

CHAPTER ONE

LIFE SKETCH (1878 to 1950)

Latthe family which originally belonged to a village Babanagar in Vijapur district, migrated to Abdul Lat, a village in Kolhapur district. The first known ancestor of the family was Appaji Deshmukh, who enjoyed a Deshmukhi vatan under the Adilshahi rule of Bijapur. The family enjoyed forty acres of land as Deshmukhi vatan. Appaji Deshmukh had his own fortified fortress and had 100 horses under him. Appaji had a son Jinnappa and from him a grand son Narasappa. Narasappa had three sons, Appaji, Kallappa and Nemanna. It is Kallappa who migrated to Abdul Lat in 1745 as he was forced to leave Babanagar due to some feud.¹ His brothers Appaji and Nemanna stayed behind at Babanagar. Here at Abdul Lat Kallappa Deshmukh managed to secure the Patilaki vatan.²

Shantappa, the great grand son of Kallappa shifted from Abdul Lat to Kurundwad in 1770; as he succeeded to the property of his father-in-law at Kurundwad. At Kurundwad Shantappa came to be known as the Patil of Lat (Lateche Patil) and converted form of "Lateche Patil" became "Latthe" in course of time.³

Shantappa had a grand son Babaji (1810-1900) and Babaji had five sons and fifth child was Annasaheb Latthe.

Babaji Latthe was in the service of the Patwardhans at Kurundwad, where he had won the trust of Rajasaheb and had become the store-keeper of the Prince. But soon he left the service and started his own business of corn and cotton deal. He married Adubai, sister of Kallappa Duge of Aurwad. The Jain community of this part in those days, was engaged either in agriculture or in business. Since Babaji was in the service of Patwardhans, he came

in close contact with Brahmins, who were educated. Naturally, he realised the importance of education and he took care to educate his sons.⁴ His eldest son Bhaurao matriculated and became practising lawyer in Kurundwad and Miraj. He was also editing an English weekly "The Deccan Darbar" from Kurundwad. Babaji's second son Bharmappa too, had matriculated himself and was practising law securing Sanad from Kurundwad. Apparao and Annasaheb received education in Sangli and Miraj and of them Apparao, for some time was the Magistrate in Bombay. Babaji's youngest son Ganapatrao died a premature death.⁵

Annasaheb's sister Marudevi Gundappa Subhedar was the president of the 'Ladies Conference' in 1903. She read courageously a short speech in the 'Ladies Conference' of Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha (now Daxin Bharath Jain Sabha). This was a pace-setter and ladies in increasing number started actively participating in conferences. In the conferences of 1904 Mrs. Marudevi presented a felicitation address to Mrs. Sakhumai Hirachand Doshi, President of 'Ladies Conference'.⁶

Annasaheb, the fifth child of his parents was born on 9th December, 1878 (the 15th of Margashirsha, 1800, Shaliwahan shaka) at Kurundwad.⁷ In 1884 he joined a primary school at Kurundwad from which he completed his middle school education. He was sent to Miraj in 1899 for his High School education. He joined Sangli High School in 1891. From this High School he passed his matriculation.⁸ Then he joined Rajaram College of Kolhapur in 1896 and was there upto 1898. Then he moved to Poona and joined

Deccan College. He took his Master's Degree (M.A.) from the University of Bombay in the subject of English.⁹

When he joined the Rajaram College, he was seventeen years old. In 1930 he contributed an article to the Golden Jubilee Volume of 'Rajaramian'. He was the Diwan of Kolhapur then. He admired the progress made by the Rajaram College in the following words:¹⁰

"The Rajaram College today looks a much bigger thing than it was, when I joined it as a student about thirtyfive years ago, or even when I went to it as a professor in 1907. But I cannot imagine a more sublime picture of college than the one I saw when I entered the previous class to hear the first lecture of the tall, venerable-looking Professor Apte. In those days, his used to be the first lecture in the day and of course his subject was mathematics. I knew little of that subject and had even less interest in learning it. But even if I had the dry brain of mathematician I do not think I could have the same love for the subject as I had for the charming eccentricities of that most towering personality of the college Mr. Apte. One day he would make the students do all the work of the hour. The next day he would go on with his book just as if the student did not exist. Sometimes he would not open his lips for the whole hour which he then spent in working-out problems on the board without caring to know if any blessed creature on the earth followed him or not. I never understood the value of his lectures; which merely inspired in me the awe which ignorance leads to at the sight of the "unknowable". But there was genius in the man, genius which is defined as an eccentricity and it left on my mind a profound impression.

I made up my mind very soon after I had joined the college that I could not be a great man without being an extraordinary student. I was then living with two or three fellow students in a house near Rankala.

In order to attain the great goal of being uncommon, I began spending about two or three hours of the morning on or about the big Tank. An hour or two followed which had to be devoted to the unbegun and unending theme of the dirty little hotel at which we got our food and then the college. Mr. Apte's lectures I attended but did not follow other lectures, I thought I should not care about as so many of us attended them without fail. There was however one exception to this rule of non-attendance. As soon as the lecturer in History, the late Mr. Natu, entered the class-room, most of the boys left it through the door or through the windows opening into the veranda. I tried to attend this class quite regularly. I liked history. But that was not the main reason which really consisted in the generous sentiments of mine that Mr. Natu would be a broken heart if we at least half a dozen boys out of sixty or seventy were not present in his class. As most of the boys fled, I thought I should be one of the select few to attend Mr. Natu's lectures.

The afternoons and nights were given to reading everything except the prescribed texts. These latter were for the common run. And in what I used to read, my aim was more to convince my companions that I exceeded everyone else in the number of books I issued from the college library presumably for reading them than to study them or be benefited by them. This had its own advantages. Mr. Natu's successor in the history chair was a Cambridge done in mathematics and he taught Greece from Grote. I began



anticipating him in the study of the bulky volumes of Grote beyond which my new professor knew nothing. In the end the professor found at the terminal examination that the topmost man in his subject, the man who had proved a surprise to his teacher, was no less than one who had failed twice in mathematics in the previous.

I will not indulge further in the resurrection of memories associated with my life in the college either as a bad student or a worse teacher. I dare think that there are many who have succeeded me in the college who will think of themselves in the same way as I do now. Whether they are so foolish as to desire to attain the eminence of genius by treading out of the way paths or not, I wish them to do one thing which I always did, may be by smallness made me always think of my teachers and my college with feelings of reverence. Some of the professors were quite ordinary people. In later life, I looked 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. But as a boy I always felt an instinctive awe at the dizzy heights of learning to which I thought they had risen. The transfer from the High School to college was to me the transfer to a new world where the teachers and the taught knew not the melancholy meanness of the world, where the pupils thought of nothing but great ambitions and inspiring ideals, where the teachers always soared and lived in the higher altitudes of the skies, facts are, partially at any rate, subjective impressions. Things are what you take them to be. Think that your college is the embodiment of all that is noble and you will in a very large measure derive from the "alma mater", an inspiration to strive for the highest in life. When a

student in a Highschool, we had a teacher whose, 'hour' in the class was a perfect pandemonium to the completion of which the boys contributed by showing rags, papers and sometimes shoes on the table, if not on the teacher. But in my simplicity, I looked on the teacher as a pure soul with nothing but love radiating from him. Therefore, inspite of all the boys, I found the teacher, the late Mr. Wamanrao Deshpande, a personality always to be respected. Much therefore, depends on how you start looking at your college. Go to the college with a mind imbued with a conscious humility and respect for your teachers and however imperfect the teachers may be, you will be benefited by them in all your life.

The youth of a college student is the best seed-bed for cultivating wider national outlook. The Rajaram College is the nursery of forces which must be looked to in the coming years to lead Kolhapur to a more vigorous and more glorious life.

The college has now completed fifty years of her life. She has served Kolhapur and Maharashtra fairly well during these years. But her function in the times coming on so fast is even more important than the past. To be successful the alumni must develop for higher type of manhood and womanhood, capable of exploring newer fields of work, sacrificing cherished prejudices which are known to be detrimental to healthy social growth and setting up exemplars of citizenship which will be the admiration of our country. Long live the college !"

Annasaheb married Dnyanamati, the daughter of Mr. Kallappa and Mrs. Padminibai Duge of Aurwad in 1899. Dnyanamati was ten years old and was uneducated but Annasaheb taught her reading and writing after marriage.¹¹ She assisted Annasaheb in the work of

Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha. She subsequently emerged as a social worker and worked for the masses. But she did not survive for long. She died in 1913 in her 25th year. Annasaheb then married Jotsnabai a daughter of Anantrao Kadre of Kolhapur. Annasaheb and Jotsnabai had nine children - four sons and five daughters. All these received higher education. And they were all well placed in their life.¹²

While Annasaheb was pursuing his studies for Degree examination, in 1890's he was drawn in a contemporary social and religious movement. In 1899, Annasaheb as a college student attended the first conference of Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha at Stawanidhi in Belgaum District near Nipani.¹³

His fortunate meeting with Shahu Chhatrapati Maharaja of Kolhapur at Bombay in 1899 was a turning point in his career. This meeting forms the axis around which his entire career as a social reformer, an able administrator, a writer, and a statesman turns. His meeting with Shahu Chhatrapati in Bombay was an unexpected pleasant fortune-making accident. He was just going along the road with his friends in Bombay when he saw a horse carriage coming along. He could rightly guess that it must be the carriage of Shahu Chhatrapati. He and his friends went near the carriage and bowed down before the great Maharaja who was then just emerging on the horizon of social fermentation in India. Latthe and his friends were wearing Kolhapuri turbans and Chhatrapati could immediately recognise them. To his great satisfaction Chhatrapati found that they were staying in Bombay to prepare themselves for the degree examination of Bombay University. Annasaheb stayed in "Hirachand Gumanji Jain Boarding" at Bombay. The Chhatrapati showed deep

interest in this Boarding and expressed his desire to visit the boarding. The visit took place immediately after this first meeting with Annasaheb. This accidental meeting with Chhatrapati paved the way to Annasaheb Latthe's brilliant and dazzling career.

When he was studying in Deccan college, Poona, in 1899, Latthe attended the first conference of Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha at Stawanidhi.¹⁴ The Sabha was working for the uplift of the Jain community in southern Maharashtra. It is Latthe who suggested the name "Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha" for the Sabha. This suggestion was accepted by the conference. Latthe worked in the conference with his friend Anna Faddyappa Chougule.¹⁵ In the initial stages, Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha also needed a capable leader and this need was fulfilled by Latthe and Chougule. With the assistance of Shri Hanje, the then Secretary of the Sabha, he used to work for the Sabha very ably.¹⁶ He was the editor of "Shri Jinvijay" which was started in 1902 as the Sabha's authorised monthly. He continued to edit the paper upto 1905 and again from 1913 to 1916¹⁷. When the Sabha founded its Vidya Vibhag (Education Wing) Latthe became its chief. He collected donations upto Rs. 20,000 as educational fund for the Institute.¹⁸ Jain Vidyalaya was founded by the Sabha's Vidya Vibhag. On August 2, 1902, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur was invited to visit the Vidyalaya and Latthe virtually got the promise from Chhatrapati to assist the Jain Sabha and its educational activities. This incident brought Shahu Chhatrapati and Latthe close to each other.¹⁹

In 1904 Latthe, Bugate, Malagave and Hanje attended at Bombay

a felicitation of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj on his return from European tour at the end of August 30. Manikchand Hirachand Javeri took this opportunity to invite the Chhatrapati for reception arranged at his home "Ratnakar Palace".²⁰ Latthe delivered there an address of felicitation. In his reply to the address the Chhatrapati invited Manikchand Hirachand Javeri to visit Kolhapur.²¹

Hirachand Nemchand Doshi of Solapur presided over the Sabha at its 5th conference in 1904. During this conference Latthe was felicitated as the first M. A. (English) of the Jain community.²²

Latthe took advantage of the close relationship between Manikchand Hirachand Javeri and Chh. Shahu to get a donation from Manikchand Javeri for the construction of building for the Jain Boarding and from Shahu Chhatrapati he got the grant of land site known as "Chouphalyacha Mal" near "Dasara Chowk" in Kolhapur. In securing this grant of land Shri Latthe had to overcome stiff opposition and cross many hurdles. The foundation of the building of the Jain Hostel was laid in 1904 and the work started immediately and within one year the hostel consisting of 24 rooms in two storeys was completed at the cost of Rs. 22,000 and the building was inaugurated on 9th August 1905 at the hands of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj.²³ This shows Latthe's devotion and fearless efforts for the cause of education. He was the first superintendent of Jain Boarding between 1905 and 1914.²⁴

In 1906 Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha opened a separate wing for women's education with Latthe as the head.²⁵ Thus Latthe and his wife Dnyanmatibai laid the foundation of women's education

of Jain Shrivikashram in Kolhapur.

In 1909 with a view to impart religious education to the resident students of Jain Boarding, Latthe requested Shri Jirage to build "Jin Mandir" on the Hostel premises.²⁶ In the same year, he organised an agricultural and industrial exhibition for the guidance of farmers. Latthe and Chougule drafted the constitution of Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha in 1905, which was approved in 1907 with some modifications. This constitution was adopted in 1914 and remained in force upto 1963. While forging a homogenous character for the Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha, Latthe had to face several critical problems like the controversy between Laxmisen Bhattarak of Kolhapur and Jinsen Bhattarak of Nandani, the supremacy of the Purohits, the struggle between Chaturth and Pancham and problems arising out of Jain Sabha's policy of encouraging intercaste marriages between the Chaturth and Pancham communities.

Thus, Latthe shouldered the responsibility of Jain Sabha from its inception until his death in 1950 and left the impression of his personality on the social, religious and educational activities of the Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha.

Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj was deeply impressed by Latthe's social work in Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha, his devotion and his intelligence. He appointed Latthe as a Lecturer in Rajaram College in 1907. Latthe was M.A. with English as his Principal subject and there were no professors in Rajaram College with that

qualification.²⁷ Under the influence of Chhatrapati Shahu, on 9th February, 1908, he founded the "Asprushya Vidya Prasarak Mandal" for the spread of education among the Backward Classes.²⁸ Latthe was a leading light among the capable workers which Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj had gathered around him.

In 1908 Latthe was almost excommunicated by the Jain community because he had attended a reception arranged by the Harijans during Ganapati festival. But Latthe continued his work of uplift of the backward classes undeterred. Even the Jains observed the practice of untouchability. But Annasaheb Latthe did not have false notions regarding such beliefs. He used to mix up with "Harijans" freely and open-heartedly and hence people from his own community were annoyed with him. He was so much isolated that no member of Jain community except one friend Shri Pirale was present for cremation of Dhanmatibai who died in 1913 but Latthe remained unshaken.²⁹

In 1910 Latthe was appointed as an Acting City Magistrate for a short period from 17.9.1910 to 15.1.1911.³⁰ But in recognition of Latthe's social and educational work in Daxin Maharashtra Jain Sabha and his singular devotion he was appointed educational Inspector of Kolhapur State in 1911.³¹ The credit for the bold experiments in education carried out by Shri Shahu goes to Annasaheb Latthe for between 1911 and 1914 he initiated and executed successfully the programmes of freeships for students, system of school Panch, hereditary teachers' scheme, teachers' training

school for uneducated Patils, scheme of compulsory primary education.³²

As a part of the uplift of the Backward Classes programme Latthe in co-operation with Dongre and Bhaskarrao Jadhav launched a movement of social awakening of the masses under the Satya Shodhak Samaj. In this he was inspired by the philosophy of Mahatma Phule.

Satya Shodhak Samaj (Truth Searching Society) was founded by Jyotiba Phule at Poona on September 24, 1873.³³ The objects of the Samaj were to redeem the Shudras and Atishudras from the influence of Brahminical scriptures under which the Brahmin priests fleeced them and to teach them their human rights and to liberate them from mental and religious slavery.³⁴

The Satya Shodhak Samaj was, thus, the first institution to launch a social movement in Modern Maharashtra. It raised its voice against social slavery and demanded social justice. It was the rising voice of a long suppressed people in India.³⁵

The movement grew in four phases.³⁶

The first phase covered the period from its foundation in 1873 to 1890; it took roots in the cities and villages of Poona and Bombay region during this stage.

In the second phase, which goes upto about 1910, the city organisation languished but village leaders spread the movement as far east as Vidarbha and south to Kolhapur and Belgaum.

In the third phase from 1911 to 1919 a series of All Maharashtra yearly conferences were held in a burst of revived activity and the Samaj took significant roots in every district of Deccan and Vidarbha and penetrated into Nagpur and Marathwada areas.

The first three periods saw the growth of the Samaj as almost purely a socio-religious reform organisation. In the fourth period 1919-1930 with the emergence of the non-Brahmin party as a result of the Montague Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, the Samaj activity became greatly involved in political and economic disputes.³⁷

Shahu Maharaj was installed at Kolhapur in 1894; he had keen interest in the social, educational and material progress of non-Brahmins. All round progress of the non-Brahmins who were backward, illiterate, ignorant and neglected was the main motto of Shahu Chhatrapati's rule. It is in the Vedokta controversy that Shahu came to be offended by the Brahmins.

Shahu had so far not taken any active interest in the propagation of Satya Shodhak Samaj whose work had languished after the death of Narayanrao Lokhande in 1897. The Vedokta controversy stirred the Satya Shodhak workers to action. Vasudeo Lingoji Birje, author of 'Kshatriya Ani Tyanche Astitwa', suggested in 'Din Bandhu' of June 1906³⁸ that just as Brahmins utilised the weapon of boycott against Britishers so also the non-Brahmins should utilise it against the Brahmins for their social and religious rights.

The Vedokt controversy drove Shahu to the ideology of the

Satya Shodhak Samaj as its ideal of social equality and upliftment of villagers appealed to him. The workers of Satya Shodhak Samaj were active in Bombay, Poona, Baroda, Kolhapur, Nasik, Satara, Marathwada and Khandesh and were struggling against social rigidity and priesthood based on birth. The Vedokt controversy revived interest in the Satya Shodhak Samaj. A branch of Satya Shodhak Samaj was established again in Bombay and its meeting was held under the presidentship of Karmaveer V.R. Shinde in 1910.³⁹

Latthe was the leading light among the capable workers which Shahu Maharaj had gathered around him as workers to overthrow the Brahmin supremacy from the days of the Vedokt controversy of 1899. Latthe was inspired by the philosophy of Jotiba Phule and Satya Shodhak Samaj and the idea of overthrowing Brahmin supremacy of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj by educating downtrodden masses in rural areas appealed him. By helping Shahu in his Hostel movement and in upliftment of Backward classes, he won Shahu's favour who appointed him as an Education Inspector of Kolhapur state. Latthe, Dongare, Jadhav were the three eminent educated non-Brahmin leaders who worked for fulfilling Shahu's ideals.

Shahu, who had so far not shown any interest in its work, now thought of reviving the Satya Shodhak Samaj under his direction. Satya Shodhak Samaj was established in Kolhapur on January 11, 1911 at the meeting held under Parsharam Ghosarwadkar. Bhaskarrao Jadhav was elected President, Latthe Vice-president, M.G. Dongare, the Chief Officer, Haribhau Chavan Secretary. Shahu donated a piece of

land to the Samaj for its building.⁴⁰ When the high state officials became office bearers of the Samaj, it gave strength and spirit to the Samaj.

The most important non-Brahmin state employees such as Bhaskarrao Jadhav (Maratha), A.B. Latthe (Jain) and Mahadev Dongare (C.K.P.) took up the movement and all three took part in organizing the first statewide Satya Shodhak Conference in 1911.⁴¹

The leaders of Satya Shodhak Samaj organised a Conference at Poona on April 17, 1911 under the Presidentship of Ramayya, a friend and colleague of Mahatma Phule, and Dr. Santuji Lad, Gangadhar Bagade, Marut Rao Navale and Birje took leading part in it and formulated the principles and policy of the Samaj.⁴²

The activities of Satya Shodhak Samaj after all can be only briefly summarized. Conferences were held every year. According to the reports published in 1918 conferences were held at Poona (1911), Nasik (1912), Thana (1913), Saswad (1914), Ahmednagar (1915), Nipani in Belgaum district (1916), Adgaon in Jalgaon district (1917) and Akola (1918).⁴³

Latthe became education Inspector in 1911 and the same year the Branch of Satya Shodhak Samaj was established in Kolhapur. In July 1913, His Highness Shahu Chhatrapati established the Satya Shodhak School at Kolhapur.⁴⁴

Its object was to teach the non-Brahmin all the religious rites

which the Hindus wished to observe and which the non-Brahmins were hitherto declared to be unfit to conduct.⁴⁵

The administrative Report of the year 1913-14 says that Satya Shodhak school was started here by some of the socio-religious reformers to impart instruction to non-Brahmin students with a view to make them fit for priesthood. There were 20 students on the role at the end of the year in this school. It received Rs. 480 during the year as state help.⁴⁶

The administrative Report of 1915, states that "The school was attended by 17 students."⁴⁷

The Satya Shodhak school was closed during the year on account of the spread of plague in the city.⁴⁸ In 1916-1917 there were 11 students on the role and 480 Rs. were required for expenditure on this school.

Latthe's social and educational work enhanced Latthe's prestige in the court of Shahu Chhatrapati and out of personal rivalry some people made Latthe a 'scape-goat' in the 'Tar Incident'. Latthe left for Belgaum when he was prosecuted by the Kolhapur state though subsequently he was acquitted. He did not of course return to Kolhapur but completed his LL.B. from the Law College, Poona⁴⁹ and started practising as an advocate in Belgaum. He had endured great personal indignity and persecution in the 'Tar incident' but he had infinite patience. Latthe organized non-Brahmin conference under the Presidentship of Tyagaraj Chetty on 27th July, 1920 at Hubli. At the

same time he organised social conference under the presidentship of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj realised that Latthe was honest and wrote a letter of apology to Annasaheb Latthe on 27th July 1920.⁵⁰

His craving for social work would not let him be alone in Belgaum. He had started work of organising non-Brahmin communities in Belgaum. In fact, he worked as a representative of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj in Belgaum and Karnatak. Latthe was financially supported by Shahu Maharaj in his non-Brahmin Party. Private Secretary of Shahu R.A. Sabnis wrote a letter to Latthe from Simla on 4th October, 1920⁵¹ in which he says:

"His Highness has been pleased to present you with Rs. 4,000/- for the work you are doing in the interest of the Backward communities and I am desired by His Highness to send to you the amount by cheque."

In 1915 he started the non-Brahmin Party in Belgaum.⁵² In April 1916 the 6th session of this party was held in Nipani. The followers of the Satya Shodhak Samaj met in conference at Nipani and Latthe, Jadhav and Dongare, their leaders were present. Karmaveer V.R. Shinde attended it as an observer, Walchand Kothari was elected to propogate the philosophy of the Satya Shodhak Samaj.⁵³

Spread of Satya Shodhak ideas was attempted through lectures and instructional tours of leaders, publication of books and

newspapers and use of popular song and dramas.⁵⁴

V.R. Kothari and Latthe established the Deccan Rayat Association at Poona to campaign for the cause of the Backward classes.⁵⁵ The Deccan Rayat Association was the first organisation to appear: its provincial working committee was announced in September, 1917. Its initial leaders included three prominent Satya Shodhaks: A.B. Latthe, Mukundrao Patil, Walchand Kothari.⁵⁶

The delegation of Deccan Rayat led by Latthe met the Governor on 18th July 1919 but the Governor was not in favour of the communal representation. He said, the Backward communities should devote their attention to agricultural improvements, trade, commerce and industries. Curtis also told Bhaskarrao Jadhav that Marathas being in the majority, did not require communal representation. So, Jadhav came to the conclusion that his people will have to organise a strong party. The Maratha cannot stand alone. A non-Brahmin majority will have to be organised,⁵⁷ and because of this realisation, the Satya Shodhak Samaj became converted into a non-Brahmin party.

With the help of Shahu, activities of Samaj spread rapidly but the movement as such degenerated into non-Brahmin movement and assumed a different shape after the August Declaration of 1917. A delegation sent by Shahu Maharaj, under the leadership of Bhaskarrao Jadhav to England to gain political rights for the non-Brahmins in ensuing act of Reforms called on the Labour Party leaders in England and appeared before the parliamentary committee

to represent the cause of the non-Brahmins. The Montford Reforms Act of 1919 allotted seven reserved seats for the Bombay State legislature.⁵⁸

The Montford reform of 1919 forced Bahujan Samaj to turn to politics because the extension of political democracy had given a chance to non-Brahmins to have some share in the power that was granted by the Act.⁵⁹

All India Maratha Conference was held at Belgaum in November, 1917. Ramrao Deshmukh presided over the conference and opposed the communal representation desired by other non-Brahmins.⁶⁰

In 1920, a combined non-Brahmin organisation was finally established. On 12th December 1920 all prominent non-Brahmins gathered in Jedhe Mansion to form Deccan non-Brahmin league (Deccan Brahmanetar Sangh) at Belgaum. On 14th and 15th May, 1921 the conference participated by even an untouchable leader, Dnyaneshwar Gholap, drafted the constitution for the organisation.⁶¹

In course of time the Deccan non-Brahmin league came to be called the non-Brahmin Party.⁶²

In the election of 1920 non-Brahmin Party won 10 seats in Bombay legislative Assembly. In the election of 1923 the non-Brahmins got 11 seats and again in 1926 they secured the strength of eleven.⁶³

Annasaheb Latthe contested the council election in 1920. He



represented the Deccan non-Brahmin League. He won the elections with a thumping majority. His speeches in the legislative council were very well studied. They were meant for the welfare and rights of the downtrodden. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahatma Gandhi were impressed by his speeches and thoughts. He was known as national leader of Karnatak.⁶⁴

He used to speak without any reservation in the Legislative Council. He never cared for the British Government. He was the member of the Democratic Party right from the beginning. He criticised the British Government boldly for the unnecessary expenses on Military, Railway etc. It was he who pointed out to the British Government how the tax on salt was unjust. He appealed the British Government in his speeches that it should introduce political reforms sincerely. He pointed out that unless the fundamental laws were changed the Hindu society will remain as it is. He cited with illustrations that without such change there will be no improvement in the Hindu society.⁶⁵

In 1923 Latthe contested elections of the provincial council Bombay as non-Brahmin party candidate; however he was defeated because of the communal propaganda carried on by 'Rashtravir', 'Vijayi Maratha', Vishwa Bandhu', etc. This created internal rift in the party itself.⁶⁹ In 1924 the British Government honoured him with the title of 'Rao Bahadur'; in the same year he was also appointed on the University Reform Committee.⁷⁰ In December 1924 a session of All India Congress was held in Belgaum and Sarojini

presided over it. Simultaneously Latthe organised the first conference of non-Brahmin Party under the presidentship of Ramswami Mudliyar. Sarojini Naidu visited the non-Brahmin conference and observed its working. Then Gandhiji also visited the conference.⁷¹

Though Latthe was no longer in Kolhapur state, he was wholly loyal to Chhatrapati Shahu who used to consult him through correspondence. Latthe was greatly grieved to hear about the death of Chhatrapati Shahu in 1922. He said that Shahu's death was a sad tragedy for Maharashtra.⁷²

Though he was forced to leave Kolhapur for a long period he could not totally sever his relations with Kolhapur. He used to say that "Kolhapur is my weak point".⁷³ Though he was away from Kolhapur he was always involved in the affairs of Kolhapur and Kolhapur state.

Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj who succeeded Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj to the Gadi of Kolhapur invited Annasaheb Latthe to attend his coronation ceremony and Latthe presented a felicitation address to Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj on behalf of the non-Brahmin Party.⁷⁴ Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj requested Latthe to undertake the writing of official Biography of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj. Latthe wrote two volumes within 4 months named as 'Memoirs of His Highness Shahu Chhatrapati Maharaj of Kolhapur' and published it in 1924.

After the coronation ceremony of Rajaram Maharaj, Rajaram wrote to Latthe "I know you have been a great friend and helper of my father and I hope you will continue to be the same."⁷⁵

Since Shri Latthe was a close experienced associate of Shahu Maharaj, his son Rajaram Maharaj not only sought advice but also expected it from him. Latthe wrote 'Shahu Charitra' which helped in smoothening his strained relations with Kolhapur.

In 1925 he revised the act of Kolhapur Municipality and implemented the Bombay Municipality Act with all its amendments and ratified it as Kolhapur Municipal Act of 1925.⁷⁶

Latthe was appointed Diwan of Kolhapur state on 2.10.1925.⁷⁷ His tenure as the Diwan proved to be immemorable. Ilakha Panchayats which were dormant, were made to work and this step laid the foundation of Local Self Government in the state. He appointed the president of Kolhapur Municipality and initiated the subjects of Kolhapur state to the rights of self-government. It was at this time, 1927, that he met Mahatma Gandhi. They together visited 'Khadi exhibition'.⁷⁸ He helped the Laxmipuri settlement in Kolhapur city in 1928, widened the roads of the city and encouraged industrial development. He also established Kolhapur Bank. It was in recognition of his work and service that the then Viceroy conferred on him the title of 'Diwan Bahadur' on 3.6.1930.⁷⁹

He represented the Indian states at the first Round Table conference of Indian leaders which was convened after the recommendation of Simon Commission of 1927. He left for England on 1.10.1930 by His Majesty S.S. Viceroy of India. The other representatives from India were certain Mill owners, Dr. Ambedkar, Maulana Mahamad Ali, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Wrangler Narlikar.

Narlikar and they were with him, on the same boat. Latthe had studied the problems of Indian states with certain depth and prepared a treatise 'Problems of Indian States'.⁸⁰

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru presided over the first Round Table conference and Latthe discussed the problem of how the Federation of Indian states could be organised. The draft prepared by these two ultimately came to be included in 1935 Constitution.⁸¹

On his return from England, he sent his resignation of Diwanship from Belgaum on 8th March, 1931. In the covering letter Latthe writes, "I am aware of the confidence reposed in me by the Chhatrapati. I wished to serve Chhatrapati forgetting all the bitterness of the last year of my service but destiny had different plans."⁸²

Thus his Diwanship of Kolhapur state proved short lived.

After his return from the Round Table Conference he resumed his practice as an advocate in Belgaum. But as he was a born social worker, he got elected to the District School Board, District Local Board, and to the Belgaum Municipality. But he did not become its Chairman because of his uprightness and discipline. So, he resigned these three societies.⁸³ Then he concentrated his attention towards the work of Central Bank, Belgaum. As its president he modified the laws and byelaws of the Bank. He initiated and implemented the provident fund scheme for the employees of the Bank. He also constructed the magnificent

Bank building.⁸⁴ At this time he was also the Chairman of the Municipal Election Committee and he was associated with local self government bodies as well-wisher and adviser.⁸⁵

He was closely associated with the southern federation of states of which he was a moving force. He presided over the Kudchi conference of southern federation of states on 23 and 24 December, 1936, where he met his old friend Vir Nariman.⁸⁶

The Sangli State Rayat Assembly passed the market Act in May 1934. The Chamber of Commerce approached Latthe to intermediate with the Rajasaheb of Sangli to withdraw the Act which hit hard upon the merchant community. Latthe studied the Act and pointing out the probable adverse effect and hardship which could be caused to commercial and merchant communities, convinced the Rajasaheb of Sangli that the Act should be withdrawn. In July 1935 the Rajasaheb announced in the Darbar Hall the withdrawal of the Act. The Chamber of Commerce felicitated Annasaheb Latthe on his successful intermediation and presented him with an address.⁸⁷

Having been attracted by the ideology and programme of Indian National Congress, Annasaheb Latthe returned all honours and titles conferred on him by the British Government and on 1 Oct. 1936 he joined Indian National Congress at Belgaum with 500 workers of the non-Brahmin Party. The Karnatak Lion Gangadharrao Deshpande welcoming him in the party, said, "I am delighted that Indian National Congress has got a statesman, politician and a brave warrior in Annasaheb Latthe."⁸⁸

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 14.7.1937.⁸⁹

'Leader' of Allahabad highly praised Latthe when he made some valuable suggestions in the Assembly. Shri Chintamani writes in the editorial of 'Leader'⁹⁰ "The Hon. Mr. Latthe remarked that the quickest way to the goal is "to hasten slowly". This is true both in the field of economics and of politics. That a congress Minister should preach the virtues of doctrine of 'Hasten slowly' is another evidence of the sobering effect of the responsibility of office. Hon. Latthe's speech is that of a practical administrator. Mr. Latthe was the Diwan of Kolhapur who does not wish to blink at realities. He has refused to play to the gallery and evinced a spirit of caution." Soon he presented his budget which was appreciated and praised abroad, though it came under fire in India. Replying to the criticism on the budget Annasaheb Latthe said:

"We accepted power only in order to convince the people that we have not been given any power granted under the constitution to do some real work of public welfare".⁹¹

He was appointed a trusty by the Government on the Trust founded for the purpose of Deccan College Reforms.

Mahatma Gandhi advised the congress ministry in Bombay Province on 22 Oct. 1939 to resign in protest against involving

India in the II World War. Latthe was the follower of Mahatma Gandhi and the Swadeshi movement. He submitted his resignation of the post of a minister in provincial congress ministry.

He was arrested on August 1942 for participating in the Quit India Movement and was placed in Hindalga Jail for 8 days from where he was released on his denouncing the destructive programme of Indian National Congress. Chh. Shahaji Maharaj needed his advice and he tried to get Latthe out of the prison.⁹²

In 1945 he travelled all over India with Rajgopalachari and tried to convince the people how the formation of Pakistan would be communal. In 1946 he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly, as a congress candidate but he was not included in the Ministry. In 1947, he resigned from the Assembly and was appointed as an adviser to Chhatrapati Shahaji. He was also appointed as a member of the Union Public Service Commission on 23.3.1948. Captain Nanjappa was appointed as an administrator of Kolhapur state. Latthe was one of those who opposed the merger of Kolhapur state with Indian Union and he was ruthlessly penalised. He was ordered to leave Kolhapur at once and Chhatrapati Shahaji Maharaj signed the document of merger. On 9.3.1949 Latthe returned to Belgaum.⁹³

The writings of Annasaheb Latthe were worthy of praise. He has touched social, religious, political and educational fields. He wrote his first book 'Introduction to Jainism' in 1905.

He wrote the 'Rise of the British Empire' in 1914. He discussed the degradation of the nation in it. He explained how and when the British Government emerged. He wrote: "The open eyed introspection of fault rather than the false pride will revive the nation. The British empire emerged because of the anarchy in our social, religious and political life and the forceful reign (Zotangpatshahi)".⁹⁴

In 1924, he published his book, 'Memoirs of His Highness Shahu Chhatrapati Maharaja of Kolhapur' in two volumes. In the introduction of this book Sir S.M. Freser writes "His biographer Prof. Latthe however who is himself the leader of the non-Brahmin movement in British India, writes with none of the limitations of courtier and has been fortunate in finding ready to his hand materials for work of far wider scope. The history of a movement as well as of a man, which should prove of interest to a large circle, including many who are unfamiliar with the name of Kolhapur".⁹⁵

As a representative of Deccan states he observed the conditions of south Indian states and published 'Problems of Indian States' before attending the Round Table Conference in 1930-31.

He wrote a book called 'The Federal Constitution of the World' in Marathi in 1931. He published a travelogue called "Mazya Vilayatchya Athavani" in Marathi.

He was a good writer as well as a good editor. He edited

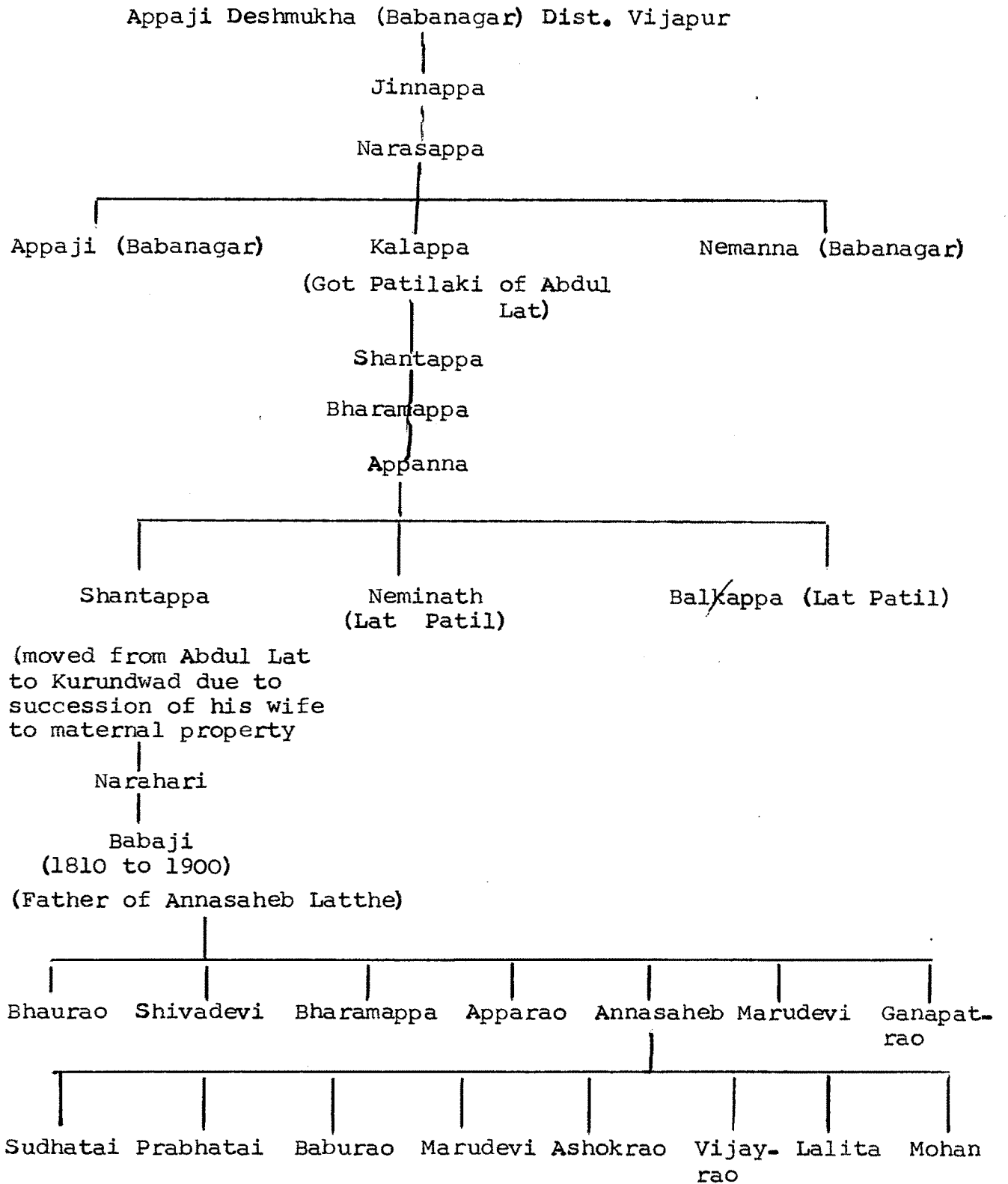
'Pragati and Jinvijay' an authorised mouthpiece of Daxin Bharath Jain Sabha. He published the weekly Deccan Rayat from 1918 to 1920. He explained the objects of non-Brahmin movement in it. The articles in it impressed the British rulers. The wise people and politicians regarded it with respect. He wrote fearlessly about the miseries of the downtrodden. He pressed for their political rights.

The Bombay Assembly in 1946 urged Shri Latthe to be the President of the Planning Board. He was, accordingly, made the president of the planning board.

He was the elected member of the Bombay Legislative Assembly even after 1947. He was the Chief Adviser to the Deccan states. He held prestigious position in the administrative body.⁹⁷

He was a political and social leader; he was also a true worker of the Kolhapur state. He never thought of his own gains or losses, when he thought of the welfare of the state. He had his close relations with Shahu Maharaj, Rajaram Maharaj and Shahaji Maharaj.

After the merger of Kolhapur state he went to Belgaum in 1948. He was ill in 1950 and became very weak. He died of heart failure on 16th May, 1950.

Geneological Tree

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