

CHAPTER - III

TEMPLE ENTRY SATYAGRAHAS - I

In the second decade of the 20th century social reformers of India, especially of Maharashtra were attracted towards an important social problem i.e. 'untouchables and the issue of temple entry'. But it must be noted that its credit goes to (Vaikome) *Travankore Temple Entry Satyagraha* which took place in 1924 at Malabar. The reformers all over India were influenced by that *Satyagraha*. Consequently, it helped to increase the awareness among the reformers about this problem. And gradually, a series of temple entry *Satyagrahas* were launched by the reformers at many places in Maharashtra and other states also.

In this chapter we are going to discuss some temple entry *Satyagrahas* initiated in the very beginning of the 20th century in Maharashtra. Such *Satyagrahas* took place at Ratnagiri, Amarawati, Pune, Kolhapur and Nrusinhwadi etc. Details of those *satyagrahas* are discussed below.

A) V. D. Savarkar and Temple Entry :

In January 1924 Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966), a famous revolutionary of our country, was released from prison on certain conditions. He assured the government that he would reside at Ratnagiri and would abstain from any participation, public or private in politics. The restrictions imposed on him from 1924 to 1937 did not prevent him from taking up the issue of abolition of the practice of untouchability. Through his powerful writings and speeches he led a sustained campaign against this practice, for 13 years. He regarded this practice of untouchability as a pernicious custom which weakened the Hindu society. He wanted everyone who belonged to the depressed

classes to regard himself a Hindu. Intercaste dinners and marriages were supported by him and he wanted all the Hindu temples to be thrown open to the untouchables.¹

Since 1924 he was trying to change the minds and old customs of caste Hindus. Though, he initiated his programme since 1924 to solve the problem of untouchability, his work did not touch the issue directly. In the beginning he attempted indirectly for it. Because he did not want to attack directly that question and also the minds of the caste Hindus. There was one similarity between Lokmanya Tilak and Savarkar regarding their social work. Lokmanya B. G. Tilak was the first person who initiated the *Ganapati Utsav* for the creation of unity among the Indian people. While V. D. Savarkar made it a vehicle of social reforms as he skillfully used two Hindu Gods Viz. *Ganapati* and *Satyanarayana* in his programme for the eradication of untouchability. They both had nationalist attitude behind it. As a part of his social work Savarkar gave a speech at the Kalaram temple, Nasik in the presence of Dr. Munje on 27th August, 1924. And notable thing was that a lot of people of Nasik including ex-untouchables (*Purvasprusha*) were present on that occasion in the Kalaram temple, where the sabha was arranged.²

Besides V. D. Savarkar launched temple entry campaign in the following temples in Ratnagiri district.

a) Vitthal Temple (1925-29) :

V. D. Savarkar used his special strategy for seeking entry in the Vitthal temple with the untouchables, at Ratnagiri. In his programme he used a *Ganapati Mela*, *Mishrahindu Mela* and *Akhil Hindu Mela* as a media or vehicle to reach the target. Through which he entered step by step in the Vitthal temple i.e. firstly at the stair of Namdeva, secondly at

the stair of the main temple, then in the *sabha mandap* and lastly in the Nave of the temple.

Ganapati Mela : In 1925 Savarkar come back to Ratnagiri from Nasik. It was the *Ganesh utsava* of 1925. Savarkar decided to take its advantage. Hence, he established a *Ganapati Mela* of all Ex-untouchables (*Purvasprusha*). It was one of the parts of his programme. It was in this year that he succeeded in bringing that *Purvasprusha Mela* at the 'stair of Namdeva' in Vitthal Temple which was regarded as the most important temple in Ratnagiri. We have the detailed description of this event in the local newspapers namely '*Balavant*', '*Bakul*' and '*Satyashodhak*'. It was the first step in his programme of temple entry.³ It means first he tried to unite all ex-untouchables in the form of *Ganapati Mela*.

Mishrahindumela : Secondly, he tried to bring closer all Hindus by founding a *Mishrahindumela*. '1927 was the year of establishment of *Mishrahindumela* made up of all Hindus.' There was freedom to every body 'to join it or to join the *Mela* of their own caste'. Some people joined both. *Mishrahindumela* could reach at the 'stair of Vitthal temple' in 1927. In the same year *purvasprusha* attended the lecture of V.D. Savarkar which was arranged in the Vitthal temple. They gathered in the compound of that temple alongwith the caste Hindus. There was a group of student - followers of Savarkar, who were influenced by his novel thoughts. They arranged a *sabha* in 1927 in which a resolution for the entry of the *purvasprusha* in the Hindu temples was passed, It contained the following appeal to the caste Hindus, "Please, give entry to the *purvasprusha* in the main *sabha mandap* (pendal) of the Hindu public temples. And also give them assurance that you would not prohibit them in future." It means that Savarkar acted quickly and

secured entry of the *purvasprusha* in the *sabha mandap* of Vitthal temple. From the resolution it is realised that 'Sabha Mandap' of Vitthal temple was the next target of V. D. Savarkar in his programme of temple entry.⁴

In 1928, he took one step forward in that programme. Shivu Bhangi, stood up on the staircase deriving inspiration from Savarkar of Vitthal temple and sang a *Bhajan* of Chokhamela in the presence of the Brahmins. They heard it and gave big hands to him. It was nothing but a revolution of that time.⁵

Akhil Hindu Mela : In 1929 V. D. Savarkar established 'Akhil Hindu Mela'. He desired to bring it in the *Sabha Mandap* of Vitthal temple. He decided to use the occasion of *Ganeshotsava* for securing entry of the *purvasprushas* in temple. So he discussed the matter with the caste Hindus and it turned out to be his victory. The orthodox people agreed with him on the following :

1. they approved of the new customs of temple entry which was initiated by Savarkar.
2. they agreed that they would not oppose to *purvasprusha* when they come to enter the temple.
3. if there would be any person, who wants to start an agitation of temple entry, then he would be the only person responsible for the consequences.⁶

Apart from the above agreement between Savarkar and orthodox Hindus of Ratnagiri, Savarkar used another strategy in his programme. He declared that he had arranged an open discussion on 'Whether the *purvasprusha* will be permitted to enter in the Vitthal temple or not?' On 11th September, 1929 the *Sabha* started under the Presidentship of

St. Pachalegaonkar Maharaja. As Savarkar was an intellectual person, he answered satisfactorily all the questions of the caste Hindus. Discussion produced good results as there was a majority of people in favour of temple entry of the *purvasprushas*. In this way, Savarkar was able to bring *purvasprusha* at the upper stair of the main *sabha mandap*. They did not enter in the *sabha mandap* on that day. *Akhil Hindu Mela* did it on 13th September, 1929. But on 13th September he did not enter in the nave and he used to stop in the *sabha mandap* because he thought that it would help the better implementation of the programme. First of all he wanted to testify that what action will be taken by the caste Hindus against the *purvasprusha* on their entering in the *sabha mandap*? At that time caste Hindus realised one important thing that it was impossible for them to defeat Savarkar in debate. Hence they created violence in the *sabha*. But Savarkar firmly handled that situation and continued the *sabha*. *Purvasprushas* achieved their target. It was nothing but the fruit of Savarkar's hard work and his continuous efforts of 5 years that the *purvasprushas* entered in the *sabha mandap* of the Vitthal temple.⁷

Now he turned his attention to the nave of Vitthal temple. 'How could we get entry in the nave?' was the problem that perturbed him. And only after two months he got a golden chance, on *Kartik Ekadashi*. He arranged a *sabha* in the Vitthal temple on 29th November, 1929 which was a very special day - a *Rathotsava* day. For the purpose of protection District Superintendent was also present in the *sabha*. When Savarkar began to speak, he got influenced by Savarkar's speech and suddenly he stood and gave his opinion and support in Savarkar's favour. Eventually, with large crowd of people they entered in the Vitthal temple. *Ratnagiri Prativritta* reported that news in bold headline

as : “*Kartik Ekadashila Junya Sarvajanik Vitthal Mandirat Thet Gabharyat Javun Itar Sprushansahach Rathotsavache Divashi Purvasprusha Prakatapane Devapudhe Matha Tekun Aale.*”⁸ [Kartik Edadashi was the day of chariot procession. On that day ex-untouchables directly entered in the nave of Vitthal temple- an old public temple. And took *darshan* of lord Vitthal with the caste Hindus.]

Here one thing must be noted that Savarkar did not directly enter in the temple. He entered step by step. Firstly he brought *purvasprusha* at the compound of temple, secondly at the stair of Namdeva, thirdly at the upper stair of main temple, then in the *sabha mandap* and at last in the nave of Vitthal temple. From the above process of temple entry it can be concluded that simultaneously he had done two things. Firstly, he wanted to give the entry to the *purvasprushas* in the temple and on the other hand he didnot want to hurt minds of the caste Hindus. Hence he used a path of discussion with them. Thus, he tried to change their minds and afterwards with their permission he entered the Vitthal temple with *purvasprushas*. Besides he used the Hindu festivals (*utsavas*) as an instrument for achieving his goal.

By the five years efforts of Savarkar the Vitthal temple of Ratnagiri was opened to the all *purvasprusha* people. It was the most important event not only in the history of temple entry movement in Maharashtra but also in the whole history of Maharashtra. But in the next year i.e. in 1930 *purvasprushas* were again prohibited to enter in that temple. Shri V. G. Mule passed the resolution in the favour of orthodox people. And since then *Sarvajanik Utsava* declined and it became an affair merely of caste Hindus in Ratnagiri.⁹

b) Hanuman Temple-Shirgaon (April 1925) :

In 1925, Shri Mahadev Laxman - a Gurav person built a separate temple of Hanuman at Shirgaon in Ratnagiri district. He was influenced by the thoughts of Savarkar which he had expressed in *Holikotsava* at Shirgaon. Therefore, he invited Savarkar for installation of idol of Hanuman. Savarkar thought that it would be useful for his work of social reforms, if he took the benefit of that opportunity. So he accepted the invitation on following conditions.¹⁰

1. The untouchables like Mahar, Mang etc. will have permission to participate in the *Pradakshina* of Palanquin around the new temple.
2. *Purvasprusha* people will be permitted to sit with caste Hindus at the time of ceremony of idol installation.¹¹

Shri Gurav considered and conceded the above demands. Then the inauguration of Hanuman temple took place on 9th April, 1925.¹² At the time of inauguration Savarkar gave a speech on 'Untouchables and their right of worship of Hindu Gods'. It was the first temple in which Savarkar entered with the untouchables. Now a days it has become a place of *Veer Savarkar Balwadi*.¹³

c) Radhakrishna Temple (August 1925) :

Radhakrishna temple was built by *Vaishya Samaj* of Ratnagiri in August 1925. In this temple Savarkar gave a lecture on eradication of untouchability. His efforts made it possible for the untouchables to come at the stair of Namdeva of that temple. In future it became popular as custom after it was approved by the *Vaishya Samaj* of Ratnagiri. In Savarkar's opinion it was an important step towards opening the old temples to the untouchables.¹⁴

d) Vitthal Temple - Devrukh :

In case of Vitthal temple of Devrukh, Savarkar had a very strange experience. There he had seen 'Untouchability among the untouchables'.

Vitthal temple of Devrukh was established by the native *Chambhar* community. Chambhar community was known as an untouchable community. But they did not permit entry to the other untouchables like *Mahar, Mang, Bhangi* etc. in the temple. In that case, orthodox people showed their distortion. They did not lose the opportunity to nag Savarkar by firing questions regarding that type of untouchability. They wanted to catch him in a dilemma. But he realised their guile. Savarkar preached both of them calmly and advised to remove the thoughts of inequality to which they held by the tradition, and tried to cleanse their minds. Consequently all the untouchables were granted entry in that temple. Savarkar succeeded in bringing about such reforms because he followed the path of 'changing the minds of caste Hindus'. Hence there was little chance of protest from the caste Hindus.¹⁵

e) Establishment of Patit-Pavan Temple (1931) :

It is a well known fact that Savarkar established *Patit-Pavan temple* in Ratnagiri though he did not believe in idol worship. Therefore, it is necessary to explore and understand his intention behind it. It is also important to know on what conditions he supported to build such a separate temple for all the Hindus. A brief history of establishment of Patit Pavan temple will give us an idea about it.

Bhagoji Keer, a rich man, lived in Ratnagiri. He was a devotee of lord Shiva. But he had no right to touch the idol of Shiva as he was *Bhandari* by caste. Hence he built a separate temple of Bhageshwara



for himself. He conveyed his complaint to Savarkar. Savarkar thought over it carefully and preached him as, "In case of temple entry, Brahmins prohibited *Bhandari*. Hence you built this temple. You have money but can you think about the untouchables like *Mahars*? They neither have money nor God and temple. Then what will they do?" Through this he wanted to give an advice to Keer that, 'You should build such a temple in which each and every Hindu person will have entry till the nave of it.'¹⁶ That thought touched the mind of Keer and I think, an establishment of *Patit-Pavan Temple* was the result of its due implementation.

i) Intention Behind the Establishment of Temple :

Like Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, V. D. Savarkar also thought that it was always wrong and harmful to all of us to build a separate temple for the untouchables. For Savarkar, there was not a question - 'to build a separate temple for the untouchables'. Rather than the above question he asked himself whether it would be proper to build such a separate temple for 'all Hindus' as one of the stages of the transitional period of temple entry agitation? He believed that the combine worship of God with all Hindus which would be performed in such a new temple would be helpful and useful to open the old temples for the untouchables. Therefore, '*Patit-Pavan*' temple for opening the old temples', it was the prominent object of Savarkar behind the establishment of *Patit-Pavan* temple. At the same time he preferred to clear that, that was not a temple, merely for the untouchables or it was not a new alternative inspite to open the new temples to them. He had a view that 'separate temples for the untouchables' is not a proper way or solution for the eradication of untouchability.¹⁷ He dreamt of a temple in which all

Hindus including the untouchables will have right to perform the worship of God in equal manner.¹⁸

A ceremony of laying foundation of the *Patit-Pavan* temple was fixed on 10th March, 1929, which was a day of *Mahashivaratri*.¹⁹ It is worthwhile to highlight the points which were stressed by Savarkar on that occasion. That explains his real purpose behind it.

In his speech he expected from the people that they first habituate the new customs in the *Patit Pavan* temple initiated by Savarkar and then they should give entry to the untouchables in old temples.²⁰

ii) Ceremony of Idol Installation in Temple :

Y. D. Phadke and Dhananjay Keer have stated in their writings that the untouchables achieved their right to enter the *Patit-Pavan* temple on *Ganeshotsava* of 1930.²¹ But Shesharao More in his book named *Savarkaranchya Samajkrantiche Antarang* (published in 2003, page 162) has explained that it was in 1931 that the construction of that temple was completed. And then the untouchables entered in it.

The date for the idol-installation ceremony was 23rd February, 1931.²² Savarkar held the view that Vishnu was a symbol of *Patit-Pavan* God - who was an emancipator of nation. Hence he gave importance to lord Vishnu in that temple.²³

On the fixed day Brahmins of Kashi came to Ratnagiri to perform the worship. Bhagoji Keer was ready for the occasion. He wanted to install the idol by chanting the *mantras* as stated in *Vedas*. But as it was not expected by all people, Brahmins denied to tell him liturgy as enunciated in *Vedas* as he was a *Shudra*. Savarkar had already informed the Brahmins that Bhagoji Keer would perform the *Puja*. He tried to change their minds but all in vain. Finally, that work done by *Ganesh*

Shastri Modak. And by the hands of Keer the idol of Vishnu was installed in that temple.²⁴

This event shows that Savarkar broke the *Vedoktabandi* and introduced a *Navi Akhil Hindusmriti* in which right of liturgy was given to a person who knew how to perform the worship.

Savarkar established *Patit-Pavan* temple with the intention that all Hindus including untouchables will be allowed to enter in that temple and they will have a right to perform worship equally. He had done it to create equality in the society. However, he had to face criticism of many social reformers and others also. They criticized Savarkar in the following ways:

1. Patit-Pavan temple was a temple which was built only for the untouchables.
2. It was an alternative to the question of temple entry of the untouchables.
3. It had been used as a solution to avoid to open the old temples to the untouchables.²⁵

Regarding point of the criticism it must be pointed out that in the beginning it was the temple only of the untouchables because orthodox people had boycotted it. Many local newspapers had supported them. But Savarkar was a cunning person. He followed persuasive method to change the situation. In first six months of the inauguration of the temple, he asked people who came in the temple to note down their name and caste. And then purposefully, he tried to increase the number of people of the specific caste.²⁶ It means that this temple was not accepted by the *Sanatanis* as 'the temple of all Hindus'. But Savarkar converted the minds of caste Hindus and brought them in it. He was a nationalist hence he wanted to enhance respect for Hindu religion in the

minds of each and every people. I think, in the beginning this was a temple only for the untouchables later it becomes the temple of all Hindus due to the efforts of Savarkar.

In case of second point of criticism I want to say that, it is not a deniable criticism. Because there might be a possibility that when Savarkar entered in the other temples and discussed the issue with caste Hindus, he realised that orthodox people would never accept the idea to allow the untouchables to enter inside the nave. They would permit the untouchables to enter only upto the stair of Namdeva or at the *sabha mandap*. One notable thing was that he succeeded in getting approval of the orthodox to his demands. Following is the example of it - "When Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das was expired in 1925, Savarkar arranged a condolence meeting in the Vitthal temple of Ratnagiri. He called all people including untouchables to join that meeting. At that time as per his request, *sanatanis* agreed to sit with the untouchables in that *sabha*."²⁷ But after such occasions *sanatanis* would behave as usual and protest the untouchables to enter the temple. Therefore, I think it is not wrong when someone say that Savarkar built a *Patit Pavan* temple as an alternative to the question of temple - entry of untouchables.

About the third point of criticism it can be argued that if he did not have purpose 'to avoid to open the old temples' behind the establishment of that temple, why he did not open the Bhageshwar temple to the untouchables? And why did he insist on building a separate temple like *Patit Pavan* temple? In relation to *Patit Pavan* temple issue Dr. Ambedkar has expressed his views in his newspaper.

Dr. Ambedkar in *Bahiskrit Bharat* dated 12th April, 1929, wrote an article named '*Asprushyankarita Khas Devalaya*' (separate temple for untouchables) and in it he stated that if we built such separate

temples for the untouchables, it would become difficult for us to solve the question of untouchability. He thought that such things would usually help to increase the border between touchables and untouchables.²⁸

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that Savarkar was an intelligent person. But he did not work heartily for the untouchables. He tried to use them skillfully as an instrument to reach his target. He had a great respect for Hindu religion hence he never hurt the caste Hindus during his temple entry campaign. He took proper benefit from his all circumstances and opportunities. We saw that in case of all temples which have been discussed above, he used a strategy to catch the caste Hindus in dilemma. He requested them to change their mind-set when he was sure that they would not resist him. Important thing was that he used his special theory of 'first change the minds of caste Hindus and then enter in the temples'. But he did not succeed in his endeavours. Although V. D. Savarkar did not achieve 100% success in his work, he made revolutionary attempts to promote noble cause should be noted carefully.

B) Ambadevi Temple Entry *Satyagraha* (1925-1928) - Amarawati :

Amarawati is a district headquarters and an important town in the Vidarbha region. It is a trade centre in cotton and is well connected with many important places in Maharashtra as well as Madhya Pradesh by road.²⁹ Before going into details of the Ambadevi temple entry *Satyagraha* it is essential to know about the temple itself. Its brief history is as given below.

1. **Temple of Ambadevi :** The temple of Shri Ambadevi is situated in the heart of the city. A big old gate on the road leading to the temple is named as "Amba Gate". This temple is believed to have been

constructed in the times of *Mahabharat* though most of the present construction is said to have been completed in the last two centuries, particularly in the year 1856. Though the construction of the temple is simple, it has a big area, measuring about 200 feet x 200 feet. In the centre, the main temple of the deity is situated and it measures about 40 feet x 40 feet. The main gate as well as the entrance to the shrine faces the east. The door facing the south is used as exit. The open space around the three sides i.e. the south, the west and the north of the shrine is provided for holy circuit.³⁰

The image of Ambadevi made of sand is about 3½ feet in height and is in a sitting position.³¹

2. Agitation for Temple Entry 1925 : Since the ancient times, Ambadevi temple has great importance. But in the past the untouchables had no right to enter in it though they believed that it was their human right to enter in that temple. Therefore, for asserting their right they launched an agitation in 1925. They chose for it the path of *Satyagraha*. This agitation was led by Shri Madhoram Govind Meshram. Ambadevi temple had a Committee of Trustees. Meshram attempted to change their mind in favour of *Satyagraha* by sending applications one after another, continuously. But they did not give any response to him.³²

ii) In 1926 the agitation was supported by powerful non-Brahmin leaders like Dadasaheb Patil, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh etc. Under their leadership they convened a number of public meetings at many places, passed resolutions to support the untouchables for their entry in temple and also sent those resolutions to the Committee of Trustees. Then, in 1926 the Committee of Trustees passed a following resolution : "That agitation of untouchables has been started thoughtlessly, hence it is an

injustice for the caste Hindus. By taking such a step they are going to attack on *Varnashram Dharma*.”³³

iii) **26th July, 1927 :** For giving reply to the above resolution of the trustees, a meeting was arranged under the Presidentship of Dadasaheb Patil, in the house of Dadasaheb Bagave on 26th July, 1927, at 5.30 p.m. Shri Gavai and Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh were also present for it. In this important meeting a resolution was passed which states ‘If within 15 days Committee unable to permit the untouchables for their entry in temple, untouchables are ready to initiate *Satyagraha* for it.’³⁴

iv) **27th July, 1927 :** Dadasaheb Patil sent second notice on 27th July, 1927 to the Committee asking it take cognizance of the above resolution. The Committee answered the notice by passing another resolution which states, “there will be a possibility of quarrel between the committee and the other *Sanatanis* if we approved the resolution of untouchables, as *Sanatanis* believed in *Varnashrama Dharma*. Therefore first of all you will try to convert them. Then we will think over it. There will have been a whole responsibility of untouchables, if they want to launch a *Satyagraha*, meantime.”³⁵ It means they opposed the demand of giving entry to the untouchables in the temple.

At the same time Dr.B.R.Ambedkar suggested to the untouchables that, “You will try to resist the *Sanatanis* firmly and confidently because you have a big support of non-Brahmin brothers. And yet, you don’t try to enter in the temple having co-operation of them, then I think that untouchables donot want to leave the untouchability.”³⁶

Further he said that in recent period awareness among the untouchables about their rights had been increasing. Therefore, by using

all tricks *Sanatanis* had been trying to suppress the untouchables' movement. Following incident clearly shows it :

v) **28th August, 1927** : It is well known that Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh a President of Maratha Highschool and Gopalrao Deshmukh a Superintendent of Maratha Boarding (Hostel) were involved in the untouchables' movement. Therefore they became a target of criticism and blame of *Sanatanis*. On 28th August, 1927, in the untouchables *sabha* one non-Brahmin orator explained that '*Sanatanis* believed that Maratha people donot want to send their children in the Maratha Highschool as well as in Maratha Boarding because non-Brahmin leaders supported to untouchables agitation and they also used to involve the students of their institution in it. Consequently the institutions have been closed.' But Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh hit the trustees by saying that, "We will not forbid this agitation even if our institutions would be shut down. We supported the non-Brahmins, *Satyashodhaks*, untouchables considering their human rights.'³⁷

When trustees denied entry in Ambadevi temple to the untouchables, Barrister Bagave established a 'Setting (adjustment) Committee' with the intention of making an agreement between the touchables and the untouchables. Barr. Bagave prepared a plan which consists of three provisions :

- 1) Build a compound at the same distance from the idol of Ambadevi. Only *Pujari* (worshipper) allowed to enter inside the compound.
- 2) All Hindus have freedom to enter in the temple avoiding specific time of day.
- 3) Untouchables are not allowed to enter in the temple at time when it is fixed for the touchables.



But the Committee rejected these provisions because the trustees thought that the freedom/ right of the touchables to enter in the temple had been reduced through this plan.³⁸

Then, the people favouring *Satyagraha* arranged a *sabha*. Nanasaheb Tidake, Bar-at-Law, was the President of that *Sabha*. For the good results of *Satyagraha*, Damodarrao proposed a resolution of forming a Committee. The Committee consisted of the following ;

| | | |
|----------------|---|--|
| President | - | Shri Gavai, M. L. C. |
| Vice-President | - | Shri Nanasaheb Tidake, Bar at Law |
| Secretaries | - | Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh and Shri Sampatrao Naik |
| Treasurer | - | Shri S. Y. Patil |
| Members | - | Shri Amritkar, Barr. Bagave, Shri Choubal, Shri Chavhan, Shri Thavare and Shri Khaparde. ³⁹ |

Dr. Shivajirao Patwardhan a Brahman was also present for that *sabha*. He suggested, 'first of all you would try to convert the minds of Hindus by establishing a Committee. If not any improvement in the attitude of caste Hindus within a month, you will start *Satyagraha*.' It was approved by the *sabha*. One notable thing was that many untouchable women also attend the *sabha*. They participated at the frontage in the procession which was organized before the beginning of the *sabha*.⁴⁰

The movement of untouchables was protested by the *Matang Samaj* of Amarawati. They believed that *Mahars* had deceived them as they took their signatures by showing the reason of 'caste-development.' But it was not true. They found that *Mahars* wanted to enter in the Ambadevi temple, while Matang people did not wish to do so. They did

not have any interest in breaking the tradition of their parents which had been going on till now.⁴¹

vi) Untouchables' Varhad Provincial Conference :

In 1927, the trustees of the Ambadevi temple at Amarawati declared that they would not allow entry to the depressed classes in the temple. Then the question of resorting to *Satyagraha* for temple - entry was considered by the reformers. For the first time Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh took the initiative in holding a conference to discuss this issue and invited Dr.B.R.Ambedkar to preside over it. In his Presidential address delivered on November 13, 1927, Dr.B.R. Ambedkar explained why the untouchables were keen to start agitation for temple entry. He stated, "The most important point we want to emphasize is not the satisfaction we get from the worship of the image of God, but the plain fact that a temple is not defiled by the presence of an untouchable nor is the purity of the image affected by it. That is why we oppose the idea of separate temples for us and insists on entering into the existing ones." The objective of the temple entry agitation was to assert the basic human right to enter into any place of worship.⁴²

The first resolution of this session was about the grief of the death of Shri Balaram Ambedkar (date of death November 12, 1927). Then they discussed the question of Ambadevi temple entry.⁴³

On the next day they declared that *Satyagraha* had been postponed for three months. Ganesh Shrikrishna alias Dadasaheb Khaparde who was the member of the Council of States and the President of Committee of trustees of Ambadevi temple⁴⁴ promised "I will try to change the minds of caste Hindus. But it is essential for it to cancel the *Satyagraha* for three months." *Satyagraha* Committee



assented to it. And *Satyagraha* was postponed till February 15, 1928. But after efforts of two years Khaparde did not succeed in changing the minds of caste Hindus.⁴⁵

Eventually, a *satyagraha* was launched on 15 February, 1928 as decided in the conference of 13th November, 1927. But there was lack of enthusiasm and confidence among the *satyagrahis*. It was not led with full co-operation of the untouchables. For a long time it was constant. It went on slowly and afterwards it was neglected by those people. And there was nevermore hope of its restart. This *Satyagraha* was unable to reach at its object.

C) The Parvati *Satyagraha*-Poona :

Temple entry *satyagraha* also took place in Poona. Poona was no exception as it was the city of temples. The Parvati temple entry *satyagraha* took place in Poona on 13th October, 1929.

1) **Mahadeva Temple, Parvati (Pune) :** The temple of Mahadeva is located on the hill which is 260 feet in height at the south of Pune. Previously, there was Parvati Devi. The temple was built by Nanasaheb Peshwa. He installed an idol of Shiva (Shankara) made up of silver in it. There are temples of Surya (sun), Ganesh, Parvati and Vishnu in the four corners of the main temple. There are separate temples of Kartik Swami and Vishnu at the west of the temple.⁴⁶ The construction of temple was started in 1748 and on 11th April, 1849 Brahmins installed the idols of God in it.⁴⁷

2) **Parvati *Satyagraha* - Poona :** In India, the agitation for emancipation of the untouchables started in the first few decades of the 20th century. 'In the anti-untouchability conferences reformers insisted on eradication of untouchability and the untouchables' entry in the

Hindu temples'. 'Untouchables should not be denied the entry in the temples' was the subject matter of the many resolutions passed in these conferences. Shivaram Janaba Kamble in his biography forewarns the untouchables that it is foolish to wait for the favourable opinion of caste Hindus in this matter. Because in such a way there is no hope to any reformation.⁴⁸ On 27th August, 1929, on behalf of *Asprushata Nivarak Mandal* run by some Brahmins of Poona, L. B. (Annasaheb) Bhopatkar entreated the trustees of Parvati temple to open the historic temple for the untouchables. The untouchables as well as the Youth League of Poona supported them. But trustees adopted stand of neutrality.⁴⁹

Hence in the meeting of September 22nd, 1929 a *Satyagraha Mandal* was formed in Poona with Shivaram Janaba Kamble as its President and Pandurang Nathuji Rajbhoj (1905-1984) as its Secretary. Rajbhoj at this time, was more under the influence of Prof. S.M.Mate and *Hindu Maha Sabha* leaders than of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar. A *Chambhar* (Cobbler) by caste, Rajbhoj spearheaded the campaign for entry into the historic temple at Parvati where the Peshwas used to worship the deity.⁵⁰

On 2nd October, 1929 the trustees of the temple argued that it was not a publicly owned temple but a private one and on this ground they denied entry to the untouchables.⁵¹ Mate, L. B. Bhopatkar and N. C. Kelkar, were in favour of temple entry of the untouchables, but they opposed the idea of launching a *Satyagraha* campaign on this issue. Rajbhoj, Kamble and their companions were supported by congressmen such as N. V. Gadgil, Vinayakrao Bhuskhute, V. V. Sathe, G. N. alias Balukaka Kanitkar, Deshdas Ranade etc. and S. M. Joshi, Keshavrao Jedhe, a prominent leader of the *Satyashodhak* and the non-Brahmin movement were also a staunch supporter of the *Satyagraha* movement.⁵²

2.1 Notice to the Trustees :

Following were the trustees of the 'Parvati temple' :

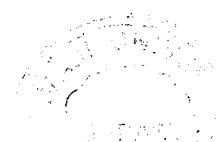
- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. Shri. Gangadhar Narayanrao Mujumdar- | Sarpanch |
| 2. Shri. Gopal Moreshwar Patwardhan - | Panch (Member) |
| 3. Shri. Moreshwar Chintaman Onkar - | Panch |
| 4. Shri. Vishwanath Khanderao Raste - | Panch |
| 5. Shri. Vinayakrao Kanherao Patwardhan- | Panch |
| 6. Shri. Vinayak Trimbak Aagashe - | Panch ⁵³ |

Untouchables sent a notice to the trustees, on 2nd October, 1929. It elucidated that as untouchables are Hindus, they have a right to come in the temple at the particular place where the Hindus used to come. For the support of their notice, further they made the reference to notice of the Collector-Pune, and the declaration of *Sarpanch* which was written on notice board of temple as "Non Hindus are requested not to enter into Temple" dated on 15th March, 1842 and 5th March, 1894 respectively.⁵⁴

2.2 Preparation of *Satyagraha* :

Before embarking upon the *Satyagraha*, S. J. Kamble held total eight *sabha* (meetings) under his Presidentship to introduce the programme of *Satyagraha*. Narharpant Gadgil (B.A., LL.B.), Rajbhoj, Bhuskute, Balukaka Kanitkar, etc. imparted guidance in those *sabhas*. They emphasized a need of having volunteers for the fulfilment of *Satyagraha*. They requested the people to give undertaking about their full participation in *Satyagraha*. S. J. Kamble and P. N. Rajbhoj evoked the people to give their help to *Satyagraha Committee* and involve in *Satyagraha* constitutionally to emphatic action.⁵⁵ S. J. Kamble and P. N. Rajbhoj framed some rules for it. They were as follows :

1. Untouchables requested to sit at the foot of Parvati hill and should give their co-operation to the volunteers.



2. Do not gather at one place and do not create shout.
3. It is not allowed to bring a stick or umbrella with us.
4. It will be decided by the *Satyagraha* Committee as to how many people will they want with them at the time of climbing the Parvati hill.⁵⁶

2.3 Declaration of the Trustees :

On 6th October, 1929, trustees of the temple made it clear that “it is a misapprehension of a lot of people that the Parvati temples and temples around it are public temples. But it is not true. Because trustees have its ownership. Nearly about 180 years ago Nanasaheb Peshave built these temples with his own money. He appointed a Brahmin as a trustee and it has been continued till now. Thus, untouchables are not permitted to come across the specific restriction in the temple.”⁵⁷ After this answer of the trustees, *Satyagraha* Committee took one step forward and arranged a meeting with Collector of Poona, on 9th October, 1929 and discussed the matter with him. They conveyed to the Collector that their agitation had a big support of public as well as journalists.⁵⁸

2.4 Initiation of Parvati *Satyagraha* :

After discussion with the Collector of Pune, confidence of *satyagraha* committee was increased. They seriously thought why the depressed classes (Hindus) did not have entry in Parvati temple while the Europeans had this right. *Satyagraha* Committee realized that caste Hindus did not want to give them equal rights. Hence the members of committee courageously went ahead to achieve their goal of equality by launching a *Satyagraha* at the Parvati temple.

P. N. Rajbhoj on Temple Entry :

P. N. Rajbhoj gave his opinion on temple entry of the untouchables. His views appeared under the title 'why do they want it?' in a journal named *HARIJAN* dated 11th February, 1933.

He said, the Harijans want temple entry for the following reasons:

- “1. The Harijans will become God-fearing though religious education afforded by the *bhajans*, *kirtans* etc. of the temples, if they are thrown open to them.
2. Temples are the citadels of orthodoxy and if we manage to get admission there, the cruel and inhuman practice of untouchability will be exterminated from our land once for all and we will be enabled to use all other public institutions, roads, wells and tanks.
3. If untouchability is completely removed through temple entry, our economic condition will be improved as we will be getting work in Hindu quarters.
4. When the *Harijans* come in contact with the educated and cultured people in temples and other public places, their habits will become more clean and their elevation will become easier.
5. However, educated and independent some of the Harijans are at present, they have to undergo several inconveniences owing to be practice of untouchability among the caste Hindus.”⁵⁹

2.5 Satyagraha on Parvati Hill :

On Sunday, 13th October, 1929, about 200-250 *satyagrahis* gathered at the foot of the Parvati hill near the Caravansary. At 9.00 a.m. the procession of *Bhajani Mandal* joined the *Satyagrahis*. *Bhajani*

Mandal included Thorat (Mahar), Landge (Mang) and another 30 *Satyagrahis* and some untouchable women. An unconcerned people were also climbing the Parvati hill. They were not interested in the *satyagraha* yet they came there to see its consequence. Many groups of the touchables sat on the benches and gathered near Nandi of Parvati hill to obstruct the *Satyagrahis*. Since morning collector of Poona, Mr. Guld, Assistant Collector Mr. Ezakel and other officers had reached at the top of the Parvati hill to manage the situation. While for the purpose of resistance trustees had closed the doors of all temples on the Parvati hill, on Saturday, 12th October, 1929.⁶⁰

Faces of the untouchables reflected a lot of enthusiasm regarding the temple entry. After the *Bhajans*, leaders of the untouchables requested the people to come with them with forbearance and discipline. S. J. Kamble, Rajbhoj, Thorat and Gadgil made speeches to advise the *Satyagrahis*.⁶¹

About 250 untouchables including women were present at the foot of the Parvati hill. The *satyagrahis* were divided into following 4-5 groups and each of those groups had women members.

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| 1 st Group | - | Gadgil, Rajbhoj and Bhuskute |
| 2 nd Group | - | S. J. Kamble, his wife and daughter |
| 3 rd Group | - | Landage, Kothalekar and Swami Yoganand |
| 4 th Group | - | Ishwara, Bhau Waghachaure and mother of Kothalekar |

Fifth group consisted of *Paisaphand Ranade*, who followed all the *Satyagrahis*. Besides these people, non-Brahmins leaders like Keshavrao Jedhe, Madhavrao Shripatrao Shinde, Mr. Lad (editor of 'Majur') etc. were also present for help of the *Satyagraha*.⁶²

2.6 Violence in the *Satyagraha* :

At 9.00 a.m., *Satyagrahis* began climbing up the hill. Their orthodox opponents pelted stones and assaulted them. Deshdas Ranade and Rajbhoj were seriously injured while Gadgil, Bhuskute and S. M. Joshi were beaten up severely.⁶³

Sanatanis enjoyed that struggle watching from the upper side of the stairs. Among them Narayanrao Gunjal, Vishwasrao Davare, Hon. Appasaheb Gadre, G. P. Mahajan, Baburao Phule, Ganapatrao Devdhar, Dr. Jejurikar, Zanjale, Nalawade, Dedgaonkar etc. played a vital role. They tried to push the *Satyagrahis* in the gorse such as cactus and used to throw a custard apples, stones and bricks on them. But *Satyagrahis* continued the *Satyagraha* without loosing confidence. They tolerated the trouble with a lot of patience and bravery.⁶⁴ *Sanatanis* also struck the Swami Yoganand - a *Arya Samajist*. After a long time police come down to handle the situation. Collector and his Personal Assistant attempted to conciliate the caste Hindus to stop all that. They realized that even if they controlled the situation at one place, violence started at another place. Thus collector proclaimed that the road of stairs upto the temple was a public one. Hence, none should prohibit the untouchables to walk on it. Then under his protection he brought Gadgil and Rajbhoj at the doors of the temple. Other *Satyagrahis* also got police protection though they did not expected it. When they reached the top of the Parvati hill, they kept their heads on the stairs of temple and returned back as the doors of the Parvati temple were closed. As he was injured seriously, Rajbhoj admitted in the Mission Hospital which was near the Parvati.⁶⁵

When all *Satyagrahis* were dispersed, *Sanatanis* returned home happily as they thought they had defeated the *Satyagrahis*. They did not

open doors of the temple even after 12.00 noon. Some people congratulated Gadgil, Bhuskute, Rajbhoj etc. In their opinion, it was moral conquest of the *Satyagrahis*.⁶⁶

Sanatanis deployed armed police force to protect the Parvati temple. The doors of temple remained closed for three days. With the aim of preventing *Satyagraha*, they distributed handbills all over in Pune and other villages.⁶⁷

2.7 Popular Support to Parvati *Satyagraha* :

On 16th October, 1929 a meeting was organized by the people of depressed classes at Parel under the Presidentship of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to felicitate the *Satyagrahis* of Parvati temple, Bhuskute, Devrao Naik, Thakare, Pradhan, Khandke, Kavadi, Kadrekar, Acharya Dr. Suratkar (all touchables) and Shivatarkar, Mali, Aadarekar (untouchables) etc. attended the meeting. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar appealed to untouchables for their co-operation.⁶⁸

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar always tried to escort the *Satyagrahis* in their confused state by expressing his thoughts in many public meetings about the Parvati *Satyagraha*. He wrote a detailed account of Parvati *Satyagraha* in an article in *Bahiskrit Bharat* dated 15th November, 1929.⁶⁹

3) Second Campaign of Parvati *Satyagraha* :

An insurrection of Parvati *Satyagraha* was spread rapidly in the outside villages of Poona. Therefore they sent a sympathetic letters to the *Satyagrahis*. Some people enforced for the negotiation supposing that it was not useful for untouchables to strain the matter. Jamanalal Bajaj suggested to untouchables' leaders to suspend the *Satyagraha* for sometime. But untouchables insisted for leading the *Satyagraha*. They tried to convert to Rajbhoj in favour of them.



For the confirmation of their demand Secretary of *Satyagraha* Committee prepared a handbill on 'temple-entry *Satyagraha*'. As a result of it, Narayanrao Gunjal also brought out a handbills which contained an appeal a challenge 'come again to Parvati' (*Punha Parvatis Chala*). Meantime Anand Swami, Secretary of Jammalal Bajaj, arrived at Poona and persuaded Rajbhoj for a compromise with the *Sanatanis*. Narsinha Chintaman, Kelkar, L.B.Bhopatkar, Mate and Swami Anand intervened and succeeded in persuading the leaders of the *Satyagraha* Committee to suspend their *Satyagraha* for 15 days on certain conditions. As the date of *Satyagraha* was fixed, earlier the *Satyagraha* Committee decided that they would inform the *satyagrahis* about the agreement on the spot of *Satyagraha*.⁷⁰

As per schedule *Satyagrahis* come at the Parvati hill from different places on 18th October, 1929 at 9.00 a.m. Procession initiated from the temple of Rameshwara. Landage was at the centre. And about 300 people participated in it. They overcrowded at the foot of Parvati hill. Four Police Officers and 25 constables were present there.⁷¹

The doors of temple were closed. But some *Sanatanis* observed the scene of *Satyagraha* from the top with binocular. G. N. Kanitkar came there after fifteen minutes and spokesman Rajbhoj informed the *Satyagrahis* that, 'Mate, Bhopatkar and Kelkar had agreed to take up the matter with the trustees. Hence the proposed *satyagraha* was postponed for fifteen days.' Suddenly, the *Sabha* was disrupted by the *Satyagrahis* and they didn't concede to the above agreement. There was *Pandamonium* at the site of *satyagraha*. Hence *Satyagrahis* regressed to the Swargate. In such a way the second campaign of Parvati *Satyagraha* ended after the speech of Jedhe.⁷²

4) Impact of Parvati *Satyagraha* :

Parvati *Satyagraha* produced far reaching impact all over India.

1. On 22nd October, 1929, Jamanalal Bajaj come to Pune. Here he visited S. J. Kamble and Rajbhoj. Later he discussed for a long time with the trustees to change their mind regarding Parvati satyagraha. But at the same time the trustees tried to prevent him.⁷³
2. On 23rd October, 1929, trustees of 'Shri Ramachandra Temple' - (Gulabwadi, near C. P. Tank, Mumbai) declared in a meeting that they had opened the temple for all the Hindus including untouchables.⁷⁴
3. Jamanalal Bajaj attempted to bring about change in the minds of the trustees by sending a letter dated 9th November, 1929. He emphasized in his letter that, untouchables had no entry in temples in India though they belong to Hindu religion. It was a matter of shame for all of us. It was not a question only of Parvati temple but it was a question of all people of India.⁷⁵
4. Trustees of 'Swami Narayana temple' - Ahmedabad prohibited entry to the untouchables in that temple by issuing the notice which stated that only the upper caste Hindus were allowed. They stuck that notice on the temple on 13th November, 1929 (*Kartik Ekadashi*).⁷⁶ However, the untouchables didn't try to enter in it.
5. November 21st was the memorable day in the history of Jabalpur city. Because on that day, eight temples were opened to the untouchables at the hands of Jamanalal Bajaj. First of all he opened a huge temple of 'Radhakrishna' which was built 100 years ago. Untouchables enjoyed their right by entering in those temples.⁷⁷

However, in Poona the *Satyagrahis* did not stop their efforts to seek entry in the Parvati temple. On 28th November, 1929, Abaji Laxman Chaure arranged a dinner for the regular *Satyagrahis* on the

occasion of *Dwadashi* at the foot of Parvati hill. Twenty seven *Satyagrahis* attended it. They consisted of 20 persons of *Mahar* caste, 5- *Chambhar*, 1- *Mang* and 1- touchable. While Rajbhoj with 9 men and 12 women went to the Parvati for *Satyagraha* on 10th December, 1929 they were accosted at the Nandi by the Bhayye (People from U.P.).⁷⁸

6. Dr. Harold H. Mann (Ex-Director of Agricultural Department) sent a letter to S. J. Kamble on 14th January, 1930 and congratulated him. He expressed his sympathy for the *Satyagrahis* as he wrote, 'The campaign of Parvati *Satyagraha* is based on justice and humanity. Hence I have a great respect and sympathy for it in my mind.'⁷⁹

'The Daily Mail' of 22nd January, 1939 gave the news about the Parvati *Satyagraha*.

From that news we conclude that even after continuous efforts of three months *Satyagrahis* had not achieved entry in the Parvati temple. Neither these efforts nor the efforts of Mate, Jamanalal Bajaj and Bhopatkar were successful in changing minds of caste Hindus. They failed to bring about an agreement between the trustees and *Satyagraha* Committee. When *Satyagrahis* realised that there was no improvement in the situation they eventually gave up the *Satyagraha* of Parvati temple.⁸⁰

D) Temple Entry Movement in Kolhapur State :

1. Ambabai (Mahalaxmi) Temple - Kolhapur.
2. Datta Temple - Nrusinghwadi.

Temple entry movement spread gradually all over Maharashtra from 1924. Kolhapur state of Chh. Shahu Maharaja was no an exception to it. It is well known fact that Chh. Shahu Maharaj was a social revolutionary who made constant efforts for eradication of

untouchability. And as Madhavrao Bagal was profoundly influenced by the work and social ideology of Chh. Shahu, he attempted to secure for the untouchables entry in the temples. He thought that it was their fundamental right as they are Hindus. He succeeded in his endeavours and the untouchables got entry in 'Ambabai temple - Kolhapur' and 'Datta temple - Nrushnwadi'.

1. AMBABAI (MAHALAXMI) TEMPLE- KOLHAPUR :

Though, temple entry agitation was launched in Kolhapur state also, it was unknown to the people of Maharashtra. Therefore an attempt to throw light on it has been made here.

1.1 Geographical Condition of Kolhapur State -

The Kolhapur state was bounded on the north by the river Warna which separated the state from British District Satara, on the north-east by the river Krishna, on the east and south by the district of Belgaum and on the west by the Sahyadri mountains which divided it from the Sawantwadi state, on the South-West and Ratnagiri on the West. The total area of the state was 3217.1 square miles.⁸¹

1.2 Ambabai (Mahalaxmi) temple - Kolhapur :

The presiding deity of Kolhapur is Shri Mahalaxmi after whom it was originally called Mahamatrika, according to Karvira Mahatmya. On account of this deity the place has attained high sanctity superior even to that of Kashi, as it is called 'Dakshina Kashi'. To sanctify the place and also to destroy the demons, under whose weight of numerical strength and gigantic forms the earth and consequently shesha the serpent King, who bore her, were staggering, Shri Vishnu assumed the form of the Goddess and stayed here. The famous temple to her,

constantly visited by many pilgrims is situated about a hundred yards to the north west of the old state-palace.⁸²

1.2.1 History of the Temple :

The historical personage who built the Ambabai temple is without doubt Karnadeva of the Chalukya dynasty. The architecture of the temple is purely Chalukyan and not Dravidian and the Chalukyan architecture dates from the sixth century A.D. In view of this fact, we must take the temple to have been built after the sixth century A.D. and King Karna must have flourished after the sixth century A.D. Shri Mahalaxmi temple, it seems, was built about 1400 years ago to satisfy all these requirements.⁸³

Mahalaxmi temple and that at Khidrapura are priceless treasure handed down to the posterity by the ancestors.⁸⁴

1.2.2 Image of Shri Mahalaxmi :

The image of Shri Mahalaxmi as it is known in inscriptions, and popularly called Ambabai (mother Amba) and Karvira-Nivasini, is a very handsome figure about four feet high, with the prabhavalaya or halo, standing on a pedestal of about three feet. It has four hands the upper two bearing a Gada, a mace (right) and a Khetaka, a shield (left) and the lower two bearing Matulinga, a symbol of God Shiva (right) and a drinking pot (left).⁸⁵

1.3 Religious Condition in Kolhapur State:

In the last decade of the 19th century, in the state administration the caste-wise representation was 79% Brahmins, 10.1% Jains and Lingayats, 8.6% Marathas, 7.5% Muslims and 1.5% Kunbi. The lack of educational facilities and also the attitude of the people towards education resulted in pitiable conditions of the common man. The

religious picture was gloomier still. There was domination of the priests in the temples. The priests were almost corrupting every religious practice. The temple doors were open to only privileged classes. Untouchables were denied entry into the temples. These untouchables were not only denied temple entry but even glimpse of the image was forbidden.⁸⁶

1.4 Condition of the Untouchables in Kolhapur State :

General conditions in Kolhapur state were far from satisfactory. The common people were in a pitiable social and economic conditions. On the social front there was the age old caste system with its demerits. On the economic front the general people were deprived of their resources by the money lenders. On the whole there was illiteracy, corruption in religious practices due to the lack of knowledge of religious tenets. There was widespread ignorance, superstitions and extreme poverty in the state.⁸¹

1.5 Emergence of Madhavrao Bagal :

Madhavrao Bagal was influenced by his reformer father Khanderao Bagal. He had started the newspaper called "Hunter". Through Hunter he wrote articles on social equality, the need for eradicating untouchability and other such issues, which had dominated the social scene in those days. He had explained the objectives of "Hunter". He stated, "casteism is baseless, man-made, insult of human beings, weakening the society and nation, creating differences and inequality. So to abolish such casteism is the object of Hunter." He was writing from the very beginning for social awakening. For example he wrote in Hunter 'Swaraj is my birth right and I will have it, says Tilak like that we say equality is our birth right and as long we are not getting we will fight against upper classes.⁸⁸

Madhavrao Bagal got the legacy of progressive reformist thoughts from Khanderao Bagal. He became the editor of 'Hunter' and continued to write for social reforms. Even he became more aggressive than his father in this regard. He began to write to Kolhapur darbar for the demands of common people, peasants and workers. The state administration did not like it and so 'Hunter' was banned, M. Bagal was banished.⁸⁹ Consequently he emerged as a leader of poor people.

1.6 Temple Entry of the Untouchables :

In the beginning of the 20th century, untouchables had no right to enter in the temples and they mutely accepted this traditional fact. It is unbelievable and unacceptable thing that such a question was raised after the death of Chh. Shahu Maharaj in his state. Because Chh. Shahu Maharaj had progressive thoughts and outlook in those days regarding the problem of untouchability and rights of the untouchables. So many people do not know about the agitation launched for securing entry of the untouchables in the Mahalaxmi and Datta temples in Kolhapur State. Madhavrao Bagal was the first person who seriously thought over this question and attempted to secure for the untouchables entry in the temples. He raised voice against the practice of untouchability observed in the Mahalaxmi temple (Kolhapur) and Datta temple (Nrusinhwadi). These are the two famous places of pilgrimages in the erstwhile Kolhapur state.

'After Gandhiji's visit to Kolhapur in 1927, Madhavrao Bagal was much influenced by him. Gandhi was presented a purse and an address by Satyashodhak Samaj of Kolhapur. The address maintained same line about the entrance in Mahalaxmi temple. *Satyashodhak Samaj* was trying for the entrance of the people of all castes in the temple. *Samaj* was also trying and arranging the functions of

Sahabhojan (co-dining). The address was drafted by Madhavrao Bagal alongwith others.⁹⁴

Madhavrao Bagal has written much through his *Hunter* about the subjects like "Prohibition on temple entrance", "Prohibition on idol touching", "Differences between man and man", "The need of law" etc. Government should abolish the evil by enacting laws. In this way 'Hunter' was earnestly writing about the need of a law for equality but the Government did not appear to be in any haste to do so. The dominance of upper class and injustice with the non-Brahmins continued. So after two years in 1929 'Hunter' adopted offensive policy and wrote, 'we should not bother for law'. "We say people should touch idols". Though some progressive priests, Judges had agreed to it, they were not ready to interfere in the tradition. So the best remedy for it is *Satyagraha*. In this way some newspapers and social institutions like *Satyashodhak Samaj* were trying to awaken the people, they were appealing to upper class people to co-operate and take a shift in their attitude in order to change social ethos. For this purpose *Satyagraha* was to be adopted.⁹¹

1.7 Ambabai Temple Entry :

Madhavrao Bagal decided to assert right of the untouchables by entering in the Mahalaxmi temple with them. His enthusiasm was increased when the news of 'Gandhi's fast' reached at Kolhapur. Because he had great respect for him. Therefore, suddenly he prepared an application asking for permission from the District Magistrate to hold a public meeting. Then he distributed nearly 5-7 thousand pamphlets in the city. On 18th September, 1932 he held a public meeting. In this meeting he successfully and easily moved the resolution requesting the Karvir Darbar to open the public temples in Kolhapur state to all the

untouchables. Thousands of people were present for this meeting but no one tried to raise voice of protest. This meeting helped him to make sure that there won't be any obstruction when he will try to enter the temple.⁹²

As his confidence was increased by the above resolution he decided to enter in the Mahalaxmi temple. Hence, on 25th September, 1932 he again circulated 7-8 thousand pamphlets. He put the name of Waghmare, an untouchable student, with him on these pamphlets. He informed the District Magistrate that they were ready to launch *Satyagraha* if they faced incrimination from the caste Hindus. But surprising thing was that, some untouchables were shocked by the decision of Madhavrao Bagal. Therefore they requested to him, 'perhaps, it will be harmful for us to take action in hurry, so do not expedite.' But he did not accede to their request and decided to go ahead with his previous planning.⁹³

Bagal arranged a meeting in which he moved the resolution of 'Untouchable's temple entry' and along with Waghmare, an untouchable, he entered in the Mahalaxmi temple of Kolhapur, on 25th September, 1932.⁹⁴

2. Datta Temple Entry (20 October, 1932) Nrusinhwadi :

Nrusinhwadi is a famous and popular place of pilgrimage in the Kolhapur district. Datta temple of Nrusinhwadi has been the most important shrine not only in Kolhapur District but also in the state of Maharashtra. It is situated on the bank of river Krishna. During the first half of the 20th century it was the stronghold of the Brahmins. Hence they used to perform religious rites as per old custom. In this temple they did not allow the untouchables to enter.

2.1 Injustice on Non-Brahmins in Nrusinhwadi (2 April, 1928) :

Chh. Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur started the 'non-Brahmin Movement' in Kolhapur state during his reign. But the non-Brahmin movement was weakened after his death in 1922. Consequently the Brahmins got free-hand in the religious matter again. The incident which took place in Nrusinhwadi in 1928 shows it clearly :

On 22nd April, 1928, Mamlatdar of *taluka* Shirol - Shri Jadhav D. S. had gone to Wadi for funeral rites of someone. When Brahmins saw them they locked the doors of Datta temple. Shri Jadhav felt the it very strange. But Shri Jadhav was a courageous person. He gently went to the temple for enquiry. But Brahmins (Pujari) gave him rude answers. Suddenly, they locked out Shri Jadhav and beat him and all those who had accompanied him there. In this way Brahmins purposefully disturbed peace in the area of Datta temple. As Brahmins beat the Marathas, *Pujari* was pleased by their action.”⁹⁵

And after some days the protagonist newspapers of Brahmins requested the Government to take charge of the temple administration. On this situation the weekly *Vijayee Maratha* wrote that, it was an enigma that a progressive state like Kolhapur should not have taken steps for temple entry. It further added that non-Brahmin priest be appointed in the temple. Also Madhavrao Bagal through his writings tried to create an awakening among the people first. Slowly the temple entry question was getting momentum in this wake.⁹⁶

2.2 Achievement of the Non-Brahmins :

The above case continued for about one year. And after efforts of one year the non-Brahmins achieved their right to enter in the Datta temple. As it was one of the stages in the efforts of abolition of

untouchability. Dr. B.R.Ambedkar wrote about it in his *Bahiskrit Bharat* of 15th November, 1929.⁹⁷

“*Shri Kshetra* Nrusinghwadi has a famous shrine of Shri Dattatreya in the Maharashtra. Non-Brahmins had initiated a movement for getting a right of worship in that temple. But they were opposed by priests and *Sanatanis*. Therefore, it was converted into quarrel and court cases. However, at the end it gave good results. They made an agreement that ‘the iron compound would be built around the nave. Only priest has a right to enter in the nave and perform worship (*Puja*). Other Brahmins, non-Brahmins and untouchables will be permitted for vision of idol from the outside of compounds.’ By such an agreement they withdrew the right of Brahmins also to perform *Puja* in the temple, while the untouchables got the right to enter into the temple upto the iron compound. It will help to solve the question of temple entry of the untouchables in other places.”⁹⁸

2.3 Tradition of *Pangati Bhojan* - Nrusinghwadi :

At the occasion of *Gurudwadishi* dinner had been arranged at Nrusinghwadi, and it was traditional. Thousands of Brahmins were attending it. The expenditure of the dinner was given by Government. But there was discrimination in distributing the food. After the *pangati* of Brahmins the remained food was distributed to the non-Brahmins as *Prasad*. But due to the efforts of Khanderao Bagal the dissemination was removed. And after that day non-Brahmins were allowed to take dinner alongwith the Brahmins, simultaneously.⁹⁹

2.4 Resolution of temple Entry of Nrusinghwadi :

Shri Shridhar Pant Tilak, son of Lokmanya Tilak, met the tragic end. In a bid to pay homage a meeting was called in Kolhapur under the Presidentship of Dr. K. K. Chavan. In the meeting two resolutions were

passed. One of them was to condole with the death of Tilak. While the other one was related to the temple entry at Nrusinghwadi on the basis of fundamental rights. It demanded an immediate action by the state.¹⁰⁰

2.5 Madhavrao Bagal and Datta Temple Entry :

When Madhavrao Bagal succeeded in entering in the temple of Ambabai at Kolhapur, he was emboldened. Then he turned their attention towards to the issue of Datta temple, Nrusinghwadi. Puritan norms were very strictly followed there.

First of all Madhavrao Bagal sought permission from District Magistrate for a public meeting. Then he sanctioned a lot of handbills and gave responsibility to. Gaikwad which was a very active volunteer, to circulate those handbills in Nrusinghwadi as well as in the nearby villages. As per his plan, Madhavrao Bagal with some members of Satyashodhak Samaj, some untouchables, some students of Maratha boarding and Mr. G. D. Patil reached at Nrusinghwadi.¹⁰¹

He had decided to address a public meeting at Wadi before *Satyagraha*. Some officials also had come to Nrusinghwadi and requested Madhavrao Bagal to keep away from the meeting. Before his arrival at the place of meeting they were present there and had taken control of the meeting place. But Madhavrao Bagal castigated them by organizing the meeting at a small distance from the previous one. He expressed his sympathy for the people who were present for the *Sabha*. Darbar was favourable to him. When the *Sabha* was over, Madhavrao Bagal and the untouchable person workers surrounded the temple by taking photograph of Mahatma Gandhi in their hands. Then with Gangaram Kamble and other untouchables, he entered in the Datta temple on 2nd October, 1932 which was the birth anniversary of Gandhi. At the end,

Madhavrao Bagal declared that "From today the temple of Datta has been opened to all Hindus including the untouchables."¹⁰²

Since the reign of Chh. Shahu Maharaja, Darbar was in favour of eradication of untouchability, it was the 'epic' fast of Gandhiji' that helped to start the temple entry agitation in Kolhapur state, according to Madhavrao Bagal.¹⁰³

On 9th October, 1932, a meeting was held by the *Satyashodhak Samaj* of Kolhapur in which Madhavrao Bagal was congratulated for his reforms in religious field. After some days people willingly opened the *Dutondi Maruti Temple (Juna Budhwar Peth, Kolhapur)* to the untouchables at the hands of Madhavrao Bagal. Karveer Darbar also gave its support and sympathy to this agitation.¹⁰⁴ And declared that 'temples are opened to all untouchables.

Kolhapur State Government had to take cognizance of Madhavrao Bagal's religious reforms by issuing the notification No. 19 on 13th October, 1932. Kolhapur darbar declared that as the people of Kolhapur encouraged the untouchables to enter the Mahalaxmi temple Chh. Rajaram Maharaj was pleased with them. Henceforth any caste should not be treated as untouchable. All people of Hindu religion would be treated as equal to go in the temples of the state and our public places will be open to the people of all castes. It will be their right.¹⁰⁵

Later a meeting was arranged by the untouchables of Karveer taluka under the Presidentship of Madhavrao Bagal and in it they congratulated Chh. Rajaram Maharaja and Deewan Surve. Because they opened all the temples of Karveer state to the untouchables before it done by the British States of India.¹⁰⁶

Madhavrao Bagal played a vital role in the temple entry movement in Kolhapur state.

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