

CHAPTER - IV

SAYAJIRAO GAIKWAD, MAHARAJA OF BARODA AND OTHER CONTEMPORARY PIONEERS (SOME EARLY SOCIAL REFORMERS)

I) SAYAJIRAO GAIKWAD :

Like Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur, Sayajirao Gaikwad, who was the ruler of Baroda State, now situated in Gujarat, spent his whole life for the upliftment of untouchables in Bombay Presidency and gave a fine - example to follow others. Therefore, it is essential to see the work and achievement of this ruler in the field of abolishing untouchability in his State.

Sayajirao Gaikwad was born on March 11th, 1863 and later on adopted as the ruler of Baroda State on 27th May, 1875.¹

Sayajirao Gaikwad became major in 1881 and British Government invested him with full power on 28th December, 1881. Right from the beginning the reign of this Maharaja was memorable in various fields. Baroda in modern times occupied an important place in Indian States due to the progressive reforms carried out by Sayajirao Gaikwad. He was a great administrator and social reformer. His State was large and he spent large

amount for the welfare of common man in his State. He introduced drastic reforms in the social, educational, administrative and other fields also. But he is remembered forever for his work of abolishing untouchability in his State and moreover his financial support to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, who later on became the unchallenged leader and saviour of untouchables and architect of Indian Constitution.

SAYAJIRAO GAIKWAD AND

DEPRESSED CLASSES :

For the progress of any man education is important. So Sayajirao Gaikwad, a well educated and wise ruler, paid much attention towards education. He made education compulsory in his State from 1893 onwards.² In this State in the year 1910-11 there were 288 Schools for untouchables students where 15,000 untouchables students were receiving education. The number was increasing every year. He also sanctioned number of scholarships to the students coming from depressed community. Later on the number of these schools was 202 and 5,825 male students and 3,597 female students were receiving a primary education in Baroda State. In addition to this, 144 female students were receiving High School education.³

He also opened Boarding Houses for the backward classes in his State. He opened 5 Hostels for boys and 1 Hostel for girls coming from backward communities.⁴ In Baroda State there was one Legislative Assembly called 'Dhara Sabha' founded in 1907 by Sayajirao and its number was 17. Later on the number was increased and in the year 1913 1 Representative from untouchables was added to this Assembly. This was no doubt a bold step taken by Maharaja because for the first time he gave representation for untouchable community in a Legislative Body.of Baroda State.⁵

Foreign Scholar, Rosita Forbes wrote a book entitled 'India of the Princes' and visited Baroda State during the life time of Sayajirao Gaikwad and gave a fine tribute for the work carried out by the Maharaja in his State in the following way :-

" With regard to the Depressed Classes, he has given a lead to the whole of India, for since 1883, special efforts have been made in Baroda to secure their education and co-operation in public life. Free Schools and Hostels for these 'Untouchables' were opened in the provincial towns as well as in the capital. Clothing, food and lodging were given to the students without any charge at all.

During the last fifty years much more has been accomplished. When I travelled through the State in 1930 there were already 217 Schools for the Antiyaj and many thousands of these 'depressed' people were being educated in the ordinary schools. At that time over 9 per cent of Baroda's 'Untouchables' were receiving liberal instruction, while the percentage of liberate all over India, taking all classes together, amounted to 8.1.⁶

SAYAJIRAO GAIKWAD AND

DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR :

Sayajirao Gaikwad was not only opened Schools and Hostels for the untouchables in his State but extended scholarships to clever students coming from Depressed Community. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's example was noteworthy.

When Ambedkar joined Elphinstone College, Bombay after 1907 he came into contact with Sayajirao Gaikwad through Krishnarao Arjun Keluskar. After B.R.Ambedkar passed the Inter Arts Examination his father ran out of funds and here Keluskar ran to his succour. Keluskar lost no time to wait upon the Maharaja of Baroda. He remanded the Maharaja of the announcement which he had

made a few days earlier at a Town Hall Meeting in Bombay. Promising help to any worthy untouchable in the prosecution of higher studies. Sayajirao Gaikwad was a ruler who practised what he preached. He welcomed the opportunity. Accordingly, Bhimrao was given audience. The great benefactor asked him some questions. Satisfied with his answers, he granted a scholarship of rupees twenty five per mensem. Thus, Keluskar proved to be a real teacher.⁷

Thus, when Ambedkar joined the Elphinstone College, the Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda, a progressive ruler, gave him a monthly scholarship of twenty five rupees.⁸

Dr. Ambedkar passed his B.A. examination in 1913 with English and Persian as his subjects. And at this time (1913) the Maharaja of Baroda thought of sending some students to the U.S.A. for higher studies at Columbia University. Bhimrao narrated his whole story to the Maharaja in his Palace in Bombay. He advised him to apply for one of the scholarships which his State had advertised. He did so and the Maharaja decided to send Bhimrao alongwith three other students for higher education. Bhimrao was called to Baroda on June 4th, 1913, he signed an agreement before the Deputy

Minister for education of the Baroda State, agreeing to devote his time to studying the prescribed subjects and to serve for ten years the Baroda State after the completion of his studies.

This was a unique opportunity for an Indian and an event of enormous magnitude for an untouchable. And, indeed, it was an epoch-making event. An untouchable, an abominable Mahar, going to a foreign land to cultivate the best, the enduring and the ennobling influence and imbibe the spirit of the age. Among the first-rate Indian political leaders Ambedkar was the first to receive instruction in the land of Lincoln and Booker T. Washington.⁹

Maharaja Sayajirao called him on 4th June, 1913. An agreement to serve in Baroda State was signed and in the third week of July, 1913, he joined Columbia University as a Gaikwad Scholar. He was the first Mahar to study in a foreign University. Thus, with the financial assistance received from Baroda State Dr. B. R. Ambedkar proceeded to foreign country and prosecuted his higher studies.¹⁰ In June, 1915 Ambedkar obtained his M.A. Degree for his thesis 'Ancient Indian Commerce' in June, 1916, Ambedkar submitted his thesis for the Degree of Ph.D. entitled 'National Dividend for India' a historic

and analytical study. Ambedkar left Columbia University to join the London School of Economics and Political Science as a Graduate student in June, 1916. In October, 1916 he got admitted to the Gray's Inn for Law. But in that year 1917 he had to discontinue his studies on the expiry of his scholarship and return to India in 1917.

Then in July, 1917, he was appointed Military Secretary to the Maharaja of Baroda with a view to being groomed for the post of the State's Finance Minister. But in Baroda State Ambedkar met very bad experience due to his caste. So Ambedkar returned to Bombay in November, 1917 bidding farewell to the State of his benefactor.¹¹

After 1920 Ambedkar went to England and completed his study and returned to India in 1923. Remaining life from (1923 - 1956), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar spent for the upliftment of his community and known as one of the great social reformer of modern age.

In future 1931 when Dr. Ambedkar attended Round Table Conference in London, Sayajirao Gaikwad was present in London to listen the bold and powerful speech delivered by Ambedkar and too much happy. On that occasion His Highness, the Maharaja of Baroda who invited

Ambedkar to a special dinner given by him in London to his choice friends. It was a strange freak of destiny that Gaikwad and Ambedkar should meet after years of estrangement in a melodramatic situation.¹²

II-OTHERS

A) GOPAL BABA WALANGAKAR :

Gopal Baba Walangakar was the first man coming from untouchable community and became one of the first social revolutionary, first Journalist, first orator and social poet who spent his whole life for the progress of his community prior to Ambedkar era. He infused new life in the untouchable society and tried for the spread of education among downtrodden society. Gopal Baba took his early education upto Normal School and entered into military service and retired in 1886, from the post of Havaldar (13) and spent his remaining life for his caste. He was a contemporary and follower of Mahatma Phule who was regarded as the father of social reform movement in India.

Gopal Baba studied Mahatma Phule's thought - probing writings and also studied minutely Hindu religious works. He also studied social religious conditions of Asprusya and Ati-Shudra and started writing in "Dinbandhu" and "Sudhark" on various social problems of untouchables. Gopal Baba wrote a book "Veetal Vidhavansan" (विटलविधवन्सन) on 22nd October, 1888 (14) and threw light on evil practices and traditions prevailing in Hindu society.

He was staying at Dapoli near Bombay after his retirement and took active part in social activities and started new association called "Anarya Doshparihar Mandali" ("अनार्य दोष परिहार मंडली) in 1890.(15) Gopal Baba was the founder and secretary of this institution. He also wrote book 'Hindu Dharmadarpan' (हिंदू धर्मदर्पण) in 1894 and addressed to his community his views on religion. (16)

In 18th and 19th centuries, the British officers of the East India company made full use of the valour of the Mahars and Pasiachs, whom they attracted to the military service of the British company by offering regular payment good treatment and necessary facilities. The British officers did not observe untouchability. The imparted primary education to the untouchable servants and to their children.

Their recruitment in the army was continued. They fought very violently to help the British company in suppressing the Revolt of 1857 and showed great valour in Afghan wars. But by 1892, the recruitment of untouchables in the army was stopped by Lord Kitchener on the principle of reorganising the Imperial Army only with high born martial races. By this time in all 233 untouchables had occupied the higher posts such as that of Jamadar, Subhedar and even that of Sardar Bahadur.

18

In 1895, as against this decision of the British government. Havaladar Gopalnak Vittalnak Valangkar, a Mahar pensioner from the army decide to send a representation to the Government in consultation with Mahatma Phule, Justice Ranade and Baba Padamaji. (17). Gopal Baba travelled through out Kokan and Maharashtra area. In these tours he delivered lectures regarding the importance of education among his fellowmen.

Thus Gopal Baba Vangakar was the first social reformer belonging to untouchable community and first social thinker also. He breathed his last in 1900.

B) SHIVARAM JANABA KAMBLE :

Like Baba Walankar, Shivaram Janaba Kamble was also, one of the early pioneers who started for liberation movement for untouchables. He was a Great man who was seeing the dream of upliftment of the untouchables :
(असुष्याच्या उत्थानाचे स्वप्न पहाणारा महापुरुष)

Shivaram Janaba Kamble was born in 1875¹⁸ and a new era was inaugurated in the family of Janaba. His native place was Bhamburde where Shivaram's father was doing traditional Maharki Watan which was not good and evil practice also. From the early childhood, Shivaram's

mind was revolutionary and he gave up the Maharki Watan, left his native place Bamburde and came to Poona forever where he took service in the house of European Officer.¹⁹

When Shivaram Kamble stayed in the family of an European officer, he learned to read and write English and utilized this opportunity for his future work. Because here he was reading many news papers and books. He was influenced by the teachings of Baba Padmanaji and Jotiba Phule whose works he read usually.²⁰ His mind became revolutionary. He also read English books from which he understood the human rights, equality and casteless society. He read about Hindu Society, Religion and Indian History. His mind became restless for the Salvation of his fellowmen.

Shivaram started his social work for his society. British Govt. was not willing to admit untouchables students in Govt. schools at early stage. Elphinstone was the Governor at Bombay Presidency Shivaram launched his movement against this decision of Bombay Government. To prepare a public mind he called a meeting of Mahars of 51 villages at Sasawad Taluka Purander in 1904 for solving the problems of untouchables.²¹ At this meeting, a resolutions were passed about admitting untouchable students in schools,

about service recruitment in the Govt. Department etc. An agitation was started by Shivaram Janaba Kamble for getting facilities for untouchables.

He also wrote his views in 'Maratha', 'Dinbandu' 'Telegraph and Deccan Herold', 'Poona Observer' and - appealing untouchables to unite together and fight for their rights against evil practices of Hindu Society.

Once he wrote about the Hindu Religion in the following way "Sudras are not to receive religions instruction let him not give advice to a Sudru, nor may he teach the law or explain to him expiation, for the who teaches him the law, and enjoins expiations will sink together with that man into the hell called Asumrotta (unbounded). A low caste man who tries to sided own by the side of a man of high caste shall be branded on the hip and banished, as the king may cause his buttock to be cut off. The Mahar Hindu is not admitted into a Hindu temple, it being considered that he is of law origin and that his shadow and touch cause pollution. What religion is he then to believe in ?

The question is whether his present religion is useful to him as a human being ? The truth is that, most people will come to believe in our Hindu religion when the

people of our religion come to consider all human beings who are Hindus as children of one God, and will cease to consider themselves polluted by the Shadau and the touch of any one or other, the only our Hindu religion will be improved ".²²

He strongly condemned Hindu Religion, traditions by his writings in various news papers. He was also a great orator. He delivered many speeches and travelled through Maharashtra. He went Jejuri, Saswad, Nagpur and Mangaon to deliver his speeches and gave the advices to his fellowmen to agitate for their rights against age old slavery that prevailed in Hindu Society. He also started newspaper ' Somvanshiya Mitru' (सोमवंशीय मित्र) for spreading his thought among his followers.²³

Shivaram Janaba was also present at the movement started for the entry at Parvati temple in Poona in 1929 which was a bold step on his part Shivaram Kamble was felicitated for his work in the Baroda State by Sayajirao Gaikwad who always took the cause of down trodden and one of progressive ruler of India.

Being a social reformer, Shivaram Kamble maintain his close relations with ' Somavanshiya Mahar Samaj (सोमवंशीय महार समाज), Mahar Vidhyarthi Sanstha (महार विद्यार्थी संस्था) 'Nirashrit Sahayakarak Mandli' (निराश्रित सहाय्यकारी मंडळी) Hostels for untouchables (अस्वशांचे वसतीगृह)²⁴ and gave sound advice for these institutions.

Thus Shivaram Janaba Kamble spent his whole life for the upliftment of untouchables and occupies an important place in pre-Ambedkarian untouchables' liberation movement. Even Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had high regard about the work done by Shivaram Janaba Kamble. Therefore, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar says about the greatness of Shivaram Kamble's work in following way :

" मला आठवते की, मी मराठी चवथीत होतो. तेव्हा पुण्याला श्री. शिवराम जानबा कांबळे, धोरात, रामचंद्र कदम इ. माणसे - अस्वश्यांसंबंधी काम करीत आहेत. असे माझे वडील सांगत श्री. कांबळे, कदम यांस आजच्या परिणामास येता आले नाही. अशा प्रकारचे नेते असताना मुंबईहून येऊन अध्यक्षास्थान स्वीकारणे मला अचूक वाटते. " ²⁴

The above statements shows the greatness of Shivaram Janaba Kamble.

C) KISAN FHAGU BANDSODE-PATIL :

He was Dalit Poet and thinker who spent his life for welfare of the untouchables by his writing and radical poems. He was in a poor family on 18th February, 1869 at Mohapa, a small village near Nagabur.²⁶ Like Shivaram Kamble, Kisan Fhagu also struggled for the betterment of untouchables throughout his life. In 1901 he founded 'Sanmargbodhak Nirashrit Samaj',²⁷ (सममार्गबोधाक निरश्रीत समाज) and started his social work. He criticised Hindu Society by composing radical poems.

Like other social reformers, Kisan Fhagu gave due emphasis on Education because he knew that Education was important for the progress of untouchables. Therefore, he started 'Chokha Mela Girls' School,²⁸ in 1907. Again he summoned a conference of Dalit Mahila Parishad in Nagpur in 1932. He also started 'Chokhamela' Newspaper for spreading his thoughts for the betterment of Depressed Community.

Thus Kisan Fhagu was a social teacher and a leading poet who composed poems on social problems,

social injustice, evil practices of Hindu society. So he also occupies an important place in pre-Ambedkarian Untouchables' Liberation Movement.

Besides Shivaram Janba Kamble and Kisan Phagu Bansode, there were some men who worked for this movement. Ravaji Moon Pande, Kalicharan Nanda Gavali, Janaji Khandare, Vithoji Raoji.²⁹ Ambedkar's father Ramji, prepared background for the future work of Dr. Ambedkar who led this movement on a large scale.

Before Ambedkar this movement was in a small scale but it was going on in a limited scale under the leadership of these early pioneers who spent their whole life and energy for the welfare of the Depressed community.

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