

CHAPTER FIVE

EPILOGUE

Latthe's ancestors originally belonged to Babanagar, a village in Vijapur District. From his ancestors one Kallappa migrated to Abdul Lat, a village in Kolhapur District and acquired the Patilaki of that village in the middle of the 18th century. Shantappa, the great grand son of Kallappa acquired the property of his father-in-law at Kurundwad. The family was known as 'Lateche Patil' at Kurundwad which slowly became converted into 'Latthe' and Latthe became the surname of the family.

Annasaheb Latthe was born on 9 December 1878 in this Kurundwad family and he was the great grand son of Santappa. Latthe's family was associated with Patwardhans in their service at Kurundwad. The family was well aware of the importance of education. Therefore, Annasaheb Latthe was put in school when he was six years old. He took highschool education at Miraj and then went to Sangli. After his matriculation he joined Rajaram College, Kolhapur in 1896. Then he joined Deccan College, Poona and received his M.A. Degree from Bombay University.

When he was Diwan of Kolhapur State he wrote the following about Professors in Rajaram College of his student days:

"Some of the Professors were quite ordinary people. In later life I look upon them as dull commonplaces of human society, men upon whom the glories of the Professorial Chair were thrust by the freak of an unkind, unjust providence".¹

The first occasion that introduced him to public life was of



the year 1899, when as a college student he attended the first conference of D.M.J.S. at Stawanidhi near Nipani.²

Another important turning point in his life was his first meeting with Chhatrapati Shahu at Bombay. Shahu was just emerging as a champion of social reformer in Maharashtra. As he rose to more and more eminence, he became the centre of attraction for inspiration to work for the suppressed masses in India.

Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha was established mainly with a view to bringing about educational, social and religious progress of the Jains of Daxin Maharashtra. In fact the name Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha itself was suggested by Latthe and it was accepted by all members of the Sabha. With his reformist attitude and enlightenment Latthe remained throughout his life, the guiding and driving force behind the activities of the Sabha. The Sabha had started a monthly 'Shri Jinvijay' in 1902. Latthe was assigned editorship of it. With a few breaks he continued as the editor of the paper until 1916.³

The Sabha had an 'Education Wing' of its own to spread education among Jains including the Jain women. Latthe, Chougule and others persuaded Chh. Shahu Maharaj for donating a piece of land for constructing a building for Jain Boarding. Shahu too happily responded to it as he had already launched a 'Hostel Movement' for every community in Kolhapur. The foundation for the hostel building was laid in 1904 and soon a two storeyed building with 24 rooms was made ready. Latthe was the first superintendent of this hostel

and continued in his position from 1905 to 1914.⁴ In 1906, the Sabha opened a separate wing for women's education with Latthe as its head.⁵ The time was not ripe enough for women's education in Jain community, which was very traditional-minded. It is due to Latthe that the campaign for women's education took roots in the Jain community.

Knowing about Latthe's devotion to social work and his scholarship, Shri Shahu Chhatrapati appointed him as a Lecturer in Rajaram College. Influenced by Shri Shahu, Latthe founded 'Asprushya Vidya Prasarak Mandal' for the spread of education among the backward classes in 1908. Orthodox Jains hated Latthe for his liberal views and the work he was doing for the untouchables. He attended a reception of Ganapati festival arranged by the untouchables and he was excommunicated by orthodox Jains. But his zeal for social reforms remained unshaken.⁶

He was appointed Education Inspector of Kolhapur State in 1911, in which position he remained upto 1914. During his tenure as Inspector he did commendable work in implementing Shri Shahu's programme of spreading education among the masses by starting a number of new schools at various places.⁷

Latthe also worked as the member of Satya Shodhak Samaj in Kolhapur. But in the year 1914 he had to leave Kolhapur as he was involved in Tar Incident and settled at Belgaum. In Belgaum also he organised non-Brahmin communities and carried on activities of

Satya Shodhak movement. In 1915 he started a non-Brahmin Party in Belgaum.

V.R. Kothari and Latthe established the Deccan Rayat Association at Poona and campaigned the cause of backward classes.⁸

As a member of the non-Brahmin Party Latthe contested the Council election in 1921 and won the election with thumping majority. In Bombay Legislature he spoke for the welfare and rights for the downtrodden. Even Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahatma Gandhi were impressed by his speeches and thoughts. He boldly criticised the Government for unnecessary expenses on Military and Railway. He also advocated political reforms for India in his speeches.⁹

During Chh. Rajaram's regime Latthe returned to Kolhapur and became Diwan of Kolhapur in 1926. He introduced so many reforms during his tenure between 1926 and 1931. He attended the First Round Table Conference as an adviser of the delegates of Princely states in 1930-31. After relinquishing his Diwanship he worked for the Indian National Congress. Influenced by the programme and ideology of Indian National Congress, Latthe returned all honours and titles conferred on him by the British Government and joined Indian National Congress at Belgaum with 500 workers of the non-Brahmin Party in October 1936. In 1937 he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Council as a congress candidate and was appointed Minister for Finance of the Bombay Province on 14.7.1937.¹⁰

He was arrested in August 1942 for participating in Quit India Movement and was jailed for eight days.

In 1946 he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly as a congress candidate but he resigned his seat in 1947 and became an adviser to Chhatrapati Shahaji of Kolhapur. In this position he remained until the merger of Kolhapur state with the Indian Union.

Latthe was basically a reformer and his reform activities have been better reflected in his work of Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha. Educational, religious and social progress of the Jains was the aim of Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha. It is credit-worthy to Latthe that he advocated reforms whenever necessary for Jain community from the platform of the Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha.

The teaching of Jain religion was confined only to the Maths of Bhattarakas. In fact founders of Jain religion went door to door to preach the religion to make it a mass religion. Latthe and others advocated the same through Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha. Latthe was a Satya Shodhak and he made Kirtanas for preaching Jainism to masses. There was a bad custom among Jains that during the religious festivals and processions dances of girls, mostly prostitutes, were held. Latthe and other prominent members of the Sabha condemned it as an unhealthy practice and it was stopped in course of time. In the conference of 1909, a resolution was adopted for prohibiting the dancing of prostitutes or any girls.¹¹

From 1902 onwards the Sabha's activities to spread education

among the Jain community gathered momentum. In 1905 the building of Jain Boarding was ready and Latthe became its first superintendent. In course of time, as a part of the activities of Boarding House, a Sanskrit Pathshala and a gymnasium were added and Latthe as its superintendent was keen in the development of students educationally, morally and physically.

Realising the importance of woman's role in life, the Sabha gave attention to education of women. To encourage education among women it awarded some scholarships to girl students and attention was paid to prepare lady teachers from Jain community. The Sabha, in its aim of social reform, paid attention to other problems such as child marriage and widow remarriage. Out of this thinking their took birth^{of} an idea of opening a 'Shravikashram' for women's education at Kolhapur. In the 'Jinvijay' of May 1907 Latthe and others advocated for Shravikashram for education of Jain women. Emphasis on education of widows was also laid. Latthe was made head of the women's education department of the Sabha. Therefore, the management of the Shravikashram was made his responsibility. In addition to the routine subjects the women were taught Marathi language, Jain religion, Sanskrit and Hindi in the Shravikashram. Thus, the establishment of Jain Boarding in 1905 and Shravikashram in 1908 were remarkable developments in the history of the Sabha. Latthe's wife Shrimati Dnyanamatibai worked as a teacher coming all the way walking from the distance of two miles.¹² When Latthe became Diwan of Kolhapur a building was

constructed for Shrivikashram and today there stands three storeyed building where a number of girl students studying from primary to the collegiate levels are accommodated.

The Sabha's aim was to remove the bad practices and customs that had crept in the Jain society. For example, the custom of marriages within near relatives among the Jains was unscientific.¹³

The custom of child marriage was also in vogue among the Jains. In the conference of 1905 the Sabha passed a resolution supporting adult marriages. Shri Latthe wrote opposing child marriage in the editorial of 'Jinvijay' of June 1905.¹⁴ The Sabha declared the proper age for marriage for male as 21 years and for female as 18 years.

When Latthe became Diwan of Kolhapur he enacted the law prohibiting child marriage in Kolhapur state.¹⁵ Latthe also advocated the marriage among the sub-castes of Jains and widow remarriage in the editorial of 'Jinvijay' of 1906.¹⁶ All this indicates the reforming temperament of Latthe who had sagacity to read the signs of the changing time.

As Latthe was known as social and religious reformer, he was also known as an administrator and occupied various administrative positions under three Chhatrapatis, namely, Chh. Shri Shahu, Chh. Shri Rajaram and Chh. Shri Shahaji. Latthe was a professor of English in Rajaram College, but Shahu then transferred him to the administrative wing of the Kolhapur state by appointing him as

Acting City Magistrate on 17th September, 1910. This was the beginning of Latthe's career as an administrator in Kolhapur state. He continued in his position of City Magistrate until 15th January, 1911. He was then given the most prestigious position of Education Inspector on 16th January 1911.¹⁷ Shri Shahu had launched a movement of compulsory primary education in the state. In this connection Latthe's selection as an Education Inspector by Shahu was a remarkable achievement for Latthe. Latthe completely shared Shri Shahu's idea that knowledge was the source of power and hence the education was the basic need of man.

Miss Clarke Hostel, which was started in 1908 for backward classes, was one with which Latthe was associated right from the beginning. The initial meetings to start Miss Clarke Hostel were conducted in Jain Boarding, of which Latthe was superintendent. Latthe took keen interest in the education of backward classes in pursuance of Shri Shahu's policy of upgrading the depressed classes. This was indicated by many instances. In April 1912, a meeting was conducted in Jain Hostel to create a band of educated liberal leaders of depressed classes. Latthe was Educational Inspector and still the superintendent of Jain Boarding.¹⁸

The progress of depressed class education from 1911 to 1914 was tremendous, in that in 1911 there were only 22 schools for untouchables attended by 422 pupils, but when Latthe resigned as Education Inspector in November, 1914, the number of pupils had

risen to 592 and schools to 27.¹⁹

It was during 1912-13 that Shri Shahu took the decision of universalizing primary education. It is natural that Latthe, who was Education Inspector, helped Shahu in implementing the programme of mass education in Kolhapur state. During Latthe's time, on the instruction of Shri Shahu Chhatrapati, freeships and scholarships were given to the students on massive scale.²⁰ On 3rd March 1913 scholarships were also announced to girl students to encourage them.²¹

During his tenure as Education Inspector the system of School Punch to look after the functioning of schools was introduced.

When Latthe became Education Inspector in 1911 total number of girls taking education was 788 but when he resigned in 1914 the number rose to 2271, the number of educational institutions rose up to 380 in 1914 against 1,357 in 1911. During his tenure Sardar's school, teachers training school, Patil School were the notable educational institutions that were brought into being.

Latthe's zeal for the cause of education was immense. He was the Chairman of South Konkan Education Society, Belgaum. He helped starting Jain Boardings and Shrivikashrams at Kolhapur, Sangli, Belgaum and Hubli.

After he resigned from the post of Education Inspector in 1914, he remained away from Kolhapur upto 1926, the year in which

he returned to Kolhapur to become the Diwan of Kolhapur administration. Chh. Rajaram was impressed by Latthe's intellect, frankness and straightforwardness of his character and made him Diwan of Kolhapur on January 2, 1926.

As a Diwan, Latthe submitted yearly reports to the Chhatrapati. His reports, which were written especially in the years 1926 to 1928 indicate that during his regime there was financial, educational, agricultural, commercial and judicial development in the state. Even it is noticed from the reports of 'Pragati and Jinvijay' that the appearance of Kolhapur state totally changed in the period of Latthe's Diwanship.²² Latthe's well-studied and thought-out planning, organisational power, utilisation of staff, co-operative attitude and budgeting made him very able administrator and it is evident from the administrative reports. For this, Latthe carefully studied the existing situation, deeply thought over it and made certain improvements in every department of administration. Latthe paid attention to bring the Jahagirdars well under control and discipline of Chh. by recovering the share that was due to the Chhatrapati, in instalments wherever necessary.

Latthe remarkably paid attention to education department. In 1926 the playground was prepared, building of Rajaram College was expanded, museum of coins came into existence and new subjects were started. In 1927, Science Department was opened in the Rajaram College, money was invested on laboratory equipments and thus Latthe tried to provide all facilities of education. He tried

to spread even secondary education and it is noteworthy that he undertook conversion of private highschools into public institutions. Attention was also paid to improve the percentage of matriculation results.

Latthe was of the opinion that, for economic betterment of the state, knowledge of agricultural science should be given to the peasants. He, therefore, invested money on opening agricultural classes to train the students in modern agricultural methods. To divert attention of boys to agriculture and industry the Lord Irwin Agricultural Museum was built. This was intended to be the basis of central agricultural school with feeder schools in the villages of the state. In other words this was an effort to give distinctly agricultural bias to the primary education in the villages. Side by side with this the co-operative sector was developed by strengthening the co-operative societies.

In judicial department a large number of cases were lying undisposed. The judicial work of disposing of the cases was speeded up. The legislation for the prevention of child-marriage in the state was passed. Construction of roads, water works were other features of his administration.²³ Work of various departments such as Health, P.W.D. Revenue etc. was more activised, which had otherwise gone lethargic.

During the period of his Diwanship Kolhapur state made certain developments in the field of commerce and industry. It appears from the Administrative Report of 1927 that encouragement was given to

trade and commerce by helping them to enhance bank deposits and also forming the Shahupuri merchants association. A reform was also introduced in the management of Shahu Chhatrapati Mills at Kolhapur. Latthe's views behind investing money in the Kolhapur Bank Ltd. and introduction of weaving department in Shri Shahu Chhatrapati Mills at Kolhapur, clearly show his administrative approach.

The Administrative Report of the year 1927-28 shows the various reforms that Latthe introduced in the Department of Finance, General Administration, Education, Judiciary etc.²⁴ Thus, doubtlessly Latthe was an efficient, strict, sincere, intelligent administrator, who brought discipline and efficiency in the working of the state and tried for all-round development of the state.

Latthe was sent to the First Round Table Conference held in London in 1930. Before attending the conference Latthe studied the problems of princely states' relations with British India and wrote a book, 'Problems of Indian States' in which he discusses the federation of Indian Princely states with British territory. His nomination to the Round Table Conference by Rajaram Maharaj was a tribute to his statesmanship, political acumen and sound knowledge of vital issues concerning the country.

Latthe resigned his Diwanship in 1931 and once again went to Belgaum and settled there. But again he returned to Kolhapur on 15th May, 1947, to occupy the position of constitutional adviser to Shahaji Chh. Maharaj. Then he was chosen as a representative

of Kolhapur State for discussing the political matters with Sardar Patel. After the independence there was a question of integrating princely states with Indian territory. Latthe pleaded the cause of Kolhapur for its non-merger, but as it was against the currently blowing wind in India and in Kolhapur state itself, it could not materialise. There were prominent members like Ratnappa Kumbhar who had launched a movement of merger of Kolhapur state with India. Kolhapur was finally merged with Indian Union on 1st March, 1949. Here ends the role of Latthe as an administrator of Kolhapur state, in Kolhapur.

More than an administrator and educationalist Latthe has remained eminently creative for his scholarly writings. He has contributed 8 books, which cover historical, social, political and religious problems. Latthe's scholarly personality had been reflected in his writings. His trust for knowledge and love for common man are evident in his writings. Unique style of presentation, clarity of thought and good command over English and Marathi languages were his qualities.

His book 'Introduction to Jainism' was published in 1905 when he had just completed his post-graduation and was just 23 years old. The book indicates how he had acquired the habit of probing deep into the philosophical problems of Jainism. In this book he has graphically discussed the Jain concept of sin and virtues, analysed the idea of Karma and principle of Moksha in Jain religion. His conclusions in this book were that national welfare

depends on the moral condition of the society. Morality belongs to mutual trust which strengthens union. Jainism teaches this moral side and therefore, the percentage of criminals is much less among the Jain community, was his contention.²⁵ To him Jainism is also a school of philosophy. It is a purified system of rational knowledge holding such principles as appeal to reason. Thus, at that young age Latthe very ably acquainted himself with the philosophy and logic of Jainism.

Latthe was a versatile writer. He could travel from Jain philosophy to history. He wrote a book 'The Rise of British Dominion' in Marathi in 1914. He has very remarkably analysed the cause of the rise of the British dominion and decline of Maratha power in this book. He did not agree with Chiplunkar and others that rise of British power in India was the irony of fate. In his opinion caste rivalries among Marathas during Peshwa rule and disunity among the Hindus were the genuine causes of rise of British power in India. Therefore, in this book he attempted to show that decay of the several Indian states in 18th century was in a large measure due to glaring defects in Indian character and social system.²⁶

British mastery over sea and their superior diplomacy were also some of the important causes of their rise in India. Regarding 1857 mutiny he writes that socio-economic causes were more primarily responsible than Lord Dalhousie's policy of annexation.

It was a constructive reaction against British liberalism of reforms, Latthe concluded.

Shri Shahu emerged as a new star on the horizon of social reformation in India of the first quarter of the 20th century social renaissance. Shahu's crusade against untouchability, illiteracy of the masses and caste system of the Hindus made him immortal in the history of social reform in India. It was, therefore, quite natural for Latthe who himself was a non-Brahmin leader and reformer to select to write biographical account of Shri Shahu when Chh. Rajaram Maharaj invited him to do so.

In these volumes Shri Latthe has discussed the background on which Shri Shahu came to power, his subsequent struggle against Rajopadhye and Vedokt controversy, starting of Satya Shodhak Samaj and Patil School and his efforts to help the British in First World War by encouraging the people to enter the army service but in all this he has also rightly explained Shahu's educational policy of free and compulsory primary education to all, his hostel movement in Kolhapur and outside Kolhapur. In Chapter No. XXII of the book, Latthe has paid tribute to Maharaja for championing the cause of depressed classes. Here he has stated how the Maharaja freely mixed with untouchables, made laws in his state for treating them on par with others and advocated classless society for India. Here it shows Latthe's proper perspective of understanding Shahu's idea of creating an egalitarian society for future India. Since he has properly analysed Shri Shahu's movements in these two volumes, these volumes were very appropriately reviewed by various newspapers

and journals in those days.²⁷

Latthe wrote another book on 'Problems of Indian States' in 1930, before leaving for England to participate in the first Round Table Conference. In this book he has stated that states should submit to the control of federal government. He advocated that states should be represented in second chamber of federal government in the federal executive and there should be federal court established to decide all disputes between states and provinces and the federal executive government.

In 1931, he wrote another book 'Federal Political System of the World' in Marathi. In this book Latthe had made comparative study of different constitutions such as that of the U.S.A., Canada, Australia, South Africa, Switzerland and some states in Germany. He advocates federal constitution for India and says, "The federal constitutions of the U.S.A. and Germany will give the useful guidance for India for evolving the new federal constitution for India". For that he examined the constitutions of various countries in this book.

His last Marathi book, 'Mazya Vilayatchya Athavani' is a travelogue on his visit to England for the Round Table Conference. He has narrated some of the strange as well as good experiences that he gained in England.

By way of conclusion it can be said that after reading Latthe's literature one will come to the conclusion that Latthe

was a great intellectual and versatile scholar, who could easily tread the path of scholarship from literature to history, history to constitution and from constitution to biography. In his writings he has indicated intellect that enabled him to grasp the happenings of India of his times.

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- 23 A.R.K.S. year 1925-26, pp. I to XI.
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- 25 Latthe, A.B., Introduction to Jainism, p. 64.
- 26 Latthe, A.B., 'Hindusthanatil British Samrajyacha Uday, p. 6.
- 27 These views have been already given in Chapter 4.