

## CHAPTER - VII

### \_C\_O\_N\_C\_L\_U\_S\_I\_O\_N\_

Due to the caste system that prevailed in Hindu Society, the position of untouchables was deplorable and miserable. Untouchability was observing strictly at public places like Village Temples, Schools, Drinking Wells, Public Hospitals and River Ghats by the other higher castes. The untouchables had no rights against the untouchables. There were two laws, one for touchables and other for untouchables. Untouchables were the most sufferer in this age old Hindu society. Once untouchables always an untouchable.

In short, they were born in debt and perished in debt. They were born untouchables, they lived as untouchables and they died as untouchables. But untouchables got their saviour and leader in the form of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who struggled throughout life for achieving rights for down-trodden caste.

Due to efforts and attempts made by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, untouchability is now-a-days abolished by the Constitution of Free India in 1950. Because Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was the Chief Architect of Indian Constitution

as well as the liberator of untouchables. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was an educationalist, economic<sup>st</sup>, author, professor, lawyer, leader, fighter, law-giver, law-maker, leveller and liberator. Untouchability is abolishing due to the attempts of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to whom history never forgets. Ambedkar has played the part of destiny in the liberation of suppressed - humanity in India.

But Ambedkar did this work because ground was prepared by others. Before Ambedkar the liberation movement of untouchables was going on in a small scale and it was also slow.

After the fall of Peshwa Bajirao II in 1818, the whole Maharashtra became the part and parcel of Bombay Presidency where English East India Company was ruling. From this time onwards British rule in - Maharashtra was started and their liberal forces of the West reacted with the stagnant social forces of uniform administration, rule of law and modern means of communication were irresistible forces that sufficiently pressurised the Indian Society for change.

The history of the nineteenth century is the history of westernization of the world. The presence of

the British in India brought about profound changes in the social and administrative conditions of the country and these in their turn reacted on the educational policy of Government.

The rule of East India Company in Maharashtra was a rule of law. During this period Christian Missionaries penetrated into Maharashtra and started schools for untouchables community. The activities of the Christian Missionaries were helpful for abolishing untouchability at least to some extent. So British rule was beneficial for down-trodden and boon to untouchables.

But the first man who did great service for the first time for untouchables was Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley who is regarded as father of our social revolution (1827 - 1890). Jotiba started schools for untouchables and girls for the first time in India. He also criticised Hindu society, evil practices and traditions through his writings and speeches delivered at various places. His book entitled 'Gulamgiri' (Slavery) was important work and he condemned selfish attitude of Brahmanism. Therefore, he said that there was no need of intermediary between God and common man. So he founded Satya Shodhak Samaj (Truth Seeking Society) in

1873 in Poona. Later on branches were started throughout Bombay Presidency. For his great service rendered to untouchables, women, peasant and common man, the Bombay people honoured him as 'Mahatma'.

Jotirao was pre-eminently a patriot of -  
humanity. Like all really great men, he was a universal man. He stood for human rights, justice, peace and prosperity, and not for power. He wanted a religion which recognised social equality.

Mahatma Phooley came from Mali community and became Mahatma. But two rulers coming from royal family also did service for common man and became mortal in the History of Social Reform Movement of Modern India. One was Sayajirao Gaikwad (1875 - 1939), the ruler of Baroda and another was Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj (1894 - 1922) the ruler of Kolhapur State. These two rulers were progressive and liberal towards untouchable community.

Sayajirao Gaikwad was well educated and wise ruler who paid much attention towards the education of untouchables in his State. He opened number of schools for them also. He also extended monetary help to various untouchables students and sanctioned scholarship for untouchable students. But Sayajirao Gaikwad's name -

will be remembered forever because he was the ruler who helped Dr. B. R. Ambedkar for his college education in Elphinstone College and abroad also. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar went to Columbia University and London School of Economics and Politics as 'Gaikwad Scholar'. This indicates the greatness of Sayajirao Maharaj because later on Ambedkar became leader of untouchables and the Architect of Indian Constitution.

Like Sayajirao Gaikwad, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur was also a social royal revolutionary. Because Shahu Maharaj did lot for untouchables. He started crusade against untouchability. He introduced number of measures and enacted laws for abolishing untouchability from public life. He opened schools, hostels, hospitals, public well, river sides for untouchables. He also extended monetary help not only to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar at the time of his need but sent money to Mr. Ambedkar when Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was abroad. Thus, Shahu Maharaj was a Champion of Social Justice and equal opportunity for all. Therefore, the depressed classes of India in general and of Maharashtra in particular owe a deep debt of gratitude to the late Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj for the work that he did for them. The pioneering reforms that he introduced and implemented for upliftment of untouchables fifty years before, have

all now been found a place in the Constitution of Free India.

Besides these two royal social reformers, Gopal Baba Valangkar, Shivaram Janaba Kamble, Kisan Fangu Bansode, Kalicharan Nanda Gavali, Ravji Moon Pande and Ambedkar's father Ramjo who did pioneering work in the field of liberation movement of untouchables in Pre-Ambedkarian period.

Lastly, Karmveer V. R. Shinde (1873 - 1944) has left a mark of his own on the Renaissance Movement in Western India. In a comprehensive history of modern Maharashtra, the achievements of social reformers like V. R. Shinde must find a place. Karmveer Vitthal Ramji Shinde, a philosopher of Liberal Religion, a social reformer who spent the best years of his life in the cause of the Depressed Classes.

Therefore, V. R. Shinde founded the 'Depressed Classes Mission Society of India' in 1906 and the aim of this society was the total abolition of untouchability.

8 V. R. Shinde founded boardings, schools, free hospitals and Bhajan Samaj, in which the members of the caste society and untouchables were associated

together with the view of removing the prejudices towards one another by helping the backward children from Depressed Classes to follow good habits of the advanced classes.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar returned to Bombay in April, 1923 from abroad after completing his education. Ambedkar was now a Barrister reinforced by a London Doctorate in Science, an American Doctorate in Philosophy and studies in Bonn University. He was thus well equipped as a lawyer and an authority to challenge the scholars of economics and sociology in India and to storm the India citadel.

Princes like Chhatrapati Shahu and Sayajirao Gaikwad and leaders like Mahatma Phooley, Karmveer Shinde toiled untiringly for the upliftment of the untouchability and prepared ground for Dr. B. R. Ambedkar who emerged on the socio-political scenes in India after 1924 as the unchallenged leader and saviour of untouchables with a slogan 'Slaves can be revolted against slavery only when they are aware of it.'

It was decided by the Kolaba District Depressed Classes to hold a Conference of Mahad on March 19 and 20, 1927. The leaders of the Conference invited Ambedkar

and requested to deliver his Presidential address.

With great earnestness Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar then delivered a message to his people which echoed throughout the hills, dales and villages of Maharashtra. Declaring that the demilitarisation was one of the causes of their downfall, he said, " The military offered us unique opportunities of raising our standard of life and proving our merit and intellect, courage and brilliance as army officers."

Then in an inspiring tone he said, "No lasting progress can be achieved unless we put ourselves through a threefold process of purification. We must improve the general tone of our demeanour, re-tone our pronounciations and revitalise our thoughts. I, therefore, ask you now to take a vow from this moment to renounce eating carrion."

In conclusion, he said, in a moving tone, "There will be no difference between parents and animals if they will not desire to see their children in a better position than their own."

And now the momentous event, great in its magnitude and far-reaching in its consequences, was taking place. Anti-slavery, anti-caste, anti-priest, Ambedkar, who represented the awakened spirit of the Untouchable Hindus, was marching towards the Chawdar Tank at Mahad.

Ambedkar was now inspiring them to do battle for their human rights. He was driving them to action by acting himself. Thus, led for the first time in their history by a great leader of their own, the untouchables were marching to vindicate their rights.

They all displayed discipline, energy and enthusiasm. The march wended its way through the streets of Mahad and terminated at the Chawdar Tank. Ambedkar himself was now standing on the verge of the Tank. Ambedkar took water from the Tank and drank it. The vast multitude of men followed suit and vindicated their right. Ruskin says that doing is a great thing. Carlyle says that the end of man is action.

The above Chawdar Tank Satyagrah took place in 1927 and this was a turning point in the history of Untouchables' Liberation Movement because from 1927 onwards Dr. Ambedkar emerged as the leader of untouchables and it is also end of our study because the second phase of Untouchables' Liberation Movement was started under the leadership of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

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