

## CHAPTER - II :-

### SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITION IN MAHARASHTRA AT THE TIME OF BRITISH CONQUEST

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CHAPTER - II :-

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IN MAHARASHTRA AT THE TIME OF BRITISH CONQUEST

The British rule in Maharashtra was established in 1818. After the establishment of their Government, they started new education system and due to that there was development of middle class in the state. By the middle of 19th century, there emerged three important reformist trends in the state.<sup>1</sup>

1) SOCIAL AND POLITICAL

CHANGE IN MAHARASHTRA :

The first trend was religious reformism of Paramhans Sabha and Prarthana Samaj. Justice Ranade, Dr. Bhandarkar, Modak, Chandavarkar were the supporters of the first trend.

The second trend was represented by intellectual Brahmin reformist, Principal Agarkar, who believed in rationalism and secularism.

The third trend, the non-Brahmin movement against Brahmin dominance, was led by Mahatma Jotirao Phuley. Non-Brahmin reformers were concerned with the problems of the majority backward communities. Brahmin reformers related their activities to the problems of Brahmins in general. Outlook of Non-Brahmin reformers was broader and radical.

In Maharashtra, the old leadership was giving place to a new type of leadership. Earlier, the leadership of society rested with some families which had won a name for themselves by their military exploits or by their wealth and statesmanship. Under the British rule, the old traditions of statemen and administrators had to come to an end. British administration and western education had tremendous impact upon both the social and political ideas of Maharashtra. A new generation of scholars, patriots and social reformers with European knowledge replaced the old leadership.<sup>2</sup>

Under the British rule the two forces were playing important role in development of society, (1) Education, (2) Press. At that time the 'Ryotwari' settlement was an increasingly popular form which gave proprietorship to the primary cultivating landholders of the village, which was instituted throughout Bombay State. But due to colonial exploitation famine was an important problem of peasants. Heston refers to the "really extraordinary effects of the Mansoon," whose occasional failures led to catastrophic famine years that far outweighed for the majority of the peasants any benefit from cash crop production.<sup>3</sup> Thus, peasants were in bad condition.

Political and religious power was concentrated in the hands of Brahmins. The Government was favourable to moneylenders. At that time Brahmin dominance was overwhelming. Brahmins and moneylenders dominated the rural class structure became in term of relations of production or type of agrarian enterprise. The term landlords includes here money lending classes to whom the peasant

may be indebted and who often control both decisions about growing and the marketing of the crop.

Though at the top the Britishers the lower level Brahmins and money lenders exploited the peasants. Brahmins with their privileged position and conceit exploited and oppressed the masses.<sup>4</sup> Tenants and share croppers were in miserable condition. Thus, during the early phase of British rule, majority of the people in the Brahmin dominated society were facing a very difficult problem.

## 2) NEW EDUCATION :

British Government introduced new education system in order to get educated people to run administration. New education was English education which was secular in character. It was influenced by Christian missionaries who wanted to spread their religion. For that purpose, they established primary school at Pune. Thus, in India, the clash started. But the needs of administration were the primary motivating factors in British educational policy. The Bureaucracy had to be staffed by Indians and need for a class of, clerks to help govern the empire was what lay behind Macaulay's famous 1852 'minute of education' which called for the creation of a class of Indian intermediotories, who would be "English in manner and morals".<sup>5</sup>

In Maharashtra, where the former rulers had also been an intellectual elite, it was a factor in their educational policy as well as M. Stuyart Elphinston, First Governor of Deccan Province feared that implementation of radical reformist policies would

generate popular unrest. Therefore, he hoped to modify Indian institutions without breaking tradition, working through the traditional elites and their institution. As seal puts it , "Elphinstone policy may have possibly saved British dominance in Western India, they certainly postponed the decline of Brahmanical pre-eminance in Maharashtra"<sup>6</sup> Elphinston was really liberal and his approach towards education was also liberal . But the education at that time was class education. But with English Education mass-education started. Although mass education was the policy of Government, it was more concerned with the consolidation of its empire than the solvation of crores of its lower class subjects. Its high officials were never in favour of the education of the lower classes and foiled any attempt made to promote it. A missionary was ready to give education because by giving education he hoped to extend Christianity. Therefore, Lord Elinborough warned that "missionary schools were not only danger to spread of education but also to the peace of the empire"<sup>7</sup>. In short, the new educational system changed the attitude of the people and it indirectly challenged the caste privileges of old society. It helped newly emerging middle class to undertake such activities that would Help regeneration and renaissance of the country.

### 3) RISE OF MARATHI PROSE AND NEWSPAPERS :

Before British rule was established most of the literature written in poems and verses. It was concerned with religious aspects of life. But due to modern education prose

writing became common place because through prose only one can communicate his ideas properly. There emerged a large number of writers who published their books in Marathi. They were doing so to spread knowledge among the people. Dadoba Padamji, the Chiploonkars wanted to educate people. Their approach was modern and style was modelled English Prose. Prose writing gave birth to newspapers that were an instrument of spreading knowledge . Therefore, newspapers like, 'Darpan', 'Prabhakar', 'Dnyanprakash', 'Induprakash' were published. Through these newspapers new crop of prose writers emerged. Every social and political reformer published his newspaper to spread his ideas. Newspapers played a very dominant role in development of the state.

#### 4) EMERGENCE OF MIDDLE CLASS :

British rule was responsible for emergence of middle class in the state. Educated people had changed their approach. Those people who took part in schools, colleges read newspapers and became members of various associations. They constituted middle class, Nationalism, humanism and individualism became the popular ideas with this class. In this class, there existed progressive, extremist, and moderate elements. In Maharashtra, when these social changes were taking place in England industrial revolution was completed. But the change gave birth to middle class that was mainly composed of merchants, industrialists together with the intellectuals and the people belonging to the learned professions. The middle class in India has its root in the agrarian system of the country and

it largely lived on the labours of agriculture. The national movement in India was an expression of the conflict between middle classes of the two countries one aspiring for wealth and influence, the other already on possession of them. It was largely an urban class with urban interest. It developed a thirst for Western education. It imitated blindly the Western ways, customs, and manners of their rulers. Yet this class supplied the force which cracked the hold of custom. It provided the intelligentsia who became the ~~spere~~ spearhead of the movement for India's emancipation.

But it must not be forgotten that this middle class was collaborating with British rule. As colonial rulers could rule only with the help of bureaucracy, as they have to rely on mature administrators and accordingly colonial education was geared to the production of a clerical class. As bureaucrats they were the most important collaborator of foreign rule. As lawyers, they were associated with the interests of their client, bankers or landlords also. Most of studies of anti-colonial nationalism have focussed on the role of the middle class and the evolution of the national movement out of their original moderate, Western style associations. The main demands of this middle class were greater representation in public services and expansion of legislative bodies so that they can share power.<sup>8</sup> The new collaborators were rentier landlords, Government servants and other commission agents.<sup>9</sup>

Due to peculiar nature of Indian caste system, Brahmins  
/ succeeded in establishing their dominance over the Government and

society. Since they worked as agents and collaborators, they exploited people and followed corrupt practices like Brahmin dominated society by establishing their monopoly over the Government services. The second source of their dominance was their religious privileges and third source of their dominance was their business moneylending and ownership of lands in different areas. Also Brahmins were educated, therefore, they secured all the Government services and after securing Government services, they used them to further their caste interests and to spread their influence.<sup>10</sup> Religious domination was achieved through priest craft as Brahmins exploited superstitious peasants by extorting gifts from them on different important occasions. In this field their dominance was complete because they were traditionally enjoying these privileges.

5) THE BRAHMIN DOMINANCE AND EXPLOITATION OF PEASANTRY :

At that time a large chunk of the land was in the hands of moneylenders who have either bought it or taken it on mortgage. The moneylenders did not themselves till the land but put in tenants, usually the former owners under the terms of a lease. These moneylenders and merchants varied in wealth and power. At one end was the small village shopkeeper, trader, moneylender who carried on running accounts with the local peasantry. Town merchants were interested in gaining legal control of the land than of its crops or gained ~~control~~ control of the produce as a result of the mortgages they held. The wealthiest town moneylenders lent to petty moneylenders in the



villages and dealt personally only with the largest land holders. In this way Maharashtra peasantry who involved in a capitalist economy and cash crop production, the profit generally went to traders and money lenders.

The merchants were not only money lenders. In the villages, local officials non-Brahmin headman, the Brahmin accountant and village priests also lent money and also sought mortgages land control.<sup>11</sup>

The peasant was exploited by money lenders and a good number of these money lenders were Brahmins who used their bureaucratic links to get their work done.

Thus, Brahmin dominance was result of three factors.

- ✓ 1) Brahmin monopoly over Govt. jobs.
- 2) Their monopoly over religious functions, and
- 3) Their role in exploitation of peasants by money lenders and working as commission agents.

Thus Maharashtra was going through a very painful process of social and political change which was the result of introduction of modern education system in the state. To solve the problems of the people and to make the society ready for the acceptance of new social reality, there emerged different social reform movements. They played a very important role in the modernisation of state.

## 6) THE ROLE OF DIFFERENT SOCIAL

### REFORM MOVEMENTS IN MAHARASHTRA :

#### 1) PARAMHANSASABHA :

In 1850, Paramhansasabha was founded drawing inspiration from Dadoba Pandurang. The two books 'Dharmavivechan' and 'Paramhabrahmandharma' were published to spread the religious ideals of the Sabha. But Dadoba Pandurang and his friends did not have enough courage to implement the principles of Sabha. They did not participate in Sabha's proceedings with enthusiasm. Dadoba Pandurang founded Manavdharmasabha at Surat. If we saw the thoughts in Dharmavivechan, Paramhabrahmandharma we find that Dadoba Pandurang might have influenced by the ideas of Paine. Paramhansasabha was a sister of - Manavadharma.<sup>12</sup> Ramkrishna Balkrishna was the President of the Sabha. At that time, Sabha established branches at Pune, Nagpur, Satara, Belgaum and Ratnagiri. Famous novelist Baba Padamaji and Bhavalkar were the members of Sabha. Dadoba was a friend of Jotiba hence he dedicated "Life of Shivaji in Poetical Metre" to Ramkrishna B. Rane, President of - Paramhansasabha.<sup>13</sup> According to the Sabha religious books are written by human beings. It was against the caste system and untouchability. Paramhansasabha supported female education, adult marriages and widow marriages.

#### 2) PRARTHANA SAMAJ :

Prarthana Samaj was founded in 1867 and most of its

members were followers of Paramhansasabha. In Bombay, Prarthana Samaj became popular under the leadership of Justice Ranade. Prarthana Samaj drew inspiration from Brahmo Samaj hence it was something like all India movement. But Ranade did not want complete separation from the Hindu religion, therefore, he drew heavily on devotional literature of Maharashtra. The Samaj was influenced by the ideas of Keshab Chandra Sen. The Samaj believed in existence of immortal God and did not believe in idol worship and advocated the cause of social reforms especially widow remarriages and female education. It was a reformist body that worked for the reforms in the upper caste Hindu Society.

### 3) ARYA SAMAJ :

Swami Dayanand established Arya Samaj in 1874. He realised the importance and necessity of a permanent organization for the propagation of his message. Therefore, he founded the Arya Samaj. Its first branch was established in 1875 in Bombay and next at Lahore in 1877. Arya Samaj changed the face of Punjab, U.P. and Rajasthana. Arya Samaj did splendid work in the cause of national freedom and uplift of the Hindu nation.<sup>14</sup> The Samaj gave to the nation a large number of important political leaders like Lalalajpat Rai and Swami Shradhanandji. It maintains a large number of schools and colleges for boys and girls. Arya Samaj rendered yeomans service to Hindu society and made them reliant and courageous. Following were the main tenants of Arya Samaj. (1) God is the primary cause of all the knowledge. (2) The Vedas are the book

of knowledge. (3) The Vedas are a revelation from God as is proved by their correspondence with nature. They are the sole revelation from God. They are accordingly the fountain head of the science and the religion of all mankind. All that confronts to the teachings of Vedas nature attributes and characteristics of God is right, the contrary is wrong.

Arya Samaj was a reformist body that decided to wage battle against caste system, idol worship and such evil practices as child marriages and sati as the Samaj was of the view that the Vedic society was free from all these evils. Therefore, Arya Samaj played a very important reformist role in Indian renaissance.

#### 4) SATYASHODHAK SAMAJ :

Satyashodhak Samaj was established on 24th Sept., 1873 by Jotiba Phuley.<sup>15</sup> The main goal of the Samaj was to destroy the social and religious slavery and removal of evil practices from Bahujan Samaj of Maharashtra. He was supported by peasantry in the state. The Samaj was most radical social reform organization as it was uncompromising in its battle against caste system and Brahminical slavery. The Samaj stood for one Goal and rejected the practice of idol worship. It was the only organization to expound the cause of the oppressed cultivators and it suggested radical programmes to alleviate their sufferings.

Thus, Indian renaissance was the result of different

social reform movements that took the challenge represented by the West and undertook programmes to remove the backwardness of their own society. With ruthless self criticism, they sought to lay the ground for total social transformation. Phuley was one of the greatest thinkers of this tradition.

#### 7) MAHATMA PHULEY WAS THE FIRST

##### NON-BRAHMIN SOCIAL REFORMER :

The life of the founder of the Satyashodhak movement - Mahatma Phuley - spanned the middle of the 19th century and after his death the movement was led by Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur. The main appeal of the movement was to peasants who had no hope either in the near or distant future to 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.

Hindu culture and the caste system rested upon Brahminism hence Phuley who aimed for the complete destruction of caste superstitions and inequality linked his thought with a movement of opposition to the Brahmin elite. Non-Brahminism in India, therefore, represents not simply communalism or a result of British divide - and rule policies, it traces its origin to the Indian renaissance and represents one of the important social rebellions in India.

Thus, Mahatma Phuley was the first non-Brahmin social reformer who took up the causes that were dear to a vast majority

of population. Efforts of their associations were limited but Phuley raised his voice in the cause of toiling peasants. Both Brahmins and British rulers were exploiting the peasantry. But he trained his guns against Brahmins because they were - immediate target of his attack. In his books like slavery, he put forward different ways and means the Brahmins had employed to establish their hegemony. Therefore, he raised the banner of cultural revolt that rejected everything preached by Brahmins.

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