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: CHAPTER - I :

INTRODUCTION

Maharashtra is the land of peasants and cultivators as more than 70% people depend on agriculture. The Maharashtrian agriculture is dependent upon rains and there is a very poor irrigation system hence famines constantly stalked the land. Under the leadership of great Shivaji the Maratha peasants carved out an independent state but along with other states it went under the British rule in the 18th century. The lot of peasants under the British rule was miserable and as a result there were constant food riots in Maharashtra. Deccan riots of 1874-75 rocked the British government. Jotirao Phuley was the first leader and thinker who understood the sorry state of affairs of the peasants. Gradually, the peasantry in the state got galvanised and brought the pressure to bear upon the government to improve their lot. It was under the leadership of Y.B. Chavan the first Chief Minister of Maharashtra that the blue-print of establishment of the agro-industrial society in the state was developed and partially executed. In the present work,

political development in Maharashtra is studied in the light of emergence of agro-industrial society.

1.1 THE MARATHA PEASANTS AND THE BRITISH RULE :

Under the British rule, the old traditions of statemen and administrators had come to an end. The British govt. introduced new education system in order to get the services of the educated people to run the administration. New education was English education which was secular in character. The education created a new class of Indian intermediotories who would be Indians in race and colour but English in manners and morals.¹

The British rule was responsible for the emergence of middle class in the state. Educated people had changed their attitudes towards life and started taking part in schools, colleges, read news papers and became the members of different associations. The ideas like nationalism, humanism and individualism became popular with this class. In this class there emerged elements committed to progressive, extremist and moderate ideas. At the same time this middle class was collaberating with the British rule.

Of all the writers and reformers of that period, Phuley stands out as an exception because he was the first to give a very vivid account of exploitation of cultivaters during

the British rule. He was of the view that during the British rule, the exploitation by money lenders rapidly increased as there developed a class of traders and money lenders. These commission agents and money lenders took hefty commissions from the peasants for selling their products, grain and raw material. The peasants had to borrow money from them to cater to their needs like seeds, religious, rites, marriage ceremonies etc. They had to pay oppressive interest rates on that amount and as a result they got indebted. Phuley graphically described this process as follows, " the money lender used dishonest means to create confusion in the record and increased the amount of loan. He gave loan to the peasant in line of mortgagage of land and waited for an opportunity to establish his ownership right over the mortgagaged land by imposing heavy interest rate. He played a cruel tricks to establish his ownership right over their land." ²

Due to above effect, farmers revolted against money lenders which is popularly known as Deccan riots of 1874-75. For example, one instance of riots in the Satara district is recorded by the Deccan riots Commission. Riots took place on 10.9.1875 at Kokrud in Shirala. The riots broke out against a money lender, Nana Gujar whose dealings extended over several villages. The immediate cause of the

outbreak was two attachments which had been executed by Nana on the houses and property of two villagers. People from all castes and professions joined hands and attacked Gujara's house. The house and the shop were burnt down while Nan escaped with the help of Patil.³

Even though one incident is recorded from the Satara district by the Deccan Riots Commission, it represents the nature of the antagonism that had developed between the peasant producer strata and the money lender. The commission took note of the situation and asked the government to adopt the measures to redress the grievances of the people. Subsequently, the government introduced the " Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act, 1879 and the Agricultural Loans Act 1886 to alleviate the woes of the farmers.⁴

1.2. SATYASHODHAK MOVEMENT AND JOTIRAO PHULYE :

According to Jotirao Phulye, peasants were poor, ignorant and illiterate because of bureaucratic exploitation and negligence of the British officers. The peasants were plundered and looted by Brahmin officers and money lenders. Also British government had imposed new taxes on farmers in order to give pensions and big salaries to their officers and as a result of the heavy taxes, the peasants had become virtually bankrupt.⁵

During the British rule government needed some local people to man its bureaucracy, and it was provided by the Brahmins, who had taken to English education. In this way, the Brahmins were able to have an upperhand in the governmental services at all levels and all deptts. All these Brahmins exploited peasants, hence, Phulye indignantly called them " Pen-butchers " and ' Village - monesters ' ⁶. But the secular education exposed Brahmins before the society and their orders were increasingly disobeyed by the lower classes of the society.

Jotirao Phulye studied the nature, reasons and consequences of the poverty and ignorance of peasants and according to him there were many reasons for these conditions. After the downfall of Maratha empire, the large Maratha armies were disbanded which left a large number of people unemployed. The failure of the revolt of 1857 increased the number unemployed, people that caused greater reliance on land. The fragmentation of land among the members of the family was second important cause as it went unabated. Also illiteracy and frequent occurrence of famine destroyed everything the peasant collected with great difficulty. ⁷

In 1883, Jotirao Phulye wrote a book namely ' Cultivator's whipeord '. The book opens with an introduction that is significant. He wrote in a ringing tone.

" For want of education intellect deteriorated,
 For want of intellect morality decayed,
 For want of morality progress stopped
 For want of progress wealth vanished
 For want of wealth the shudras perished." ⁸

Jotirao Phulye established an association ;
 Satya Shodhak Samaj at Pune on 24th Sept. 1873 to propagate
 his ideals. The samaj was of the view that it was not
 possible to make people conscious of their rights without
 education, therefore, education should be imparted to all
 the people. The samaj started a newspaper ' Dinbandhu ' in
 1877, for spreading the ideas of Phulye among the people.
 Phulye and his associates worked with a missionary zeal. The
 aim of the samaj was to improve the conditions of peasants
 who were exploited by Brahmins and government, and to promote
 education among the backward classes and women. Mahatma
 Phulye wrote several articles and books in prose and poetry
 to attack Brahmins and to propagate his ideas. Sometimes he
 used various forms of folk literature. He put up a big statue
 of a peasant at the place of the congress session to impress
 upon the fact that the peasant was the true representative of
 India.⁹

Thus, Satyashodhak samaj was a democratic
 movement of the oppressed classes of the society like peasants

etc. Mahatma Phulye was a guide, a philosopher and a friend of Satyashodhak samaj in different phases of its existence. The samaj represented a radical ideology which was based on the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity and it vigorously attacked the unjust nature of Brahminical orthodoxy.

It is a fact that the satyashodhak samaj was limited to Marathi, speaking areas and could not spread outside Maharashtra, hence it might be described as a regional organization, but it was supported by a large number of non-Maharashtrians living in the state.¹⁰

After the death of Jotirao Phulye, the non-Brahmin movement was led by Sri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur. The main appeal of the movement was to peasants who had no hope either in the near or distant future of becoming members of the bureaucratic elite or capitalists large or small. Peasantry, tribals workers low castes, untouchables were all adversely affected by the colonial regime and responded to the movement.

1.3 GROWTH OF NON-BRAHMIN MOVEMENT AND RISE OF PEASANT LEADERSHIP :

The term non-Brahmin had clear meaning in the post - Jotirao Phulye era as it included different castes other than the Brahmins. Thus, during the British rule this

alliance of different communities started protesting against the Brahmanical dominance. One of its outcomes was the pressure over the Britishers to change their policy towards the non-Brahmin masses in the matters economic, social and political.

The non-Brahmin movement took inspiration from the teachings of Mahatma Phulye and Shahu Maharaj as it further wanted to free the ' Bahujan Samaj ' from the exploitation of Brahmins . It assumed concrete shape in December 1920. When the Non-Brahmin league (league of non-Brahmins) was established at ' Jedhe menshion'- (the house of Keshavrao Jedhe) one of the important leaders of non-Brahmin movement. Some scholars are of the opinion that non-Brahmin movement was totally different from Satyashodhak Samaj, but the founders of the league namely Jedhe and Javalkar believed that non-Brahmin movement was a new development of satyashodhak samaj therefore, both leaders were helping Bhaskarrao Jadhav, the leader of Satyashodhak samaj, though they did not like his policy of appeasment of the British government.¹¹

Bhaskarrao Jadhav was elected on the Bombay legislature as a candidate of non-Brahmin party in the elections of 1923 and 1926, but he did not hide his close relations with the British government. The extremists in the non-Brahmin movement were of the opinion that there would be

no difference between the non-Brahmin movement and the moderates if former followed the policy of appeasement of the government. Mahatma Gandhi had advised the workers of the movement on 4th Sept. 1924, at poona to strengthen the movement on their own and not to be dependent upon the alien government.¹²

The leaders of the non-Brahmin movement tried to keep themselves away from other political parties. It was further decided that the admission to the league would be open to all those, who irrespective of his caste, creed or religion except Brahmins believed in its aims, rules and objectives.¹³ The views of the new and young leaders like Jedhe, Javalkar and Bhaurao Patil were similar to those mentioned above.

These young leaders were not satisfied with the attitudes of the leaders of the non-Brahmin movement as they had decided to fight in the cause of betterment of the farmers. During the period of 1928-29, Jedhe engaged himself in the peasant movement. He organised a " Bombay - Province Peasant Conference " at Pune and it was presided over by Maharshi V.R. Shinde.¹⁴ Due to these activities, the non-Brahmin movement became popular in the state and it was responsible for the emergence of new leadership from the Bahujan Samaj.

1.4 THE CONGRESS PARTY AND RURAL LEADERSHIP :

The Congress party in Maharashtra was dominated by the followers of Tilak hence there were very few Congress leaders from the rural areas. A large number of non-Brahmin masses were aloof from the congress, because of the narrow attitude of the congress leaders. It was to the credit of Maharshi V. R. Shinde that he persuaded Jedhe and his followers to join the congress and the civil disobedience movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930.

Though the non-Brahmin leaders took part in the movement they were not in a position to dominate the state Congress as it was firmly controlled by Shankarao Deo and his friends. The Deo-Deogirikar group was pro-capitalist hence it was called Shetji and Bhatji group i.e. the group supported by Brahmins and Marawadis. It neglected the interest of peasants, workers and farm hands. Jedhe challenged the leadership and became the President of M.P.C.C. He made the party very popular in the rural people. In 1937 election due to fear of non-Brahmin party some Congress tickets were given to the Non-Brahmins and largely due to their support the Congress secured majority. B.G. Kher became its first Chief Minister and at the time of formation of government he neglected the Non-Brahmin leaders. Some of his pro-rich and

anti peasant policies were badly criticised by Jedhe because he felt that the Kher government was not following the Congress policies.

The Congress ministeries resigned in 1939-40 and the Second World War started. At that time the Britishers were not ready to give independence to India. After the failure of Crips mission, the congress party under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi launched ' Quit India ' movement and the entire country was plunged into civil violence. The main leadership of the congress party was put in jail. The second rank leadership went underground and decided to continue the movement. The movement continued in an underground form in different parts of the state for a year.

One of the important events during ' Quit India Movement ' was establishment of the parallel government in Satara. By the beginning of 1943, some important decisions in Satara were taken regarding the establishment of the parallel government (Patrisarkar) and some leaders established parallel govt. in Satara District on their own.¹⁵ The structure of parallel government was very simple as those who were ready to leave home and willing to go from a village to other village, those, who were ready to engage armed fight against police and gundas and those who were willing to work on Judiciary (local) were included in this government. The

number of these workers was about 80 to 100 and this constituted the base of the government. In the absence of adequate ammunition, the leaders of the parallel government were ready to fight with the ordinary guns.¹⁶

The workers of the parallel government formed their own local groups like Kundal group led by Nana Patil, Shirala group led by Bhahurao Charankar and Borde, Karade group led by Madhavrao Jadhav and Wai group led Kisanveer. There existed some sub-groups also. The Satara movement of parallel government gave birth to eminent leaders like Nana Patil, G.D. Lad, Kisanveer, Vasanttrao Patil, Naikawadi etc. The parallel government of Satara was a shining example of the peasant rebellion. The 'Quit India' movement was called off and elections to provincial and state assembly were declared. The political scene changed completely.

At the time of 1946 elections, Deo and Deogirikar group made arrangement to retain their majority in Parliamentary board, Jedhe came to know that his men were not considered for the party ticket hence he started criticising some of the policies of Kher ministry during the period of 1937 to 39. He alleged that under the Kher ministry the interests of peasants and workers were neglected.¹⁷ Thus, the ideological differences between the two groups of Jedhe-More, Sanas, Khadilkar and Deo, Kher etc. became acute as Jedhe group



supported the cause of Tenant bill, Loan abolition bill, and opposed the land consolidation bill.

Soon after the elections of 1946, the goal of independence was achieved. But at this moment the rural leadership became restive because B. G. Kher became the Chief Minister of Bombay. They doubted the readiness of such a government to pursue land reforms and land tenancy acts ; that were promised by the Congress party.

1.5 INDEPENDENCE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE P.W.P.

There was a lot of tension in the M.P.C.C. about the dominance of rightist element over the Bombay government as the state was controlled by Vallabh Bhai Patel and his supporters. The Kher government was partial toward Gujrat and urban areas and there was no hope for regeneration of the countryside as visualised by Phulye and Shahu Maharaj. Hence the Non-Brahmin leadership within the congress decided to press for land reforms and several other radical measures. To meet that end within the congress they established the congress Shetkari Kamgar Sangh on 3.8.1947. Leaders like Jedhe, More, Jadhav, Deshmukh, Nalawade played an important role in this. These leaders expressed a view that the policies of the Kher ministry were not safeguarding the interests of peasant community.

The All India Congress Committee held its meeting at Bombay and passed an amendment to the party constitution that banned all organizations and sub-groups having separate constitutions and programmes, from the Congress party. Therefore, leaders like Jedhe and More decided to give up the membership of the congress. They established the P.W.P. on 26.4.1948. It developed its rural development program.

The peasants and worker party adopted the Marxist philosophy as a creed and believed in class-struggle. It aimed at over throwing capitalist system and the establishment of the classless society. The party was against the exploitation of any kind. The programme of the party included right to work for every citizen, control over profit, control and checks an bureaucracy, right to recall, one union in one industry (organization) and the unity of working class. The party was supported by the farmers in different parts of Maharashtra and it created political consciousness in their minds.

1.6 THE CONGRESS PARTY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM :

After forming his government, Prime Minister Nehru decided to undertake the planned development of economy and started ambitious community development programs to change the face of rural India. In the process, he defeated the

challenge of right faction led by P.D. Tandon. After 1952 elections B.G. Kher was removed as Chief Minister of Bombay and his deputy Morarji Desai became the new Chief Minister. Nehru sought to bring about the change in rural areas and for that purpose he launched the community development program.

The main objectives of the community development program were to revitalize and rejuvenate the Indian rural economy. They were as follows :

- i) Leading the rural population from chronic poverty and under development to full employment.
- ii) Leading rural population from chronic agricultural underproduction to full production with the help of scientific knowledge.
- iii) The largest possible extension of the principles of co-operation by making rural families credit-worthy.
- iv) Increased community efforts for the benefit of the community centres.¹⁸

Thus, the community development program was designed to bring about over all change in the rural areas of the country. Nehru was a socialist and he was influenced by

philosophy of Russian revolution, hence he decided to undertake the planned development of the country. In the Lahor and subsequently the Lucknow Congress he declared that the Congress was a party that was committed to socialism.

At the Avadi session of the congress in 1954 the party declared that the establishment of the socialistic pattern of society was the goal of the congress party. It decided to strive for establishing social ownership i.e. control of the important means of production in the hands of society. It was not socialism but the first step taken by the congress towards the goal of socialism. (According to Nehru there was no difference between socialism and socialistic pattern of society.)

Thus, new possibilities of rural development were opened through state-sector, community development and co-operative sector due to policies of Nehru government. In first five year plan, the stress was laid on agricultural sector and also on co-operative farming, cottage industries, state trading in food - grains, co-operative movement in rural area, sugar industry, co-operative mills, dairy, co-operative spinning mills etc. The Congress was under influence of Gandhian philosophy hence it accepted programme of small scale industries, Khadi and Village industries, and decentralization of power in economic and political fields. Abolition of

Zamindari, strengthening of public sector and community development program became the main principles of Nehru's socialism.

1.6 MAHARASHTRA AT CROSS ROADS :

Maharashtra underwent a lot of political development after the establishment of British rule. The discontent of the rural masses against the colonial and traditional society gave birth to Satya Shodhak Movement and Non-Brahmin movement. These movements sought to improve the lot of peasants and for that purpose, peasant leaders constantly fought against the alien government as well the Congress government to abolish Zamindari system and to enact land tenancy act. Nehru government started the community development program and slowly, the farmers and villages became the concern of planning commission. The disgruntled rural leadership in Maharashtra changed its mind and a large number of them returned back to the congress after the Awadi Congress.

Y. B. Chavan was the representative of the new leadership but he did not leave the congress as he realised that the face of rural Maharashtra could be changed with the help of the congress party. He became Chief Minister of Bombay in 1956 and of Maharashtra in 1960. During his

stewardship only the blue print for the development of Agro-industrial society in Maharashtra was finalised.

1.7 THE PURPOSE AND METHOD OF STUDY :

In the present dissertation an attempt is made to study emergence of the agro-industrial society and political development in Maharashtra in the light of political ideas of Y. B. Chavan. The present study seeks to analyse his vision of new rural Maharashtra with the help of his political ideas and policies pursued by his government. It may be noted that this is not the exhaustive study of the emergence of agro-industrial society in the state.

The method of the study is historical and development of peasant leadership in Maharashtra with reference to Y.B. Chavan is analysed through historical perspective. The writings, speeches committee reports and the legislative debates are consulted and critically analysed in order to develop a coherent and systematic theory of political development pursued by Y.B. Chavan during his Chief Ministership. The study seeks to cover the period between May 1960 to Nov. 1962, when Y.B. Chavan was Chief Minister of Maharashtra.

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