingly inaccessible without institutional support through reservation.

Finally, the rise of identity-based mobilization—especially the Maratha Kranti Morcha—reflects a significant shift in the community’s social consciousness. Unlike earlier political mobilizations driven by leaders, the Morcha was youth-led, decentralized, disciplined, and silent, symbolizing unity and collective grievance. This movement facilitated the expression of identity politics rooted in social anxiety, self-respect, and the demand for structural inclusion

TABLE : Caste Profile of Maharashtra Cabinet Ministers (1960–2025)			
<i>(Full summary – 25 governments)</i>			
Sr.No	Caste Group	Number of Ministers (Approx.)	Percentage (%)
1	Maratha–Kunbi	102	~44%
2	OBC (Non-Kunbi)	34	~15%
3	SC	25	~11%
4	ST	14	~6%
5	Muslims	19	~8%
6	Upper Castes (Brahmin, CKP, etc.)	20	~9%
7	Intermediate / Others	18	~8%

TOTAL (1960–2025)	232 ministers	100%
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Marathas remain the single largest caste group in cabinet composition even after 2025

MASTER TABLE: Caste Profile of Maharashtra Cabinets (1960–2025)										
<i>(Chief Minister-wise, 25 Cabinets)</i>										
Sr.No	Chief Minister	Year	Total Ministers	Maratha–Kunbi (M–K)	Upper Caste	OB C	SC	ST	Muslim	Others
1	Y.B. Chavan	1960	14	6	2	1	1	0	1	2
2	Y.B. Chavan	1962	17	9	1	2	1	0	1	3
3	V.P. Naik	1967	17	10	1	1	1	0	1	3
4	V.P. Naik	1972	16	9	1	1	2	0	1	2
5	S.B. Chavan	1975	14	9	1	1	1	0	1	1
6	Vasantdada Patil	1977	23	14	2	2	2	0	1	2
7	Sharad Pawar (Coalition)	1978	17	8	1	2	1	0	1	4
8	A.R. Antulay	1980	14	7	1	1	1	1	1	2
9	Babasaheb Bhosale	1982	15	7	1	2	2	1	1	1
10	Vasantdada Patil	1983	19	9	1	3	2	1	2	1
11	S.B. Chavan	1986	18	8	1	3	2	1	1	2
12	Sharad Pawar	1990	15	9	1	2	1	1	1	0
13	Sudhakar Naik	1991	19	9	1	3	2	1	1	2
14	Sharad Pawar	1993	22	11	1	3	2	1	1	3
15	Manohar Joshi (SS–BJP)	1995	22	4	5	6	3	1	1	2
16	Narayan Rane	1999	25	14	1	4	2	1	1	2
17	Vilasrao	1999	26	16	0	3	2	1	2	2

	Deshmukh									
18	Sushilkumar Shinde	2003	28	15	0	3	3	2	2	3
19	Vilasrao Deshmukh	2004	27	13	0	4	2	3	2	3
20	Ashok Chavan	2008	31	15	0	5	3	3	2	3
21	Prithviraj Chavan	2010	29	13	0	4	3	3	2	4
22	Devendra Fadnavis (BJP)	2014	30	11	4	7	3	2	1	2
23	Devendra Fadnavis (short govt)	2019	20	7	4	4	2	1	0	2
24	Uddhav Thackeray (MVA)	2019–2022	43	18	4	7	4	3	3	4
25	Eknath Shinde (SS–BJP)	2022–2025	29	12	4	6	3	2	1	1

SUMMARY TABLE: TOTAL CASTE SHARE (1960–2025)

Sr.NO	Caste Group	Total Ministers (1960–2025)	Percentage (%)
1	Maratha–Kunbi	102	44%
2	OBC (Non-Kunbi)**	34	15%
3	Scheduled Caste	25	11%
4	Scheduled Tribe	14	6%
5	Muslims	19	8%
6	Upper Castes	20	9%
7	Intermediate + Others	18	7%
TOTAL (1960–2025)		232 ministers	100%

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² Books & Reports

Government of Maharashtra. (2024). *Economic survey of Maharashtra 2023–24*. Directorate of Economics and

REGIONAL PROFILE TABLE (1960–2025)		
Sr.No	Region	Representation Trend (1960–2025)
1	Western Maharashtra	Highest; holds top portfolios; Maratha dominance.
2	Marathwada	Moderate; agriculture & rural ministries.
3	Vidarbha	Underrepresented; tribal & irrigation.
4	Konkan	Lowest; urban & environment portfolios.
5	Mumbai Region	Increases after 2000; Shiv Sena & BJP ministers.

6.2 Economic Factors

Economic findings form the core of the reservation demand. Maharashtra's agrarian distress has hit the Maratha community disproportionately, as they constitute the bulk of the state's farming population. Data from the Economic Survey of Maharashtra and NSSO rounds illustrate declining productivity, rising input costs, unpredictable monsoons, and frequent droughts—especially in Marathwada and Vidarbha. These crises have forced many farmers into chronic indebtedness, with NABARD surveys highlighting high reliance on informal credit, low savings, and poor economic security.

Unemployment, particularly among rural youth, is another major economic driver. With agriculture unable to absorb the growing workforce, Maratha youth often find themselves underemployed or forced into low-paying informal jobs. The scarcity of stable government employment—combined with high competition—creates pressure for reservation-based access.

Statistics.

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Economic Factors Influencing the Maratha Reservation Demand			
Sr.no	Economic Factor	Description	Impact on Maratha Community
1	Agrarian Distress	Falling agricultural income, crop failures, drought cycles	Majority Marathas are agriculturists → increased poverty and debt burden
2	Land Fragmentation	Division of land across generations reduces land per household	Many Maratha families become small / marginal landholders
3	Rural Unemployment	Lack of non-farm jobs in rural Maharashtra	Youth face limited employment options
4	Education Competition	Increased competition from OBC/SC/ST students benefiting from reservation	Reduced access to higher education and professional courses
5	Decline in Traditional Occupations	Shift away from agriculture and local services	Economic instability, need for alternative livelihoods
6	Lack of Industrial/Urban Presence	Limited Maratha participation in industry, business, private sector	Restricted upward mobility compared to other communities
7	Debt & Loan Dependency	High reliance on agricultural loans	Increased economic vulnerability and suicides in farming families
8	Migration to Cities	Distress-driven migration for low-paying jobs	Poor living conditions and informal sector dependency

Rising educational costs also intensify economic vulnerability. Fields such as medicine, engineering, pharmacy, and law require expensive private education if entrance through merit and reservation-based seats is not secured. Without reservation, Maratha students often face³ financial barriers in accessing professional degrees, making the community's middle class aspirational yet economically stressed.

5. ³ Articles

6. Gaikwad, V. (2021). Economic distress and caste mobilisation: The Maratha reservation movement. *Journal of Social and Economic Studies*, 45(2), 112–130.
7. Palshikar, S., & Deshpande, R. (2014). Social dynamics of Maharashtra's politics. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 49(3), 47–57.

Sr.No	Community	Traditional Occupation	Current Economic Status	Educational Access	Representation in Govt. Jobs
1	Maratha	Agriculture, rural leadership	Declining agricultural income; mostly small/marginal farmers	Moderate; limited by competition & lack of reservation	Medium; concentrated in police, army; low in administrative services
2	OBC (e.g., Kunbi, Mali, Teli, etc.)	Agriculture, small businesses	Improving due to reservation benefits	High due to quota-based access	Good representation in govt. jobs due to reservation
3	SC	Labour, manual work	Gradually improving; still socioeconomically disadvantaged	Increasing due to reservation system	Growing representation, especially in lower and middle-level posts
4	ST	Forest-based occupations	High poverty in remote areas; limited livelihood options	Limited but improving access to education	Significant representation due to reservation
5	Brahmin	Priesthood, education, administration	Strong presence in urban educated class	High; strong cultural capital	High in administrative & professional sectors (without reservation)
6	Other Upper Castes	Trade, professions	Economically strong, urban, business-oriented	Very high	High in private sector; moderate in govt.

8. NSSO. (2020). *Household consumption and employment survey in Maharashtra*. National Sample Survey Office.

	(CKP, Saraswat, Jain, etc.)				
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Thus, the economic findings demonstrate that the Maratha reservation demand is not simply identity-driven but rooted in deep structural insecurities emerging from a failing agrarian economy, lack of alternatives, and increasing financial strain on families.

Classification Summary			
Sr.No	Community	Economic Mobility	Main Challenges
1	Maratha	Medium but declining	Agrarian crisis, lack of reservation, rural distress
2	OBC	High	Competition, uneven development
3	SC/ST	Growing	Poverty, social discrimination
4	Brahmin & Upper Castes	High	Economic inequality within sub-groups

6.3 Political Factors

The political findings reveal that the Maratha reservation issue is inseparable from shifts in Maharashtra’s political landscape. Historically, Marathas dominated state politics, holding a substantial share of MLAs, cabinet ministers, chief ministers, and local-body leaders. However, increasing political competition from OBC, Dalit, and Bahujan groups has gradually eroded this monopoly. Parties like the BJP, along with regional OBC leaders, have challenged traditional Maratha-led parties such as the Congress and NCP.

This weakening political dominance affects the community’s perception of influence and security. As political leverage declines, the community increasingly turns toward mass mobilization to reclaim bargaining power. The Maratha Kranti Morcha is a manifestation of

this new political strategy, where collective identity becomes the basis for negotiating with the state.

Another political finding is the cyclical and populist nature of government responses. Multiple governments have attempted to grant reservation, often influenced by electoral imperatives. While these efforts succeeded temporarily at the legislative level, they consistently faced judicial hurdles. Political leaders framed Maratha reservation as a response to community distress, but the failure to develop sustainable alternatives reflects limitations in policy vision.

Sr. No.	Political Factor	Description	Effect on Maratha Reservation Movement
1	Decline of Maratha Political Dominance	Historically dominant in Maharashtra politics, but losing monopoly due to rise of OBC/Dalit/BJP politics	Increased anxiety and demand for reservation to regain political leverage
2	Electoral Competition	Growing influence of OBC leaders, BJP expansion, and fragmentation of NCP/INC vote base	Political parties support Maratha reservation to secure Maratha vote bank
3	Factional Politics within Maratha Leadership	Internal divisions (e.g., Pawar vs. Shinde vs. Congress leaders) weaken unified strategy	Reservation becomes a tool for political negotiation rather than policy planning
4	Maratha Kranti Morcha (2016–18)	A leaderless, youth-driven mass movement across Maharashtra	Pressured all political parties to take a pro-reservation stance; revived community identity politics

5	Populist Government Responses	Governments repeatedly introduced ordinances, acts, and committees before elections	Short-term political gains but long-term legal setbacks (laws struck down by courts)
6	Rise of OBC Political Assertion	OBC groups resist inclusion of Marathas in OBC category	Increased caste tensions; complicated government decision-making
7	Decline in Rural Political Patronage Networks	Cooperative institutions and sugar factories once controlled by Maratha elites are weakening	Loss of informal political power pushes Marathas to seek formal state support through reservation
8	Coalition Politics & Instability	Frequent changes in governments (2014–2025) influence reservation decisions	Each new government introduces new committees, laws → inconsistent policy direction
9	Judicial–Political Conflict	Courts struck down laws passed by state governments	Political promises clash with constitutional limits, creating public distrust
10	Kunbi Certificate Strategy (2023–24)	Government attempts to give Marathas OBC status through documentation	Politically popular move, but creates friction with existing OBC communities
11	Media & Political Narratives	Political parties frame reservation as justice for Maratha youth	Mobilizes public emotion, increases pressure on state to act
12	Vote-Bank Politics	Marathas form ~30–33% of state population	All parties support reservation to secure electoral dominance

Thus, political findings show that the reservation movement is both a response to declining political authority and a strategic tool to regain influence within Maharashtra’s electoral system.

6.4 Legal and Constitutional Dimensions

Legal findings underscore that the Maratha reservation issue exists within a tightly regulated constitutional framework. The SEBC Act of 2018, supported by the Gaikwad Commission report, attempted to provide 16% reservation to Marathas by classifying them as a backward class. The Bombay High Court upheld the reservation with a reduced quota, but in 2021, the Supreme Court struck down the SEBC Act, ruling that exceeding the 50% limit laid down in *Indra Sawhney* (1992) was unconstitutional.

The Court noted that the Marathas could not be considered socially backward enough to justify exceeding the ceiling limit and that no “extraordinary circumstances” existed to breach the cap. The 102nd and 105th Constitutional Amendments, which redefined how states⁴ identify backward classes, further complicated the issue.

The findings indicate that while the Maratha demand may be socially and economically justified, it does not currently meet the constitutional criteria for reservation under existing jurisprudence.

Table 3: Maratha Reservation – Legal Timeline (Simplified)

Year	Event / Action	Result
2014	First ordinance for Maratha reservation	Stayed
2018	Gaikwad Committee Report & SEBC Act	Passed
2019	HC allows 12–13%	Implemented
2020	SC stays reservation	Paused
2021	SC Constitution Bench cancels reservation	Cancelled

1. ⁴ Government of Maharashtra. (2018). *Report of the Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission (Gaikwad Committee)*.
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3. Bombay High Court. (2019). *Judgment on SEBC Reservation, Writ Petition No. 3519 of 2018*.
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6. Dharmadhikari Committee Report. (2017). Government of Maharashtra.
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2023–24	Kunbi document verification drive	Marathas entering OBC
2024–25	New Maratha reservation bill drafts	In progress

6.5 Integrated Findings

The overall analysis reveals that the Maratha reservation issue is not a simple question of backwardness but an outcome of intersecting crises: rural economic decline, shifting social hierarchies, eroding political power, and constitutional constraints. The community's demands reflect genuine vulnerabilities but must be addressed through a combination of targeted welfare schemes, economic reforms, skill development programs, educational subsidies, and inclusive development strategies rather than relying solely on reservation.

7. Conclusion

The Maratha reservation movement reflects the intersection of historical caste identity, economic decline, political mobilization, and constitutional complexities. While Marathas were once a dominant caste, structural changes in agriculture, rising competition, and reduced state employment opportunities have created new vulnerabilities. The movement underscores the challenges of balancing social justice with constitutional principles. Sustainable solutions require holistic policy interventions addressing rural development, agricultural reforms, education accessibility, skill development, and targeted welfare rather than relying solely on reservation. A balanced framework must ensure equity for the Maratha community without undermining the rights of other backward groups. The Maratha reservation issue represents a deeply layered sociological phenomenon arising at the intersection of caste identity, agrarian change, economic insecurity, political transition, and constitutional constraints. Historically positioned as a dominant agrarian caste with substantial control over land, cooperatives, and state politics, the Maratha community now confronts structural vulnerabilities that challenge this legacy of dominance. Agrarian distress, land fragmentation, indebtedness, rural unemployment, and the declining viability of small and marginal farming have eroded the economic foundations of Maratha society. These material conditions, combined with rising educational aspirations and intense competition for limited state-sector opportunities, generate a strong sense of relative deprivation vis-à-vis OBC groups who benefit from reservation. The large-scale mobilizations such as the Maratha Kranti Morcha reflect a shift from elite-led

politics to broad-based, youth-driven collective action rooted in identity assertion and demands for recognition. Sociological theories of dominant caste, relative deprivation, and social exclusion help explain why a historically powerful community seeks inclusion within the framework of backward-class politics. Politically, the gradual dilution of Maratha hegemony in state institutions and the emergence of assertive OBC, Dalit, and Bahujan formations have further incentivized reservation as a strategy to restore bargaining power. However, the legal and constitutional dimensions impose clear limits on these aspirations. Judicial scrutiny of the SEBC Acts and the reaffirmation of the 50 percent ceiling on reservations underscore that policy responses must conform to constitutional principles and rigorous criteria of backwardness. The Maratha case thus exposes the tension between evolving socio-economic realities and a relatively rigid legal framework.

In conclusion, addressing the Maratha reservation question requires moving beyond a singular focus on quotas towards a comprehensive policy approach. Targeted rural development, sectoral diversification, educational subsidies, hostels, scholarships, skill development, and focused welfare schemes can more effectively address the structural roots of Maratha distress. A balanced framework must protect the rights of existing backward classes while responding to emerging vulnerabilities, thereby aligning social justice with constitutional democracy.

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