

CHAPTER - VI :-

POLITICAL IDEAS OF JOTIBA PHULEY

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CHAPTER - VI

POLITICAL IDEAS OF JOTIBA PHULEY :

Jotirao Phuley discussed concret administrative, political and social issues in his political ideas! He was the major democratic thinker of this period and he argued that the peasant was the centre of the political organization. He fought in the cause of Shudras, Atishudras and women and waged ideological battle to establish a democratic society based on principles of equality, universal brotherhood and unity of all religions. His concept of ideal state and sarvajanik - satyadharma clearly show that he developed a very radical political vision.

1) POLITICAL VISION OF JOTIBA PHULEY :

Though preamble of Satyashodhak Samaj stated that in the society we will not discuss political matters,² but Jotiba and the Samaj had a very broad political vision that visualised the establishment of the ideal state or the state of creator, that was a type of social system where everybody would get justice, he would be free to follow his own religion and believe in the ideal of universal brotherhood. Phuley's concept of ideal state was very radical and revolutionary as it was based on principles of dignity of labour and universal brotherhood.

His political ideology was very radical and while formulating it he had studied different progressive events in

the world. For example, his political ideas were influenced by British liberalism, American democratism and the French Republicanism. He considered liberty as natural right of all human beings. According to him the state of peasants was a democratic state and he gave the examples of J. Washington as the leader of farmers of America.³ His ideal state was a universal state where everybody followed the principles - enshrined in the concept of truth and lived a happy life. It must be noted that there were two sides of his political ideas as one dealt with immediate problems of the Shudras and other aspect dealt with ultimate aims, ideals and goals of the ideal society. To solve the immediate problems of Shudras, Atishudras and women he suggested a political strategy of the alliance of friendly forces to end Brahmin dominance.

2) POLITICAL STRATEGY OF PHULEY :

ALLIANCE OF FRIENDLY SECTIONS TO FIGHT BRAHMINISM :-

Jotirao wanted to liberate Shudras, Atishudras from social, cultural and political bondage of Brahmins and worked out his own political strategy to break the Brahmin strangle hold over the society. Thus, political strategy was aimed at destroying the Brahmin dominance in order to bring about fundamental, social transformation that would be beneficial to all the castes. The main thrust of this policy was to accomplish political goals through education. Therefore, he requested British Queen to expand educational facilities to defeat the evil designs of wily Brahmin.⁴ Expansion of education would go

a long way in educating Shudras about their rights and as a result the supporters of his ideology would greatly increase. Phuley wanted different friendly forces to forge alliance under the leadership of newly educated middle class to achieve (1) annihilation of old order and establishment of just order, (2) for the implementation of policies and programme of immediate importance to end Brahmin dominance, and (3) to work for the formation of the political alliance of different groups of Indian society against Brahmins. The alliance was forged to face the challenge posed by the Congress. He called the British Queen the leader of the front and asked the Shudras to carefully understand his political strategy which was based on achieving political goals through education and co-operation of the British Government.

His alliance of the friendly forces consisted of three forces. (1) British rulers, (2) The Shudras, (3) Atishudras or untouchables. He was of the view that the alliance between Shudras and Atishudras was possible and perfectly right because both of them were the original inhabitants of India and followers of Bali. British rulers were natural allies because due to their Government only, Shudras could think independently and struggle for their redemption.⁵

Therefore, it was his firm belief that the British rule was a providential gift, Hence Shudras should utilize their kind support to end the Brahminical hegemony. He pleaded that untouchables should unflinchingly back the English rule

and should expose the evil designs of Indian national Congress which was established to fulfill ulterior motives of - Brahmins.⁶ He was of the opinion that in this alliance, the British Government should have a key role, therefore, he called the British Queen, the leader of the alliance.⁷

Jotiba was of the view that in this alliance of Shudras and Atishudras, the prominent role would be played by such castes. Maratha Kunabi, Shepherds, Gardner and other castes belonging to middle order peasantry. The alliance would be led by the educated middle class emerging from these castes due to spread of education. Though he had not clearly put forward this idea, it was implicit in his scheme of things. He allowed feudal lords and nobles to join alliance because he felt that they were distanced from Shudra peasants because of their hallow feudal conceit and the untouchables were separated due to cruel fate. Therefore, he relied on the middle peasantry to play the leading role in this movement for establishment of democratic order.⁸

Jotirao considered British rulers as one of allies not because ~~and~~ they were democratic in character and just in behaviour, but there was a practical side to it. He knew that Brahmins were not going to stay in this country for all the time to come. One day or the other they were bound to leave this country. But before they departed the educated middle class coming from peasantry should be ready to occupy the seats

of power.⁹ There was competition from Brahmins and the Brahmins had established Indian National Congress to achieve that goal.

3) HIS CRITICISM OF BRITISH BUREAUCRACY :

Though the British rulers were the friends of the Shudras Jotiba was of the view that they also tried to plunder the people with the help of their Brahmin Officers. He was of the view that matters were made worse by the corrupt practices of Brahmin servants who devised several corrupt methods to loot the people.

Brahmin clerks, revenue officers, and Mamlatdars , who worked under the British Officers sometimes misled and misguided them. Thus at the time British administration, state and law was unjust, partial, full of mad practices and corrupt. The Brahmin sabotaged just legal provisions with the help of their caste fellows. He criticized the British officers for allowing too much freedom to the Brahmin officers, working under them Brahmin clerks were involved in adding false numbers on rolls and the false attendance register. He gave several examples of administrative corruption and came to the conclusion that the corruption and exploitation of - bureaucracy could only end when the sons of peasantry got educated and became the officers. He was sure that they would not misbehave with the Shudras as they had kinship relations with them and they were committed to their development.

4) EDUCATION AND RESERVATION OF JOBS :

Education played a very important role in Phuley's ideology and also in his political strategy because he firmly believed that for the emancipation of the Shudras from the bondage of Manu.¹⁰ Education was the Key. Therefore, he demanded that education should be made compulsory and instead of giving more stress on higher education, which was helpful to few Brahmins more money and energy should be spend on the promotion of Primary education. He rightly felt that the Government realised reverence from the Peasants but did not make available adequate facilities to give them education.

Jotirao continuously harped on the fact that Brahmin continued to establish their hold over the people because of their ~~hold over~~ monopoly of Government jobs. Now spread of education was one of the means to enter the competition. Britishers had introduced competitive examination system to recruit the people and in this system due to the traditional background of learning, Brahmins secured most of the seats. He wanted to break the monopoly of Brahmins, therefore, he demanded that there should be reservation of job on the basis of caste and every caste should be given the job quota on the basis of their percentage of population in the society.¹¹ He was of the opinion that when the servants from only one caste were recruited, they would oppress and exploit people and would monopolise power. Therefore, he pleaded that there should

not be recruitment of the servants from one caste only.

He wanted the bureaucracy committed to the cause of Shudra cultivators and he hoped that the Government servants coming from the peasant families with a very close kinship relations with the people would serve cultivators well instead of exploiting them.¹² He repeatedly argued that Government job should be reserved on the basis of population. He made it clear that Brahmin should not be given jobs out of proportion to their number and they might be allowed to do physical labour. Thus, he also wanted to bridge gap between mental and physical labour.¹³

Phuley was deeply suspicious of any political move adopted on the part of Brahmins therefore, he did not like the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 and launched a very virulent attack against it.

5) CRITICISM OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS :

Though the establishment of Indian National Congress was the first attempt at the political, emotional and patriotic integration of modern India. Phuley was very doubtful of its ability to do so.

According to Phuley, The Indian National Congress was national in name only as it was the body of a few Brahmins. Therefore, he called it the province of Narada¹⁴ means an association that was bent upon creating

misunderstanding between the British Government and the people. According to him Indian National Congress was established to safeguard the interests of Brahmins and had nothing to do the Shudras.¹⁵ Infacty the Indian National Congress must be vigorously opposed by the downtrodden as it would restore the old Peshava rule. For that purpose they should seek the help from the British and defeat the evil designs of Brahmins.

According to him, Indian National Congress was an attempt in disguise to gain the seats in parliament and civil service for the Brahmins.¹⁶ Therefore, Indian National Congress dominated by the Brahmins could not be called national at all. Indian National Congress was not a novel attempt or a new movement but it was an old example of typical Brahmin cunning. The Brahmins in 1857 lost the chance of revolting successfully against the British Government and now they were doing the same thing under the banner of Indian National Congress since there had been no significant progress of the downtrodden, he made it clear that freedom was another name for the slavery of the Brahmins.

Thuley was opposed to local self Government law passed by Lord Ripon and he thought that the British liberals did not understand the Indian reality properly. His main grouse against Lord Ripon's liberal policies in general and his local-self Government reforms in particular was that these measures strengthened the position of Brahmins vis-a-vis, Shudras as

they were greatly benefitted by local self Government reforms. Most of the municipalities were dominated by Brahmins,¹⁷ and they used the power to safeguard their own interests. He criticized Ripon for implementing such radical program without taking into account the fact that Indian Society was greatly divided. Therefore, he called him 'a quack'.¹⁸ He also criticized the British liberals like Hume, Bradlaugh and others and asked the untouchables to meet Bradlaugh and apprised him of social injustice prevalent in India.¹⁹ He asked them to show him the wicked Vedas and evil conciet of Brahmins. He accused him of chattering out things without taking into account the actual experience.²⁰

6) HIS IDEAS ON DEMOCRACY AND NATIONALISM :

Phuley was the supporter of democratic form of Government that guaranteed freedom and liberty to the people. He was of the view that the original Indian State, which he called the sate of Bali - the legandary King, of peasants was democratic state of the people.²¹ He pointed out that the kingdom of Bali was the kingdom of peasants and workers and nobody could compet with them as far as patriotism is concerned. He cited example of George Washington to show how true democrats loved their country.²² Phuley tried to link his peasant democratism to the democratism of original inhabitants of the land. He was of the opinion that before the Aryan Advent country was ruled by small self governing

republics of peasants who lived happily. Bali was their King but these kingdoms were finally destroyed by the Aryan invaders.

Jotirao was the strong supporter of democracy. He was influenced by the Western democratic principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. At that time people loved the King of Bali but Waman diplomatically seized his state and established the dominance of Brahmins on society.²³ Jotirao used the term state of Bali to mean the democratic state and rejected the Vedic Tradition and its political philosophy which was based on Varna system and the divinity of King. His ideas of democracy were influenced by the British liberalism, American democratism and French republicanism. He believed in the theory of natural rights and argued that the right to liberty was the most important right as it allowed every human being to ~~think~~ think of freely and be happy.²⁴ In Phuley's concept of democracy, all the people were given their equal rights and proper importance was given to workers and peasants.²⁵

According to Jotirao, a nation consists of the people who love and co-operate with each other. He made it clear that nation means total integration and unity of all the sections of society. He ridiculed the Congress concept of nationalism saying that the Congress party stood for safeguarding interest of Brahmins. India could not be considered as nation because due to Brahminical policies, it was deeply divided between different groups, sections .

The country could never be called nation when there was no emotional integration between different communities.

He further argued, "as long as all the people of India including Shudras, atishudras, tribals and fisherman get educated and develop capacity to think independently, the country can not emerge as nation.²⁶ Jotirao made it clear that a pure form of democracy and nationalism go together as both of them promote the cause of social and political integration of the people.

7) THE IDEAL STATE OF PHULEY :

Phuley was quiet sure that with the help of weapon of education, shudra could end Brahmin dominance. He was also confident that through the instrument of education, we could establish an ideal state which was based on the concept of truth. His ideal state or the state ^{of} Creator was a type of social system, where every body would get justice and would be free to follow his own religion and believe in the ideal of universal brotherhood. It was the democratic state of workers and peasants where wealth would be distributed in proportion to the amount of labour put in production of wealth. Thus, labour was given due consideration.²⁷

In his 33 principles of peasants of truth, he pointed out that all men and women were given equal rights by the creator and everybody had a right to claim liberty and other human rights. He made it clear that in his ideal state

everybody should live together as if he was living in his family, irrespective of differences of caste, class, religion, race and nation. Justice would be delivered with at most impartiality and those who did physical labour would be honoured. Therefore, even a cobbler would be respected,²⁸

Thus, Mahatma Phuley's concept of an ideal state was very radical and revolutionary²⁹ as it was based on the principle of dignity of labour and universal brotherhood. His ideal state was a democratic state of workers and peasants that was universal in essence and form. He was of the view that if the people really led virtuous life there would not be any need of oppressive machinery of state also. He recognized that army, police, court, jails, and judges form the oppressive machinery of the state and in a true universal state there would be no need of these organs of Government.³⁰ If the people of world sent their children to school and impart true knowledge to them, there would ~~be~~ not be wars between the nations and the amount which is collected from hard working peasants, workers would not be wasted on maintenance of army and police.³¹

Thus, Phuley's concept of ideal state was significant in the sense that he wanted the establishment of state of peasants and workers where the dignity of labour would be maintained. It was democratic state where all the natural right would be bestowed upon the people. He recognized the oppressive character of the governmental machinery and

visualised the ideal anarchical state where the oppressive instruments of state power would be abolished. This was a unique utopia but Phuley was not the only thinker to dream such a state. Greater philosophers like Marx, Tolstoy and Gandhi also made it clear that in their ideal state the coercive machinery of the government would be abolished.

8) PHULEY AND SARVAJANIK SATYADHARMA :

Mahatma Jotirao Phuley's ideal state was based on the principles of Sarvajanik Satyadharna which broadly means social duties of man guided by the true principles of morality. He established the society for seekers of truth in order to help people and acquire true sense of morality. He was of the view that except Brahmanical Vedas, in all religious books³² the principles of truth are enshrined and he exhorted the people to follow these principles. Following are 33 principles of true moral behaviour.³³

- 1) All human beings, including men and women are created by God and they are entitled to enjoy equal rights.
- 2) Nobody should worship idols of gods.
- 3) Nobody should offer useless gifts to Gods and instead allow other people to use them as they are created by God for the human consumption.
- 4) Every body should allow others to utilise all the things created by God.

- 5) No body should harm others.
- 6) No body should establish his on his groups hegemony on others.
- 7) All human beings are given religious and political freedom and everybody should enjoy his rights in keeping in view the fact that others also have these rights.
- 8) Except husband and wife relationship, every man and every woman should consider each other as sister and brother.
- 9) Every human being is given freedom of expression but every one should take care that because of his ideas and opinions, other people are not troubled.
- 10) No body should oppress others because of ~~this~~ different political and religious opinions.³⁴
- 11) All human beings are basically capable to holding any civil and military positions provided that he or she acquires ability and qualifications to do so.
- 12) All human beings are free to enjoy their religious, civil and political rights and no body should deprive them of these rights.
- 13) Every body should properly look after his or her old parents.
- 14) No body should consume intoxicating material.
- 15) Non-violence and abstention from injuring with some

necessary exceptions.

- 16) No body should speak lie to further his own interests.
- 17) No body should committ adultery.
- 18) No body should committ theft.
- 19) No body should harm others interests.
- 20) No body should help the rebels who raise the banner of revolt against the duely established government.³⁵
- 21) Everybody should follow the principles enshrined in sacred religious books.
- 22) Everybody should believe in equality of all people irrespective of existance of artificial differences.
- 23) No body should believe in slavery.
- 24) No body should show partiality to students belonging to his own caste.
- 25) Justice should be delivered according to the principles of morality.
- 26) Those who perform hard physical labour should be honoured and respected.
- 27) Due dignity to labour should be given and one should not be deprecatd if he works it the house of cobbler to earn his livelihood.
- 28) No body should lead ~~idex~~ idle and lazy life

- 29) No body should mislead ignorant people by using religious false hood.³⁶
- 30) No body should use religious rites to live lazy life.
- 31) No body should try to drive wedge between friends and live off it.
- 32) Everybody should follow the principle of equality and should not treat others inferior on the basis of caste and other considerations.
- 33) Everybody should help need people especially handicapped and destitute children.

The above mentioned principles of moral behaviour are helpful for every human being to live good life. Jotirao was of the view that if the people followed and practiced 33 principles of morality the ideal state can be established on earth.³⁷

While concluding our discussion, we can say that political ideas of Phuley were divided into two parts as the first part deals with immediate political problems of the shudras and suggests ways and means to solve these problems to establish democratic state. The second part deals with his ideas about the ideal state and the ideal social social behaviour. In the second part, he lays down the principles for the establishment of classless, stateless and casteless society which was universal in character.

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