

C H A P T E R - I

INTRODUCTORY HISTORY OF C.K.P. COMMUNITY

Sir R.V.Sabnis, B.A.Kt.,C.I.E. (1857 to 1948) was the most trustworthy and loyal Diwan of Kolhapur State and regarded as the Grand old man and Dadabhai Nauroji of Kolhapur.

Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur (1884-1922) was one of the greatest Social revolutionaries ever produced by modern India. Shri Shahu remains immortal not as a ruler of the native State but as a Champion struggling for the realisation of Social equality and Social justice.

Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu who dedicated his life to the cause of Social reform in India was undoubtedly the greatest ruler that ascended the throne of Kolhapur in the last quarter of 19th Century. Shri Shahu for his unique contribution to the intellectual formation and Social upheaval in modern Maharashtra is remembered as one of the pioneers of Social liberation movements in modern India. As a radical reformer he was a link between Mahatma Phule and Dr.Ambedkar.

In his reign of exactly twenty eight years Kolhapur had made amazing strides both as regards industrial progress and Social reforms. He remained

an indefatigable protagonist of the abalition of the caste, distinctions in Hindu Society, he established numerous schools for the exclusive benefit of the under priviledged classes, he set-up students hostels and donated open handedly to educational Institutions in Poona, Ahmadnagar, Nasik and other places. In his own State, he formulated laws which sought to abolish untouchability in the spheres of medical treatment and education. He championed the cause of the untouchables and worked hard for their uplift.

Such was a progressive Kolhapur State under Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj and luckily R.V.Sabnis was a loyal and faithful Diwan of Shahu Maharaj. Sir R.V. Sabnis served as a Diwan of Kolhapur from 1898 to 1925. Earlier he was native tuter to Shahu Maharaj and then Huzur Chitnis and Plague Commissioner as well as C.R.O. for some time.

Shahu's Plans and measures were strongly implimented by Sir R.V. Sabnis in a capacity of a Diwan of Kolhapur State. When one can remember Shahu Maharaj's name no one forget R.V.Sabnis service to the Kolhapur State. Sir R.V. Sabnis spent his whole life for the welfare and progress of Kolhapur State.

Therefore here an attempt has been made to study the life, work, and achievements of Rao Bahadur Sir R.V. Sabnis, B.A.Kt., C.I.E. Ex-Diwan of Kolhapur (1898-1925), by using original and secondary source material. So far now no systematic attempt has not been done to give due place to R.V.Sabnis in the History of Modern Kolhapur. Sir R.V. Sabnis undoubtedly rendered a yeomen service to the Kolhapur State.

His life and work will be better understood if one can take a historical survey of a Chandra Seniya Kayastha Prabhu Community because Sir R.V. Sabnis belonged to this Community and this Community also served ancient Medieval and Modern period too.

EARLY HISTORY OF C.K.P. COMMUNITY :

There is interesting story regarding the origion of C.K.P.Community "According to their story, after Parashuram had killed Sahasrarjun and King Chandrasen, he discovered that Chandrasen's wife had taken refuge with the Seer Dalabhaya and that she was with child. To complete his vow to kill the whole of the Kshatriyas Parashuram went to the Sage, who received him kindly, asked him why he had come, and promised to grant his wishes.

wishes. Parashuram replied that he wished to kill Chandrasen's wife. The Sage produced the lady, and Parashuram, pleased with the success of this scheme, promised to grant the Sage what ever he asked for Dalabhaya asked for the unborn child and Parashuram, bounded by his promise, agreed to spare the mothers life on condition that the child should be bred a writer not a soldier, and that instead of Kshatriyas his descendants should be called Kayasths because the child was saved in his mother's body or Kaya. The boy was married to Chitragupta's daughter, and was given the title of Prabhu or lord. Kayastha are divided into Chitragupt Kayastha, Chandraseni Kayastha and Sankar Kayastha. The Chandrasenis have no Subdivision except Damani Prabhus who in no way differ from the rest and have a special name only because they lived for a time at Daman in the north Konkan"¹

About their Characteristics Bombay Gazetteer States, as follow. "They are middle sized, slightly built and fair, and their women are graceful. They speak Marathi and are clean, neat and hard working most of them are Writers."² Thus, "They are hard working, hospitable, orderly, and loyal but extravagant and fond of show. They are writers, husbandmen, money

lenders and money-changers.³

They claim decent from Chandrasen a Kshatriya King of Oudh.

Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu people settled at Mandavgad in North India. Some families of C.K.P. went to east and west Bengal. When Muslims invaded north India.

C.K.P. families that settled at Mandavagad were penetrating into Maharashtra Via Gujarath route. The families settled in western Maharashtra were assimilated with the culture and tradition of Maharashtra. They adopted Marathi language, Marathi culture and customs and tradition also later on. The C.K.P. community people spread from Indore, Malava and Maharashtra. In Maharashtra at least twenty thousand families were living and total population was about 1 lakh in 1971. When Shilahera's were the rulers of Konkan (810-1260) many C.K.P. families came to Konkan and settled there.⁵ Shilahar Kings appointed C.K.P. people for the post of Revenue Officers in Konkan and Maval area.⁶

FALL OF MANDAVGAD (1305) :

Mandavgad in central India, was the place where number of C.K.P. families were living. After the fall

of Mandavgad the C.K.P. people entered in the service of Bidar, Adilshahi and Nizamshahi and occupied some important posts in revenue field.⁷ Prior to the rise of Shivaji many C.K.P. persons were serving in the court of Adilshahi and Nizamshahi like Maratha Sardars.

C.K.P. COMMUNITY AND SHIVAJI'S PERIOD :

Chhatrapati Shivaji (1627 to 1680) Founded Hindavi Swarajya which was turning point in the History of Maharashtra. Shivaji passed away in 1680. This extraordinary man had in the course of three decades, carved out an independent State, challenged the mighty Mughel empire and left a name which was to prove never failing inspiration to future generations.

When Shivaji Started his activities for founding Hindavi Swarajya persons like Dadoji Naras Prabhu Gupte and his father Narasi were present at Rohideshwar temple in 1645 where Shivaji took Oathfor founding Swarajya. In additionto Dadoji Naras Prabhu, Baji Prabhu Deshpande, Murar Baji, Balaji Awaji, Baji Pasalkar were C.K.P. people, who rendered great service to Shivaji as well as Maharashtra.⁸

THE HEROIC STAND OF BAJIPRABHU DESHPANDE : (1660)

When Shivaji was confined in the fort of Panhala in 1660 A.D. by the Bijapur forces, at this critical

moment Bajiprabhu Deshpande who was a C.K.P. rendered great Service to the Maratha nation.

Riyasatkar, G.S. Sardesai gives the following account about the heroic deeds of Bajiprabhu Deshpande in following way. "He opened negotiations with Salabat Khan and begged for terms for his submission a provisional truce was arranged in order to allow a personal meeting and Salabt Khan temporarily stopped the Seige-operations. In this situation on the dark night or 13 July, 1660 when heavy rain was falling, Shivaji escaped through a back gate of the fort and took flight to Vishalgad accompanied by a small partyof loyal followers led by a devoted Servant, Bajiprabhu Deshpande. His escape was quickly detected and a party of the enemy fallowed almost on his heels. By day break the Pursuers came so dose as almost to prevent Shivaji getting safely into the fort of Vishalgad. At that critical moment Bajiprabhu occupied the narrow pass known as Ghod-Khind (horse-ravine) at the eastern entrance of Vishalgad and allow his master time to get safely into it and himself stoutly resisted for hours the huge body of pursuers with his own small band, until they were all cut down to a man and Bajiprabhu himself fell mortally wounded. He had however the satisfaction of learning before he expired that his master had reached the fort safely.

This sacrifice of his own life by Bajiprabhu is gratefully remembered to this day by the Maratha nation and is typical of the way in which Shivaji was served through out his carrier. Needless to say that this sacrifice was profusely rewarded.⁹

The Jedhe Karina indicates the place where Bajiprabhu fought. It says -

"Siddi Javhar came to Panhala and besieged it- Shivaji descended from the fort and went towards Khelana. Siddi Javhar came up in Pursuit. Then Shivaji left Bandel's men and Bajiprabhu at the pass of Gajapur and went to Khelana. Bajiprabhu and the men fought bravely. Bajiprabhu and some men were killed. They prevented the enemy from ascending the pass. Siddi Javhar fell back."

Thus fought and died the heroic Bajiprabhu Deshpande, due to his supreme sacrifice his name has become a household word in Maharashtra.¹⁰

SERVICE OF BALAJI AWAJI :

Another person belonging to Prabhu community who served Maratha Swarajya under Chhatrapati Shivaji was Balaji Awaji, the Secretary of Shivaji. The year

was 1658 and Shivaji need new appointments. As the Administrative work increased, new appoints were made Nilo Sondev, brother of Abaji the Governor of Kalyan, was made Mujumdar. Annaji Datto was made Surnis or Sachiv Gangu Mangaji was appointed Wagenavis Menkoji Dahatonde the Surnobat of cavelary died and in his place was appointed Netaji Palkar. But move than all the services of a most faithful and capable Secretary Balaji Awaji were obtained for the office of his Chitnis. Balaji was in deed an acquisition. For now Shivaji had to depend for the prompt and proper transmission to his orders upon a trust-worthy and devoted Secretary. Such a one was found in Balaji. His father Awaji Chitre and his brother held high positions under the Siddis or Janjira on the west coast. The family came to be disgraced and severaly punished by the Siddis on account of same supposed dereliction of duty. Awajis brother was put to death and his wife Gulbai and Children ordered to be exiled to masket. Gulbai proved a clever woman, as she and her children sailed in a ship from Janjira proceeding to maskat, she managed by bribing the captain to be disembarked at the port of Rajapur. Where here brother Visaji Shankar a respectable trader, purchased her and the children as slaves by paying to

the Captain the amount of ransom demanded for them, Gulbai had three sons. Balaji had fairly grown up and two younger ones Chimaji and Shyamji. Balaji wrote a nice hand and was brought up by his uncle and initiated into his business. The three brothers and their mother changed their names and lived in hiding at Rajapur for fear of being discovered and illused by the Siddis. When Shivaji happened to visit Rajapur about the year 1658 Balaji contrived to meet him, related his troubles and begged to be saved from the Siddis' warth. Shivaji readily agreed being delighted to have an opportunity of serving the Hindu cause and took the whole family under his protection. They amply repaid these favours by faithful service through generations.¹¹

Balaji Awaji played an important role also when Shivaji visited Agra, in 1666. Shivaji was far away from his capital Raigad and the administration of Shivaji's Swarajya was run by Jijabai, queen mother with the help of Balaji Awaji, who was very faithful and trust worthy to Jijabai as well as Shivaji. Therefore, Shivaji appointed Balaji Awaji as member of Council which formed by Shivaji himself, when he left for Agra.¹²

SHIVAJI CRNATIN AND BALAJI AWAJI :

Again when Shivaji celebrated his coronation ceremony on 6th June, 1674, at Raigad, Balaji stood

loyally behind Shivaji, Because Brahmins from Maharashtra were opposed Shivaji's coronation. They were not ready to accept Shivaji's claim as Kshatriya even though he proved by his deeds. At this critical time Balaji Awaji helped Shivaji and collected proofs to prove Shivaji as a Kshatriya Shivaji had a great faith upon this Balaji Awaji. Riyasatkar, G.S., Saradesai writes about this incident in the following way.

"The orthodox Brahman opinion was not favourable to Shivaji's claim to be recognised as a Kshatriya by blood, at though he had proved this claim by action. More than a thousand years had passed since such a ceremony was last performed, and on that account man's memories had been entirely deemed. All ancient learning of the Deccan had migrated to Benares after the invasion of Ala-ud-din Khilji and the Muslim conquest of the Deccan.

The soul of Shivaji could not tolerate this humiliating position. The pronouncement of Krishna Shaha must be publicly refuted. So he sent a deputation of learned Brachmans, Keshav Bhat Purohit, Bhalchandra Bhat, Somanath Bhat Katre, to go to Udepur and other centres of Kshatriya tradition in north India and rally their opinion in favour of renovating the Kshatriya

Caste and declaring that caste being never extinct. The deputation was heeded by Balaji Awaji the keeper of Shivaji's plans and a consummate diplomat. The avowed object of this regenerating movement was to purge Society of stupid irrational notions to put an end to the degraation that ignorance had inflicted in the Spheres of the national language, the national religion and national patriotism.¹³

Balaji Awaji was Shivaji's Chitnisi and his two other brothers Chimaji Awaji and Shamaji Awaji held the post of Potnisi and Kharakhanisi respectively during Shivaji's reign. This indicates Balaji Awaji's whole family was serving under Shivaji and his Swarajya. The following were the important posts held by Prabhu community people during Shivaji's period.

- (1) Chitnisi - Officer or the correspondence,
- (2) Potnisi - Cash Keeper or Officer in charge of the treasury.
- (3) Karakhanisi - Karkhanis.
- (4) Khasnisi - Private Secretary or officer in charge of the Khasgi Department.
- (5) Jamenisi - Officer that inspects lands, soil, crops etc. and fixes the assessment.
- (6) Fadnisi - Record-Keeper or officer in charge of Records.

(7) Sabnishi - Sabnis.

(8) Parasnishi - Parsanis (Persian Translator)¹⁴

This fact shows that the people from prabhu community rendered great services to the Maratha Rajya under Shivaji.

SAKHARAM HARI GUPTE :

During Peshawa period Sardar Hari Gupte (1718-1779) who was belonging to C.K.P. community played an important role, Sakharam Hari Gupte served under Bajirao-I, Nanasaheb, Madhavrao Peshwa. He took the part in the battle of Janjira led by Bajirao-I, in 1733, and Bajirao's expedition against Nijam in 1738. He also took the part in the northern expedition undertaken by Nanasaheb. During Madhavrao's period (1761-1773) Sakharam Hari Gupte marched to the South for fighting against Hyder Ali. Thus Sakharam Hari Gupte rendered great Service to Peshawa also.¹⁵

During British period one cannot forget the name of Rango Bapuji who spent his whole life for redressing injustice made by Britishers to Chhatrapati Pratapsinh of Satara. Chhatrapati Pratapsinh of Satara was dethroned by East India Company and this Rango Bapuji went to

London and trying for achieving help to Pratapsinh's cause. He remained in London for 6 years and agitating for the injustice done to Pratapsinh. Unfortunately Rango Bapuji did not succeed in his mission but his name in British Indian history is remained immortal. Therefore some historian compares that Rango Bapuji was, Balaji Awaji of Pratapsinh.¹⁶

During British period C.K.P. people, occupied very important post in the British Administration. 'Campbell' wrote that "They are clean, neat, hardworking and faithful and hold places of trust both in the native states and under the British Government, to whom they have been always loyal".¹⁷

Thus the past history of Chandra Seniya Kayastha Prabhu community was glorious and note-worthy. This community spread all over India as well as Western India also. They were loyal, trustworthy and well acquainted with the art of writing and blood soldiers. But during British period they learned English and occupied and important posts in Government services such as revenue department Education Department etc.

C.K.P. IN KOLHAPUR STATE :

Prabhus or, Lords are returned as numbering 286, and as found scattered over the whole state. They are

of two classes, Kayasth Prabhus and Patana Prabhus most Kolhapur prabhus are Kayasths Shivaji (1627-1680) had great faith in Prabhus and raised them to high military and civil posts. The Kolhapur Kayasth Prabhus had belied to have come from the Konkan and Satara since the rise of the Maratha state of Kolhapur. (1710)

The few Patana or Bombay Prabhus are said to have come during for last fifty years of the origin of the Kayasth Prabhus the books give three accounts. According to the Padma Puran they are descended from Chitragupt who was erected by Brahma to record the actions of mankind. According to the Renuka Mahatmya of the Skand Puran they represent a Kshatriya King of Oudh named Chandrasen and according to an account given in the Shudra Kamalakar, which is probably a Brahma play on the Prabhu or bastard a corruption of the Word Prabhu's or lord, they are descended from Kshatriya and his Mistress. The Patana Prabhus claim a Rajaput origin. It seems probable that they represent Rajaput settlements from Anhilvada-Patan in north Gujarath (A.D.1139) along the Thana coast near Bombay. The Patna Prabhus properly have no surnames, though of late they have hegan to copy the Martha practice Among Kayastha Prabhus, Dikshit, Garud, Ghalkar, Khatik Pradhan, Raje, Shringarpure Jamhne and other Surnames are in use. They have also family names from official

titles as Chitnis, Jamnis, Karakhanis Pharasnis, Phadnis and Sabhasad. The two classes of Prabhus differential in appearance. As a rule the Patanass are larger, darker, more robust and manly, some Kayasths are unusually fair and delicate featured. Their women are middle sized, fair and good looking. Their home speech is Marathi. The Kayasth Marathi is different little from the Chitparan's and the Patanas home speech is marked by the use of Gujarati Portuguese and English words. Though there is no caste objection to the eating of fish and flesh. Most Kolhapur Prabhus live like Brahmans on rice, pulse and vegetables. They dress like Brahmans and wear the same ornaments. They are clean neat, hardworking and faithful. The Kayasths are given to the worship of local goddess rather than of the regular duties. In other respects their religious rites, fasts and feasts, and their social customs differ little from those of Marathas disputes are settled by the elders of the casts. They send their boys and some of their girls to school and well to-do.¹⁸

Sir R.V. Sabnis belonged to this glorious community and served in the Education department of Bombay Government first. Who latter on spent his whole life to the welfare of Kolhapur State. Hence his early life education will deal in the next Chapter.

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