

ORIGIN OF THE PWP. :

The P.W.P. is an important political party in Maharashtra and its birth in the state is result of peculiar intellectual development of the state. The PWP tried to synthesis the indigenous intellectual traditions of Maharashtra and the Marxist ideology of proletarian revolution.

The leadership of the PWP was influenced by the ideology of Mahatma Phuley and Satyashodhak movement. The credit for radicalising the Marathi peasantry should go to Phuley and his Satyashodhak movement. In the present chapter an attempt is made to trace the development of the PWP in the light of Satyashodhak movement and with reference to the struggle of leftist and rightist forces that was taking place within the party.

2:1. SATYASHODHAK MOVEMENT AND ITS IDEOLOGY :

Jotiba, who established Satyashodhak samaj, needed an association and a platform for the propagation of his ideas. He wanted to enrol followers and workers so that they would propagate his National ideals among the people. To spread and propagate his ideals effectively, he established Satyashodhak samaj at Pune on 24 Sept. 1873.⁽¹⁾ The samaj was of the view that it was not possible to make people conscious of their rights without education. Therefore education should be given to all people so that the aim of the Samaj-liberation of shudras, atishudras and women from

the slavery of Brahmins could be achieved. The Satyashodhak samaj started newspaper ' Dinbandhu ' in 1877 for spreading the ideas of Phuley among the people.⁽²⁾ The samaj was the first organizational attempt to fight Brahminism. Phuley was ably supported by his friends like Lokhande, Maske, Ghole and Bhalekar. But he was the main theoretician of the Satyashodhak Samaj.

The aim of samaj was to improve the conditions of peasants who were exploited by traders and money lenders. Also it was interested in promoting education among backward classes and women. It opposed varna system and polytheism and declared that there was no need of an agent in the form of a priest between human beings and God. Satyashodhak Samaj wanted to free people from religious superstitions and the evil Brahminical influence.

Phuley advocated the cause of Indian cultivators and told the visiting British prince that real India lived in the slum of a peasant. 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. In 1873 Jotirao Phuley shifted his attention from education for the most oppressed groups of untouchables, and women to organize the masses of middle and low-caste non-Brahmins to launch a frontal attack on Brahminism.⁽³⁾ Satyashodhak Samaj was a democratic movement of the oppressed classes of society. Some of the castes afterwards emerged as the dominant castes

but at that time they were backward and impoverished. Thus, the Satyashodhak samaj belonged to a continuous movement of protest that attacked tradition such as Budhism and Bhakti movement.⁽⁴⁾

Phuley's followers Bhalekar and Lokhande played a very important role in the Satyashodhak Samaj movement. Bhalekar was instrumental in starting a newspaper as well as spreading the ideology of the samaj in different areas of Maharashtra. Thus his role cannot be minimised.⁽⁵⁾ Other leader was Lokhande, who worked in the city of Bombay. Lokhande established trade unions in Bombay. Thus Satyashodhak Samaj movement was instrumental in starting trade union movement in Maharashtra.⁽⁶⁾

Satyashodhak Samaj had begun its social activities with opening of schools for untouchables and women. During its initial period it was not supported by the aristocratic and feudual non-Brahmin elements. But it was gaining ground among middle classes and peasants who realised that education and social reforms were necessary for their salvation. The movement was supported by the contractors and businessman who were oppressed by Brahmin bureaucruy. Due to such a wide support the samaj became quite a mass based movement.

While describing Phuley's movement as a cultural revolt. Dr. Gail Omvedit pointed out that the main principle of Satyashodhak propaganda was the deplorable condition of

lower classes in the system and miserable condition of peasants in a colonial economy. The samaj tried to spread its movement on the basis of these ideas. She says that Marutirao Navle put forward following four principles of Samaj :

1. The samaj tried to fight caste and communal prejudices.
2. Established schools and Hostels.
3. Encouraged love marriages and simple marriages.
4. Opposed evil practices of Brahmins.

The opponents of Satyashodhak movement charged the samaj that it simply sought to replace Brahmin priests by their own priests and predicted the rise of New privileged class. It is the opinion of Dr. Gail Omvedt, that the tendency was indeed exemplified when the Maharaja of Kolhapur set up the " Ksatrajagadguru " in 1920.⁽⁷⁾ But it was a move resisted by most Satyashodhaks including several Maratha ones.

Mahatma Phuley was a guide and philosopher of Satyashodhak samaj and different phases of its existence the samaj tried to take forward the movement of social advancement. The samaj represented a radical ideology which was based on the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity and it vigorously attacked the feudal nature of Brahminical orthodoxy. The Satyashodhak samaj was opposed to Indian National Congress as it felt that congress wanted to revive ' Peshavai ' as it was dominated by Brahmins. Maharashtra congress was dominated by B.G. Tilak and

his conservative Brahmin supporters upto 1920, therefore, it was opposed to social reforms advocated by Non-Brahmin sections of the society. After the death of Tilak also the party was influenced by Tilakites hence in Non-co-operation movement of 1921 the non-Brahmin sections were conspicuous by their absence. But slowly non-Brahmin leaders realised that the congress under Mahatma Gandhi was different and under the leadership of Gandhi, the Non-Brahmin sections would be in a position to get justice, Maharshi V. R. Shinde played a very important role in convincing these leaders that they should join the national mainstream. The leaders decided to join the congress in 1930 and they took part in civil disobedience movement of 1930. Slowly the composition of the state congress was changing.

2:2 THE CONGRESS PARTY & CONFLICT BETWEEN LEFT AND RIGHT :

The congress party in Maharashtra was in the hands of staunch Gandhians like Deo and Deo girikar who were rightist in their ideology. With the induction of Non-Brahmin leaders, the leftist group was formed. The conflict between the right and left within the state congress paved way for formation of the PWP.

The meeting of the Maharashtra congress party was held in 13th January 1935 at Poona and selected Mr. Shankarrao Deo as president of Maharashtra Congress Party. The congress president of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad came to Maharashtra

in June 1935. The Maharashtra congress party launched registration of members in 1935, and at the end of year, the number of total members was 27,806 . Of these members 11,673 were from urban areas and 6933 from rural areas. The year 1935 was the year of congress party's Golden Jubilee as the party completed 50 years of its existence. In 1936 the congress party wanted to hold conference in Maharashtra. At that time Maharashtrian members quarrelled among themselves about the venue of the conference. Lastly Mr. Shankarrao Deo and Dastane were of the views that the party conference should be held in rural area. The congress party, hence decided to organise it at Faizpur in Khandesh. By the end of December, the congress met under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Faizpur conference's main aim was to establish the close relation with farmers. In the elections to Bombay legislative assembly but contested the elections and during this election all sources of false propaganda and resort to castism was taken. But the congress won the elections.

Out of the assembly of 175 members in Bombay assembly. The congress contested 110 seats in 1937 out of these 110 seats, 53 in Maharashtra, 22 from Karnataka and 22 from Gujarath and 14 seats from Bombay and the other cities were contested. The congress party won all seats from Gujarath and Bombay but in Karnataka it secured 15 seats and in Maharashtra it won

only 37 seats. There were two opinions in the congress party about the formation of ministry. The socialist members of the congress party did not like the idea of forming the ministry and members of legislative assembly wanted the formation of government. Ultimately the congress party gave green signal to the making of ministry. It was widely believed at that time that F.H. Nariman would become Chief Minister but the congress high command favoured Balasaheb Kher.

After the formation of Kher ministry there were internal clashes in the congress party. Mr. Shankarrao Deo was president of Maharashtra pradesh congress party since 1932. But some congress leaders wanted that the presidentship of Maharashtra congress party should go to Mr. Keshavrao Jedhe. In Maharashtra, the peasant community was backing Mr. Keshavrao Jedhe and it was argued that if he was selected, the work of the congress would spread in the rural areas. Keeping these things in view Mr. Deo held a meeting of the MPCC on 15th January 1938 at Sarsavat Collony, Santacruse Bombay. Out of 143 members of MPCC 139 attended the meeting and Keshavrao Jedhe was unanimously elected as the president of MPCC.

Jedhe was the first Non-Brahmin to assume the position of President of MPCC as before 1930 the party was completely dominated by the city based Brahmins. Due to Jedhe the congress became extremely popular in rural areas. In 1937 the membership

of the congress in the state was 45,925 but in 1938, it rose to 1,63,880. Several Non-Brahmin leaders joined the party ; for example, Anand Swami a famous non-Brahmin leader from Vidarbha and Shankarrao More from Pune joined the congress making it popular and broad based.⁽⁸⁾ But clashes between Kher and Jedhe became inevitable as Kher was playing in the hands of right wing politicians of the state.

But the new non-Brahmin leaders were getting increasingly attracted towards the congress as the party under Nehru was leaning towards socialism and social equality. In Maharashtra the Brahmin leadership of the congress party was increasingly challenged by the new leadership. The industrial relations bill proposed by Kher government was opposed by the leftists in the congress party. Jedhe and his group supported Mr. Subhash Chandra Bose in 1939 when he sought to get elected second time.⁽⁹⁾

As the internal clashes were developing, the Jedhe group adopted the leftist line declaring that the congress government should stand for workers and peasants. But the Kher government did not function that way, therefore, the clashes continued as the govt. ignored the notice of MPCC regarding Warali tribunal.⁽¹⁰⁾

The Kher ministry tendered its resignation in 1939 as the differences between the congress and the British govt. got deepened. Great Britain was greatly involved in the second World War in 1942, when Mahatma Gandhi decided to launch the

quit India Movement. The Quit India Movement was widely supported by the people in Maharashtra. The parallel government of Nana Patil in Satara district showed that the peasants were willing to wage war against the British imperialists.

The war was over in 1945 and elections to Bombay legislative assembly were held in 1946 and the congress returned to power with comfortable majority. B.G. Kher was reelected the leader of the congress legislative party and he became chief Minister of Bombay state second time. The struggle between Kher and Jedhe continued as Jedhe thought that the Kher government was pro-capitalist and was not willing to implement progressive policies.

In 1947 there rose a clash between the governmental and organisational wings of the congress party as the latter claimed that the former should work according to its guidance. The congress president Acharya Kripalani and Secretary Shankarrao Deo supported the claim of the organisation but it was not acceptable to Nehru.⁽¹¹⁾

In Maharashtra the Kher ministry did not take the notice of the MPCC seriously. Keshavrao Jedhe started open opposition to Kher Ministry. He said that Kher ministry was behaving selfishly like a trader.⁽¹²⁾ At that time Jedhe was related with shetakari samaj. Acharya Kripalani the congress

president sent resignation letter to the all India congress committee arguing that the congress governments did not take the notice of popular view, his resignation was accepted by the congress committee. In his interview published in weekly named ' Navyug ' edited by Acharya Atre, Mr. Shankarrao Deo boasted that in Maharashtra congress party. Jedhe was nominal president and actual authority vested in Gandhi group. Jedhe and Gadgil were the chatrapathis of Satara. He likened himself to Peshave who wielded the real power in the Maratha empire of 18th century.

Thus, at the time of independence, Maharashtra congress was deeply divided and Non-Brahmin leaders were disappointed with the party for not nominating Shankarrao More as a candidate in 1946 elections. The party was further divided between Non-Marathi speaking people Gujrathis and Kannada speaking people and Marathi speaking people. Factionalism and bitterness was quite evident in the party. (13)

2:3. NATURE OF THE CONGRESS PARTY :

During freedom struggle the congress was a movement. All people participated in it to win freedom. Since it was a movement, the capitalists, the landlords, the tenants, the labourers, those who supported caste system and different religions (social groups) were all included in the congress.

In brief, the congress had in its organization people having interests opposite to one another because at first it was necessary to get freedom. Hence Gandhiji kept the congress in such a form that it should be able to make adjustments, eschewing any form of class-conflict. Gandhiji was conscious of this nature of the congress that is why he began to express his opinion that the congress should be abolished and that it should be converted into Loksevak Sangha. The leaders' ambitions of assuming political power were not in favour of this proposal. They decided to keep the existence of the congress in a permanent form and used it as an instrument to secure political power.⁽¹⁴⁾

In Maharashtra congress the conflict between the groups of Mr. Deo-Devgirikar and that of Mr. Jedhe was growing. The power of congress government was in the hands of one group, while the organization of the party was in the hands of the other group.⁽¹⁵⁾ It was the grouse of Jedhe that the Kher ministry did not function in favour of the peasants and the workers. This criticism was made during the period when the general elections were to take place. The Maharashtra congress was mouthing the language of the interests of the farmers. But it was not ready to take the concrete steps in that direction. If the Maharashtra congress had looked after

the interests of the small, poor farmers ; the interests of the rich landlords and the capitalists would have been jeopardised. The congress leadership did not want to encourage the class-conflict.

Hence the leadership was trying its level best to bring in to practice the social class adjustment. The Jedhe-More-Raut group started propoganda for establishment of internal party in the congress. At this time the capitalistic form of the congress began to get exposed and the internal group within the congress started gaining the support on a large scale. Though the congress had thought generally on the matter how and for whom the political freedom should be utilized, it had not worked out any specific programme for the utilization of the political freedom. It resulted in the congress being taken over by the Rightists. The philosophy of Leftists had no influence on the congress. The Leftists becoming powerful enough was realised. Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel and his powerful supporters like Mr. Deo decided to drive out the group of the Leftists from the congress.⁽¹⁶⁾

The ideological conflicts in the congress were bursting out since the election of the provincial constitution Board in 1937. At this time the MPCC had in it broadly 3 groups i.e. the group of Mr. Deo Devgirikar, the second one belonging to Mr. Keshavrao Jedhe and third one belonging to those who openly supported the ideology of socialism. There were Brahmins,

Marwaris, and Gujarathis on a large scale in the group of Dev-Devegirikar. So this group was called a the group of Shetjis and Bhatjis. In Jedhe-Gadgil group there were non-Brahmins, peasants and to some extent workers. In the group known as the socialist there were the people who supported of M. N. Roy. (17)

Maharashtra Pradesh congress committee was under the pressure of capitalists as Dev-Devginkar allied with Gujrat hence it could not carryout the programs of M. Gandhi, M. Phuley, and Rajershi Shahu Maharaj. It is felt by increasing number of the people that as long as equality is not demanded by destroyng social economic difference there would be no welfare of Bahujan Samaj and there were no signs that the congress would do so. (18)

It was felt by Jedhe group that majority in this country constituted of workers and peasants. Hence the leadership should come from that class and the people had achieved freedom by sacrificing their precious lives but at present the government was in the hands of capitalists like Tata and Birla. (19)

2:4 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE P.W.P.

The Jedhe group was toying with the ideas of establishment of New political party and towards that end a meeting was invited by Baburao Sanas on the 26th July 1946. It was decided

in that meeting that to spread the ideas of social and political reforms, a newspaper should be established. The paper should give expression to the own views and demands of the peasantry. For this purpose a committee was appointed but it did not function effectively.⁽²⁰⁾

On September 11, 1946 another meeting was called on Swastik Bangla at Shivaji Nagar in Pune. In this meeting some Non-Brahmin peasant leaders were present. In this meeting a decision was taken that within the congress, Shetkari Kamagar Sangh should be established for the implementation of the policies and programs in benefit of peasant. It was stated that, the shetkari kamagar sangh was founded to unite farmers and to support the ~~the~~ congress party. As well as for successfully implementing political, economic and social programmes of the congress. In this meeting Yashvantrao Chavan took opposite stand. He was of the opinion that establishment of a political group within the congress party would be construed as a revolt and the party High command would take disciplinary action against it.⁽²¹⁾

It was thought that the time was favourable for establishment of a new political party as the people were disillusioned with the congress. The Dev-Devgirikar faction was happy that the Jedhe group was leaving the congress because they knew that the internal organisation of Jedhe would be

unfavourable to them at some time. The Dev-Devagirikar group took an objection to the move of Jedhe-More group. At that time, Shankarrao Deo was secretary of All India Congress Committee. In Bombay, conference held in April 1948. Deo group complained against Jedhe group regarding their activities and Shankarrao Deo dominated the scene and got a resolution passed by the body declaring that there should be a ban on any political unions functioning within the congress party. This resolution left no scope for Jedhe and More but to resign.

As a result of this, some leaders and the active members of the group were forced to form a party. A meeting was called at the house of Bhausaheb Raut's to discuss the different contours of resolution. In this meeting the leaders and the active members made a demand that the congress declaration of establishment of a state of farmers and worker's must be implemented. In pursuance of **this policy** it was decided that All India peasants and workers party be established. The party was wedded to the ideas of Marxism and Leninism and wanted to establish a egalitarian society. (22)

2:5. IMPORTANCE OF DABHADI THESIS :

After the formation of the PWP, the party leaders decided to adopt a political resolution that would enunciate the basic political philosophy of the party. Such a political resolution in the form of Dabhadi thesis was passed in May 1950 at Dabhadi in Nasik district.

Dabhadi thesis is an important ideological document in the sense that it declares that the PWP was the Marxist party. It is a unique attempt outside Indian communist movement to apply the principles of Marxism - Leninism to Indian situation. The PWP continued to follow political line elaborated in Dabhadi thesis with some adjustments. To correctly understand political philosophy of the PWP, a critical study of the Dabhadi thesis is necessary.

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