

**CHAPTER - IV**

**BAL SHASTRI'S ROLE**

**II**

**THE RENAISSANCE ACTIVITIES**

Bal Shastri Jambhakar was the great Maharashtrian, who in the early days of the British rule, attained a position of great eminence in the public life of the city of Bombay, sheerly by dint of his ability and industry.<sup>1</sup> He belonged to the very first generation of English educated Maharashtrians and was undoubtedly the first Shastri (Sanskrit Pandit) who took up the study of English, and only in a few years acquired complete mastery of that language, the science of Mathematics, and several other branches of natural science. The avidity with which he took to the New Learning is reminiscent of the 15th century Renaissance Scholars in Western Europe.<sup>2</sup>

He lived and did all his life work in the first half of the 19th century. This was a period remarkable for general stagnation, despondency and cultural demoralization in Western India. Because of the downfall of the Maratha rule and its replacement by the British power, people in Western India began to think in terms of the advent of Kaliyuga and fatalism. Under such circumstances, Bal Shastri made herculean efforts to awaken his countrymen and shown some light in the darkness that was engulfing the nation. He led the renaissance of Indian thought which had its origin in the city of Bombay, and developed some special features thereof which still continue to be the characteristics of Bombay public life.

As a pioneer educationalist, he formed a remarkable link between Indian and European thought, and consequently the opportunity and privilege of laying in that city, the earliest foundations of almost all the activities that constituted public life in those times. Education, literature, science, Indian antiquarian research, journalism, social reform and political progress- all these received his attention in due proportion. His capacious mind comprehended all these as complementary aspects of our national life.<sup>3</sup>

His all-round efforts of extraordinary dimensions enabled him to influence public opinion and give it a progressive turn in matters social, political and educational. He not only shaped the public life of Bombay, but was in the forefront of the reform movement which began in Maharashtra in the first part of the 19th century. His contributions in various fields were well recognised by all his contemporaries.

#### Bal Shastri's Literary Output :

The literary labours of Bal Shastri were closely allied to his pioneering work in the field of education, and they were as varied as they were considerable.<sup>4</sup> In 1830, at the early age of seventeen, he started his meteoric career first as Deputy, and only two years later, as the full fledged Native Secretary to the Bombay Native Education Society, which may be said to be in embryo the Educational Department of the Presidency in those days. In this capacity, he contrived to write and get written by his friends several

books in Marathi, which had the effect of training that language to run in smooth and correct literary channels.<sup>5</sup> He wrote text books on Marathi grammar and several other subjects for use in schools and was one of the first architects of modern Marathi prose. His contributions as an oriental scholar, though few, are of great interest and importance.<sup>6</sup> His literary work exhibit the protean intellect and also the easy grace with which he could write Marathi and English.<sup>7</sup>

Bal Shastri's literary career begun since 1828 - from his student days, under Capt. Jervis, the Secretary to the Bombay Native Education Society, when he helped in translating - Lord Brougham's 'Scientific Treatise on the Objects', 'Advantages and Pleasures of Knowledge'. When Bal Shastri was appointed as Deputy Secretary in March 1830, along with his clerical and teaching responsibilities, he assisted in the labours of the Translating Committee of which Mr. Money and Capt. Molesworth, the distinguished authors of the Marathi-English Dictionary, were important members. He assisted Capt. Molesworth in the compilation of the first Marathi Lexicon and systematic Grammar of the language.<sup>8</sup>

During the period 1830-1836, Bal Shastri translated and prepared his following work in Marathi : (1) Neeti Katha (Moral Tales), (2) Sara-Sangraha (Catechism on General knowledge), (3) History of England, Vol. I and II, (4) Bhooole-

Vidhya- Ganit Bhag (Mathematical Geography ). At this time, he also compiled - (5) Bal-Vyakaran (Little Grammar), which practically recognised as the first elementary book on the subject, continued to be used in the vernacular schools for the next quarter of a century. This work helped him in the preparation of (6) Shoogole-Vidhya ( Rudiments of Geography). In 1837, he assisted his friend Raghoba Janardan in translating the (7) Abridgement of Murray's English Grammar. In 1843, he printed his books (8) Theory of Equations and (9) Elements of Differential and Integral Calculus in Marathi. In the same year, he co-operated with two other friends Vinayak Shastri Divekar and Bhanu Mahajan in compiling (10) 'Shabda-Siddhi-Nibandha' (Etymology of the Marathi language). In 1846, he abridged in Marathi (11) The History of India (Hindu and Mohammedan Periods) from the new work of Mountstuart Elphinstone, and compiled another work (12) History of British India from various sources, while he was working as the Director of the Normal Class.<sup>9</sup>

But this is not all- Besides these many published works, he left behind him a few chapters of the Marathi treatise (13) Discoveries of Psychology, adopted from the famous work of Dr. Abercrombie on 'Inquiries concerning Intellectual Powers'. He had projected several other books in Marathi on Algebra, Geography, Marathi Grammar etc. and had completed in manuscripts (14) A Short Dictionary of the Roots of the English Language which, falling unfortunately

into the hands of some of his students after his demise, was lost forever. We can also say with certainty that he had nearly finished a higher Marathi work on (15) Calculus.<sup>10</sup>

Bal Shastri's labours in connection with (16) Dnyaneshwari, must be deemed to form a great land-mark in the history of modern Marathi literature. For it was he who brought for the first time the fine lithographed edition of that voluminous and celebrated old classic so far back as 1845, when even some of the smallest works of the more popular Marathi poets had not been printed; while his attempt to note different readings in its text show remarkably that he anticipated critical Marathi scholarship by more than half a century.<sup>11</sup>

When we survey this whole tremendous literary output of young Bal Shastri by the time he was just thirty-three, we cannot but be struck with wonder at its singular variety and volume. In judging, however, the quality of his work and his permanent contribution to modern Marathi literature, we must not ignore the fact that his principal role had never been that of a litterateur, but that of a pioneer educator of his ignorant and backward countrymen, though it has been universally acknowledged that he is one of the first few eminent makers of modern Marathi prose.<sup>12</sup>

### His Linguistic Attainments :

It is well known that Bal Shastri was a brilliant linguist. Taking into account the various references to his linguistic attainments, we find that he was acquainted more or less with a dozen European and Asiatic languages, ancient and modern, exclusive of Marathi, his own mother tongue, of which he was a perfect master. He was a distinguished scholar of Sanskrit, well-versed in various shastras, and able to carry on discussions in that language. His proficiency in English even in his teens was such that he began to edit the columns of the Bombay Durpun with distinction, while 'his remarkable facility and elegance in English composition,' says the report of the Board of Education for the year 1846, 'enabled him to take a high place among the best scholars of the day'.<sup>13</sup>

He himself has stated in his application of the 20th February 1830 to the Bombay Native Education Society, that he had then already made at the early age of seventeen, some acquaintance with three other languages, viz. Gujarathi, Bengali and Persian. He also knew some Arabic and was quite familiar with Hindi. Latin he understood well and had paid some attention to Greek. Among other Indian vernaculars, mention has been made of Kannada as well as Telugu, and we know as a matter of fact that as Superintendent of the Third Division, he not only inspected Kannada Schools, but had also undertaken to prepare the first elementary books in

Kannada for them. His knowledge of Gujarathi as well as Marathi was so thorough, that Government used to submit to him the new publications in those languages for his opinion, whenever their authors sought their patronage. It is also very remarkable that Bal Shastri not only knew French well, but was able to converse in that foreign tongue.<sup>14</sup> In connection with this, Keshav Shivaram Bhawalkar, his pupil in the Normal class, tells us in his autobiographical fragment that Bal Shastri received honours from the French King because of his proficiency in French.

As he was well acquainted with a number of languages, he succeeded in translating and preparing number of well known books in Marathi, useful for his natives and for vernacular schools. Moreover, he edited successfully his weekly newspaper - Bombay Durpun - in both the media - English and Marathi - to make it useful and effective from the point of view of his natives. It was his linguistic brilliance which enabled him to obtain respectable position among the scholars of the day and to associate himself with the leading learned societies of the Presidency. In brief, because of his linguistic brilliance, he took an active part in every benevolent and every intellectual enterprise within the sphere of his exertions.

#### His Association with Learned Societies :

As a remarkable linguist and a scholar with varied acquirements in literature and science, Bal Shastri was

bound to associate himself with the leading learned societies of the Bombay Presidency.<sup>15</sup>

As a promising English and oriental scholar, he was appointed as Native Secretary to the 'Oriental Translation Committee of the Bombay Branch, Royal Asiatic Society', in the year 1831, which had been formed during the same year. This was the most advanced circle of European Scholars in Bombay. Distinguished orientalist of that period like Lt. Col. Vans Kennedy, W.H. Wathen, Esq. and Rev. John Wilson were the leading members of this committee.

In the year 1831, 'The Bombay Geographical Society' was established as a branch of the 'Royal Geographical Society' of London. Bal Shastri used to take part in its transactions and was formally elected a member of that body in 1840. He was one of the 12 Resident Members of that society, and had the honour to be elected one of its office-bearers every year from 1842 to 1846.<sup>16</sup>

Bal Shastri also helped the Bombay Branch of the 'Royal Asiatic Society' in its field of activity after it had been formed in 1834, though he was never actually a member of that association. However strange it may appear today, the doors of the society were in those days closed to all natives irrespective of their rank or scholarship. Bal Shastri had, therefore, to send his papers to the Secretary, who then read them out before the meetings and published them

in the Journal of the society. This journal was started in 1841, and it is certainly worthy of note, that to eight out of the eleven issues published during his life-time, Bal Shastri contributed valuable papers on Indian inscriptions, and that he was the first and the only native scholar of his time to write upon Indian Antiquities not only on this side of the Presidency, but in the whole of India. Consequently, Bal Shastri may be rightly styled the 'Father of Indian Historical Research' in this country. In the course of his Preface in Volume II (July 1844 to July 1847) of the society's journal, its learned Editor, Prof. A. B. Orlébar, mourned his loss in these words :

"In the death of the late Bal Gangadhar Shastri, remarkable among the native community for his great talent and acquirements, the society has lost a valuable and most useful contributor of Indian inscriptions - that branch to which Professor Lassen has particularly called the attention of our members, as being the only means of obtaining a clear and authentic knowledge of the early history of this country".<sup>17</sup>

By this we can easily imagine the greatness of his scholarship and his extra-ordinary attainments in various branches of knowledge which secured for him an influence as extensive in range as it was beneficial in character.

Role in the field of Journalism and Marathi Press :

In 1832, it was Bal Shastri who first initiated an effort in high class journalism in Western India, by conducting an Anglo-Marathi weekly called the 'Bombay Durpun'.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, it was his wide mental outlook, social enthusiasm and patriotic urge which induced him to undertake such ambitious and useful enterprise. This publication was undertaken by him chiefly with the object of promoting amongst the Natives the study of European Literature and the diffusion of European knowledge and to open a field for free and public discussions on points connected with the prosperity of this country and the happiness of its inhabitants.

Bal Shastri continued to edit the 'Bombay Durpun' weekly for eight and a half years viz. from 6th January 1832 to 26th June 1840, in the full spirit of patriotic service, without accepting any remuneration.<sup>19</sup> It was the first Anglo-vernacular newspaper in Western India which he ably conducted in a liberal spirit.

In spite of his herculean efforts, it was not possible to make this publication self-supporting, ultimately it was decided to incorporate it with a paper named the United Service Gazette and Literary Chronicle from the 1st of July 1840. In bidding his last farewell to the subscribers the editor of the Durpun in its issue of June 26, 1840 observes,

"At the commencement of our lucubrations, newspapers in Marathi were unknown to the Hindu community. To encourage a taste for them and spread liberal sentiments in matters of religion and politics, that might promote the improvement of our countrymen, were the causes which led to the publication of this paper, and thankful are we for the support hitherto received. How far these important results have been effected we leave to the public discernment; but we cannot deny to ourselves the pleasing consciousness of having been cheered by many a philanthropic voice without the loss of a single friend during the whole of our career".<sup>20</sup>

After the closer of the 'Bombay Darpan', Bal Shastri brought out a Marathi monthly magazine entitled 'Dig-Durshun' in Bombay the first of its kind not only in that language, but also in any of the vernaculars of the Presidency. Though he made advertisement of the 'Dig-Durshun' on the 10th of January, 1839, still the first number of the magazine actually appeared on the 1st of May, 1840. It was "to contain a summary of intelligence, short essays and articles, original and select, on subjects connected with Geography, History, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and General Science, with occasional illustrations in lithography". Its main object was 'to improve the mind and to aid the diffusion of useful knowledge'.<sup>21</sup>

The Christian Dnyanodaya for June 1846 rightly observed in the course of its obituary notice on Bal Shastri:

"For sometime he edited the Durpun newspaper, also the Dig-Durshun, a monthly periodical, both of which were conducted in a liberal spirit. These publications, which showed that the Editor was in a good degree free from the influence of the prevailing superstitions, were not properly appreciated nor properly supported by the Native community."<sup>22</sup>

After the closer of the 'Bombay Durpun', Bal Shastri who had ever been full of enthusiasm for public welfare, helped his young friend and pupil, Govind Vitthal Kunte alias Bheu Mahajan, to start a new Marathi weekly - The Prabhakar - from the 24th of October, 1841, and its own lithographic press of the same name, which was opened a few months later. It is clearly discernible, that this printing establishment was set up with the object of making it also the instrument of other useful publications, educational and literary. During the same period, the 'Dig-Durshun' which was so far printed elsewhere, thenceforth was brought out under its own management. Another monthly magazine called the 'Upadesha-Chandrika' was also issued from the same press from January 1844, apparently under the inspiration of Bal Shastri, but with Pandit Morabhat Dandekar as its Editor, in order to defend Hinduism against the attacks of Christian missionaries, who threatened to undermine Hindu religion and Hindu society

in those times. Among other printed works, the most noteworthy publication undertaken by the Prabhakar Press, was the first handsome edition of the Dnyaneshwari, which was completed in 1845. The Prabhakar weekly continued to be edited by Bhanu Mahajan, not only during the life-time of Bal Shastri, but at least till 1860, having established itself as the most influential and fearless organ of the native opinion in Marathi.<sup>23</sup>

It will thus be evident why Bal Shastri must be recognised as the Father of Marathi journalism and the promoter of the Marathi Press.<sup>24</sup>

#### Socio-Religious Reforms :

The versatile mind of Bal Shastri united with his irresistible urge for national improvement operated also in the field of social and religious reform.<sup>25</sup>

Bred and born in the best traditions of conservative Hinduism, he was remarkably free from all kinds of religious bigotry and social superstition that prevailed among all classes of society in those times. His wide acquaintance with English literature and western science, along with his personal contact with the best European society of the day, gave his thoughtful mind a correct perspective of our social and religious life, which was absent even among the most intelligent of his contemporaries, who were generally carried off their feet by English education and the outward glamour

of European society. Therefore, while feeling very keenly, the necessity of removing the glaring social evils and religious superstitions of his countrymen, Bal Shastri was far from being a revolutionary in these matters, being convinced that all reform must grow slowly from within, on evolutionary lines, conforming as far as possible to the best thought of the Hindu Shastras and traditions.<sup>26</sup>

It may be remembered that cruel customs of Sati and infanticide were still prevalent during the first quarter of the 19th century, and stray cases of the same occurred in some of the Indian states till about 1840, though these practices have been prohibited by law in British India for more than a decade. Illiteracy among the fair sex and the custom of child-marriage seriously affected the growth of a healthy womanhood and indirectly of a healthy manhood. It was also one of the root-causes of general backwardness and superstition and the other of social impurity and injustice. Child-marriage often resulted in early widowhood and promoted polygamy) and hence the improvement of the lot of women - their education and remarriage - came to occupy the first place in the movement of Indian Social reform. And here it must be said to the credit of Bal Shastri that he happens to be the first social reformer of Western India. For he not only pleaded for the education of women, but also for the remarriage of young widows so far back as the thirties of the 19th century.<sup>27</sup>

Bal Shastri was an ideal Hindu Brahmin Himself devoted to the best teachings and practices of the Hindu faith, he was singularly free from the prejudices of caste, creed or sect, and he not only preached but lived a life of moral purity, religious toleration and universal brotherhood. An erudite Shastri or Sanskrit Pandit, he had studied the various schools of Indian Philosophy, and was also a student of comparative religion. He was catholic enough to acquaint himself with the sacred books of other religions, though their critical study confirmed him in his own Hindu faith which he considered to be the most liberal and philosophical. No wonder, therefore, that he could not tolerate the aggressive attacks of the christian missionaries on other religious communities, much less on his own.<sup>28</sup>

#### Shripad Sheshadri Case :

His unflinching spirit of liberalism in social and religious matters was clearly evinced in the case of the readmission of a Brahmin boy named Shripad Sheshadri Paralikar to the Hindu fold, after he had practically joined a christian mission. As this historical episode shook the foundations of Hindu society of the day throughout the length and breadth of the land, it deserves to be briefly recorded.<sup>29</sup>

Sheshadri Govind Paralikar, a native of Parali in the Nizam's dominions, was a poor Deshastha Brahmin, who had moved with his family to Bombay, to eke out a living.

Short of means, he sent his elder son, Narayan, to the General Assembly's Institution for his English education in 1838. As he completed successfully his school course, he was employed as a teacher, with the kind assistance of the christian promoters of the institution, by the end of 1842.<sup>30</sup> Because of the missionary contacts and their proselytizing zeal, Narayan, began to feel such a strong aversion to his own Hindu faith, that he was easily persuaded by the Rev. Robert Nesbit to join the mission-house on the 7th of September 1843. His younger brother, Shripad, who was then twelve years old and was also being brought up in the same Institution, he too quietly stole away with him on the same day, and took shelter under the roof of the missionary. Not only this but after this incident in less than a week - on the 13th of September 1843 - Narayan Sheshadri - was formally baptized by the Rev. Mr. Nesbit.

This incident created a great sensation in Bombay. The Hindus held a public meeting protesting against this missionary aggression, and resolved to boycott their school, while their leaders, Bal Shastri and Jagannath Shankershet, immediately bestirred themselves, lest young Shripad too, may soon meet the same fate. Therefore, they lent their full support to the boy's father, Sheshadri Govind Paraliker and advised him to reclaim his son straightway from the Rev. Mr. Nesbit. Thus, Sheshadri Govind, along with a couple of Brahmins, went to the mission house, on the 18th of October and asked for the immediate return of his younger son Shripad. But as the Rev. Mr. Nesbit was not ready to release the boy



out of his custody, the father had to seek relief from the court of the Police Magistrate. But this attempt, too failed, the European Magistrate having sided with his christian compatriot in deciding the case.<sup>31</sup>

Then the supporters of Sheshadri advised him to pursue the matter in the Supreme Court. So he filed a suit against Rev. Nesbit in the Supreme Court on 27th of October 1843. Fortunately, this attempt proved successful and the then Chief Justice of Bombay, Sir Henry Roper, delivered his judgement on 3rd November 1843, in favour of Sheshadri Govind and accordingly his son Shripad was restored to him.

In this way, Bal Shastri succeeded in securing the release of young Shripad from the clutches of the christian missionary and handing him over to his father, who must have felt very grateful to him indeed.<sup>32</sup>

But this was just the beginning of the storm that was soon to brew. These were the days when Hindu orthodoxy was yet quite unmoved and intolerant- it could not brook the slightest infringement of caste and custom. The orthodox Brahmins were not ready for the readmission of Shripad Sheshadri to his caste, as he had joined a christian mission, has lived with them and has partaken of the food and drink. Naturally, when Shripad, desired readmission the orthodox, most vehemently denounced and opposed the idea. This orthodox section formed the great majority and were backed up by another Hindu millionaire, shet Dhakjee Dadaji. Bal Shastri

resolved to put up a strong fight against this group. As he himself was well versed in the Shastras, he was prepared to quote chapter and verse in favour of Shuddhi- the formal readmission of an outcaste to his original faith. Thus the battle began almost from the day of the boy's release.<sup>33</sup>

However, Bal Shastri was no revolutionary reformer and not totally blind to the organised opposition of his unprogressive brethren, whom he wished to bring round to his own rational view by placing all the pros and cons of the case before them. He therefore, tried to enlist the support of the learned and influential Pandits of Poona and Nasik, and even of Shri Shankaracharya of Karaveer Matha, the ruling authority in religious matters. They were first favourable to the Shastric view proposed by himself viz. of administering the first part of the 'Prayaschitta' (Ceremony for the expiation of sin) to the boy in this part of the country, and then sending him to Benares to complete the other part of the ceremony, so that the sinner would be restored to his caste. But the greedy orthodox Brahmins of Bombay, spread false and mischievous reports about the case, and went to the length of declaring a social boycott against the minority party of reforms headed by Bal Shastri, which caused no little annoyance to them for more than a year. Thus not only Shripad and his kin were thrown out of caste, but all those who were prepared to dine with them were also threatened to suffer the same fate.<sup>34</sup>

In these circumstances, Bal Shastri had the courage to perform the first part of the expiatory ceremony in Bombay and escort the Sinners to Benares at his own expense for further action. How the Pandits of that holy place finally acquitted themselves in the case is not clear, but the victims apparently took a long time to return home in those days of difficult travel. Meantime most of the leading followers of Bal Shastri had undergone the purificatory rites prescribed for them by the orthodox group, so that, he too, seems to have nominally made amends in the last resort, sometime before his death, in order to maintain social solidarity in the Hindu ranks, having contented himself that he had given them the first lesson in the matter. Be it noted that he was no social rebel or religious visionary that would wholly cut himself off from the general community, but was a practical reformer, who would first properly educate and then carry his countrymen with him slowly but surely towards the goal.<sup>35</sup>

The achievements of Bal Shastri in the field of social and religious reform has been properly evaluated by Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, in the presidential address delivered by him at the Bombay Provincial Social Conference in 1901, wherein he observes,

"Hindu social reform under British rule commenced in this Presidency in the thirties of the last century soon after the introduction of English

education. Our first social reformer was Bal Shastri Jambhekar..."

Also the following observation of 'A Political Rishi' in the course of a series of articles on Social and Religious Reform in the English Columns of the Indu-Prakash of Bombay, dated May 11, 1885, correctly sums up the position of Bal Shastri :

"From his premature death the cause of intelligent and rational reform, religious and social, received a shock from which it has since never been able to recover...." 36

#### His Other Public Activities :

The life of Bal Shastri having been prematurely cut short at the age of thirty-three, we must take into consideration that his whole career of public life extended just over a single decade i.e. from 1835 to 1845. And what is more, his main occupation was that of a responsible educational officer in the service of the state, so that all his other activities were entirely voluntary and self-imposed, being dictated by his irrepressible zeal and anxiety for the improvement of his countrymen. 37

The period, in which Bal Shastri worked the Indian affairs were still being governed by the provisions of the Charter Act of 1833, which did not contain even the smallest

germ of representative government. The vast masses living in smaller towns and villages and even in the few largest cities like Bombay and Poona, were steeped into illiteracy, ignorance and general backwardness. Naturally taking into account the condition of the people, lack of education and general backwardness, Bal Shastri concentrated all his energies on educating the public not only through the educational machinery but also through the press, platform and public libraries and associations like the Native Improvement Society.

It was with this object, he conducted the Bombay Durpun for over eight years, and the Dig-Durshun later on, for at least four years, in the result, that he succeeded in creating a new reading public which began to take interest in all sorts of public questions - social, political and educational. With the help of the first year's file of the Bombay Secretarial Records Office and the few extracts of the Durpun from contemporary English papers, we can easily draw inferences on various questions about what valuable services Bal Shastri must have rendered in educating public opinion in those benighted times. We can also gather from these writings that Bal Shastri was no political sychophant, and that he expressed his views with both freedom and moderation.<sup>38</sup>

Bal Shastri also realised the value of disseminating knowledge through the creation of public libraries, and it

must be said to his credit that it was he more than anybody else that encouraged his friends, Raghoba Janardan and others, to establish the first Native General Library in Bombay in the year 1845. This famous institution prospered for some three quarters of a century, when it was converted into the People's free-reading room of the present day.<sup>39</sup>

Another educative activity of Bal Shastri was the foundation of the Native Improvement Society of which he himself was the President. Here the young educated men of the day could read papers and discuss various questions of general improvement. Through this society Bal Shastri guided and inspired his students in many ways. About his inspiration one of his pet pupil, late Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji, said that,

"under his able, amiable and inspiring guidance,  
the student members derived great benefit indeed"

It may be noted in this connection that the 'students' Literary and Scientific Society' of later years, which did so much under the leadership of the younger generation of Dr. Bhaui Daji, Dadabhai Naoroji and V.N. Mandlik, to promote female education and the diffusion of general knowledge in the Hindu and Parsi communities of Bombay, was only the offspring of this 'Native Improvement Society'.<sup>40</sup>

As Bal Shastri was an acknowledged leader of the intelligentsia, he always took a prominent part in the public meetings, and was highly respected as much for his wide learning as for his high character. However, as he held

advanced views on social and religious matters, sometimes his views offended the orthodox section of his brethren.<sup>41</sup> In this respect, we are told that on one occasion, when he had fully explained the phenomena of solar and lunar eclipses in the light of European astronomy to the orthodox section of his people, they went to the length of threatening him with a social boycott. In spite of such stiff opposition, he continued his efforts for social and religious reform.

In this way in those benighted times, Bal Shastri struggled hard for the improvement of his countrymen. Though his whole career of public life extended just over a single decade, still during this limited period, he made all those herculean efforts for educating his own natives and for the progress and development of his society.

#### Justice of the Peace :

Having won distinction as the most prominent Indian Scholar and esteemed public worker of his time, Bal Shastri was naturally looked up to by Government as an authority on most questions affecting the natives. Therefore, he was nominated one of Her Majesty's Justice of the peace on the 26th September, 1840. This was a unique honour for a young commoner in those days, when it used to be usually bestowed by the Governor in council on only a few leading elders of wealth and rank in the different communities.<sup>42</sup> It must be noted here that Bal Shastri obtained this highest honour at

the age of only 29.

A Justice of the peace was eligible to sit as a member of the Petty or Grand Jury summoned in connection with the proceedings of the Supreme Court of Judicature.<sup>43</sup> In this capacity also Bal Shastri discharged his duties in an effective manner for many years. He directed his utmost attention to every part of the duty devolved on him for the Town and Island of Bombay upto his last breath.

The manner in which Bal Shastri played this role, was very feelingly referred to, in the open court, by so high an authority as Sir Erskine Perry, in course of his charge to the Grand Jury, immediately after his death - 'And in reference to this point', said his Lordship, before a most distinguished audience in the Supreme Court, 'I can not but advert with the deepest regret to the great loss, which your body and the whole community has sustained since our last sessions, in the death of the late Bal Gangadhar Shastri. To the wide range of information and the enlightened morality resulting from an excellent European education, to the most solid and rare attainments in science and literature, both European and Asiatic; and to the influence which was the just and natural results of a character and mind thus distinguished and adorned, he added an anxiety and zeal for Native improvement which I have never seen equalled, and which have forcibly impressed upon my mind the conviction, that the loss of no individual in Bombay, European or Native, of

whatever rank, could prove so great a calamity to Western India, as that our lamented friend, the late Bal Shastri."<sup>44</sup>

Great Teacher and Maker of Young Men :

Bal Shastri was a great teacher. It is not often that profound learning and successful teaching ability go together, but this rare combination distinguished Bal Shastri. Whatever the subject he handled, he made it both easy and interesting to his pupils, and what is more, he taught very successfully all classes of students in the school and college Departments. The first Elphinstone Professors- Harkness and Orlebar as well as Ball and Henderson, had all won high distinction as teachers and it was no small achievement for Bal Shastri stated G.C. Jambhekar that he could not only hold his own with such scholars, but excelled some of them in his teaching ability.<sup>45</sup>

His Professorial Career extended over more than a decade, and hundreds of students received instruction from him at the Elphinstone Institution. In fact his teaching career began in the year 1832, when he offered his services temporarily as a English Tutor for the son of the Raja of Akkulkote, while serving as a Native Secretary to the Bombay Native Education Society. And then upto his last breath, he served the society the Institution and the Board in every conceivable capacity as teacher, Assistant Professor, Acting Professor and the Director of the Normal Class. Though he

had many other things to do while serving in the teaching field, still he never neglected his self-imposed task. As an example of the great interest he used to take in teaching field, we can mention his connection with the Normal School. He looked upon the profession of a teacher as one for which special training was necessary and with this view he induced Government to establish a Normal School, of which, in addition to his duties at the Elphinstone Institution, he was appointed superintendent. The industry and zeal, which he brought to bear upon it, were indeed most remarkable.<sup>44</sup>

It is also noteworthy that he impressed all his students not only by his brilliance as a scholar and a teacher, but that he also left a permanent mark on them by the purity and integrity of his character no less than by his kindness and discipline. In his kind reply to a Correspondent, dated 22nd of May, 1909, from Vesava (Bombay), the famous Grand Old Man of India, Dadabhai Naoroji, recalls his great Guru after the lapse of nearly three scores and ten years, in these words -

"I know him only as my teacher, and indeed as a very able, tactful, amiable and wise teacher. He was kind and interested in his pupils. We looked upto him with great respect and admiration as much for his wide learning as far as whole character. To me personally he was particularly kind and always took much interest in me. To him I owe one

incident in my life for which I am ever grateful to him. Owing to his kindly interest in me, and favourable opinion of me, I was transferred from school to college earlier than I would otherwise have been. His early death was deeply regretted by his pupils. His death was a loss not only to our institution but to the whole community."

And this expression of opinion by Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji correctly represents the view and regard of the whole generation of young men educated under Bal Shastri.<sup>47</sup>

In fact most of the men that distinguished themselves in different walks of life during the third quarter of the 19th century - in education, literature, science, Indian antiquarian research and public affairs, not only in Bombay, but in Maharashtra, Gujaraht and Karnatak, will be found to bear the stamp of his teaching and example more or less. Among such men the following were more noteworthy: Dadoba Pandurang, Bhaui Mahajan, Nowroji Furdoonji, Bhogilal Pranvallahades, Dr. Bhaui Daji, Dr. Atmaram Pandurang, Prof. Kero Lakshman Chhatre and Prof. Dadabhai Naoroji. Bal Shastri was not only loved and highly respected by the younger generation of the period, but was also greatly admired by the leading elders of all communities. As a scholar, Educator and Reformer, everybody looked upto him for a guidance, and men much senior to him in years and experience willingly consulted him in all public matters, e.g. Framji Cowasji,

J.P. Mahomed Ibrahim Muckba, J.P., Jagannath Shankershet,  
 J.P. Vinayak Gangadhar Shastri, J.P. Morabhat Dandekar,  
 (Editor, Upadesha Chandrika), Pandit Moreshwar Shastri Sathe  
 (Principal, Poona Sanskrit College ), Ramchandra Shastri  
 Janavekar (Marathi Lexicographer), Runchhodedas Girdhurbhai  
 (Educational and Literary Pioneer in Gujarat), Durgaram  
 Muncharam Mehtaji (Pioneer Social Reformer in Gujarat)etc.<sup>48</sup>

Taking into consideration all his activities and  
 intelligence the Bombay Times in its issue of May 20, 1846  
 has aptly said,

" In every benevolent and every intellectual  
 enterprise within the sphere of his exertions,  
 Professor Bal Gangadhar Shastri took an active  
 part. He was a man of profound learning and  
 extensive and varied accomplishments, without  
 pretence or ostentation." <sup>49</sup>

In this way the life of Bal Shastri Jambhekar is an  
 inspiration and a beacon light. He was evidently a pioneer,  
 a thinker and to some extent a prophet. His writings and his  
 activities in various fields, go to show that he was a  
 personality 'for in advance of any of his countrymen'.<sup>50</sup>

After his untimely death, 'Dnyanodaya' - in its  
 article that appeared in one of the issues of - June 1846  
 very aptly sums up the position of Bal Shastri as follows :

"Bal Gangadhar Shastri was a man of learning and was generally respected by Europeans and Natives. He had made attainments far in advance of any of his countrymen in Western India, and he cherished an ardent desire to promote the cause of education. By his example and by the laborious discharge of his duties as a Professor, he has done much for the improvement of the young men who have come under his influence." 51

Such was the man who worked for his countrymen in the first half of the 19th century. He is undoubtedly one of those pioneers who devoted their life for the overall improvement of our countrymen. He had done much to earn the gratitude of his countrymen, and he certainly deserves a place of honour in the gallery of the national heroes that brightened the Western horizon of India in the early days of British rule by intellectual work and patriotic services.<sup>52</sup> And when we take into account this long list of attainments and achievements that were to the credit of Bal Shastri, need we wonder why he was regarded as the 'Pioneer of the Renaissance in Western India' and 'Father of Modern Maharashtra'?

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