



CHAPTER ONE

THE SATYA SHODHAK SAMAJ

A STUDY IN BRIEF



CHAPTER I

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History, many a times, pretends to be lying in sleep and is never awakened merely by the ticklings of time but by the severe tremors of monumental work. The society consisting of the educated, cultured and ever vigilant is eternally alive to functioning principles of democracy. In this connection, it is beyond doubt that Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil is one of those gigantic personalities, who have been chiefly responsible for changing the face of the modern Maharashtra.

Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil considered Mahatma Jotiba Phule, Rajarshi Shahu Maharaja and Mahatma Gandhi as his teachers. He accepted whole heartedly their magic principles of social regeneration and spent his life like sandle wood in making ignorant people literate, educated and cultured.

Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil tops the list of those immortal souls who have heard the painful shrieks of those common people who were disspirited and made helpless by the agelong social inequality and caste differences and those who were stumbling in the darkness of ignorance and where deprived of education for centuries together. To these people he has restored the lost title of ' Man ' and enabled them to lead the life of self respect. There is no branch or stage or

phase of social education which is not affected, during its initial period of foundation or that of expansion, by the inspring principles of Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil or (Anna) as he was referred by many.

The historians will have to come to the conclusion of their own, that barring the solitary exception of Maharshi Karmaveer Vitthal Ramaji alias Annasaheb Shinde, preceded by that of Jotiba Phule, Shri Shahu Maharaja, Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil was the only social reformer and servant to start an all pervading and all embracing movement for the welfare of the common people. Before going into details about Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil, we must know the Satya Shodhak Samaja movement and its great followers, as it is the Satya Shodhak movement which laid down the foundations of the ' Programme ' to be followed for those who wished to sacrifice their lives for social service.

The origins of the Non-Brahmin movement, and the rise of caste sabhas to reform the society had their birth in Maharashtra. Maharashtra has become an important centre for the Brahmin-Non-Brahmin conflict. This movement has been much influenced by the Non-Brahmin movement of Maharashtra, known as the Satya Shodhak Samaj Movement, in its earlier period of which Jotiba Phule was the leader. A partial exception is Jotiba Phule, a Maharashtrian of the grander caste, who wrote

angry attacks on Hinduism. He had little influence in his time, but he is the original source of the Non-Brahmin Movement in Maharashtra. Philip Spratt has mentioned the importance of Jotiba Phule and referred to him as the original source of the non-Brahmin movement of Maharashtra in his book " D.M.K. in Power ".

" Jotirao Phule was the first Indian leader to start a movement for the removal of the social and economic ills of the lower classes, who were straved, stunned, and suffering untold miseries. He gave vent to their age-long range and grief. His movement aimed at establishing social equality and securing social justice. He struggled for the dignity of human personality and human rights as he considered all Indians equal "¹. His movement has influenced all those areas wherever Brahmin domination was felt ". Phoolley's revolt was a revolt against caste in so far as caste denied ordinary human rights to all the members of Hindu Society, and not merely a Non-Brahmin movement to cast of the domination

1. Keer D., Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley, Father of Our Social Revolution, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1964, p.271.

of the Brahmins. In his writings, he demanded representation for all classes of the Hindu, in all the local bodies, the services and the institutions"².

This movement of Jotiba Phule did not receive much support from the Brahmins in general, but did not go without its influence, because this movement does not end with Jotiba Phule (1890). It was further carried out by His Highness Shri Shahu Chhatrapati Maharaja of Kolhapur.

" It was the late Shri Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur, who infused new life into the agitation, so much so that Montague and Chelmsford, in their Indian Political reforms had to grant the demand "³. What was lacking in Jotiba Phule's movement was financial support in its earlier stages, but even this was solved because, he had unique type of followers, who removed this difficulty too. Jotiba Phule was not less popular among the Non-Maharashtrians, because " One feature of the peninsular Non-Brahmin Movement was a dislike of, if not hated for, the Brahmin"⁴.

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2. Ghurye, G.S., Caste and Race in India, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, pp. 286-287.
 3. John Wilson, Indian Caste, Foot-notes, p. 89, Op.Cit. Quoted by Ghurey, G.S., Caste and Race in India.
 4. Srinivas, M.N., Social Change in Modern India and Other Essays, Asia, 1970, p. 22.

The movement led by Jotiba Phule had its influence all over the South, and this was further strengthened by His Highness Shri Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur. The Non-Brahmin movement in Peninsular India is a century old movement, and this movement cannot be assessed scientifically without an assessment of the role played by Jotiba Phule and His Highness Shri Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur. Hence it is necessary to assess Jotiba Phule's contribution to the Non-Brahmin movement and that of His Highness Shri Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur. Jotiba Phule had already sown the seeds of the Non-Brahmin movement, which has become part of the party programmes of today's many political parties especially in Maharashtra. Under the British Rule, Shri Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur, actively propagating the cause of the Non-Brahmins, contributed much to the constitution making. From 1900 onwards, it was a period of serious efforts for constitution making. The British authorities had promised further step towards responsible government. Under these circumstances Shri Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur, consolidated various Non-Brahmin organisations. He supported the cause of the poor people who were trying to throw off the yoke of Brahmin bureaucracy.

To understand the Satya Shodhak Samaj movement we should know the background and the origins of Satya Shodhak Samaja movement.

BACK GROUND AND ORIGINS OF SATYA SHODHAK SAMAJ MOVEMENT:

The British rule especially in India and Maharashtra had its great impact on the socio-economic conditions. It is well established fact that the failure of Maratha empire resulted in Brahmin dominance. As a result, the Brahmins came in direct touch with the British. British history starts from the South, especially from Madras, and then latter extended to Maharashtra and Bengal. With the advent of the British, the earliest participants in the new politics came from the higher castes, the Brahmins " who were not noted so much as founders of any empire, had here in Maharashtra their turn for a century to govern an empire founded by Shivaji, and expanded and consolidated by Bajirao^I"⁵.

Brahmins spread in all those areas, where Maratha empire had its rule and when the British came, they were also influenced much by the hold of the Brahmins on the society. When the British arrived, India was completely torn and exhausted. It was also the unity of the British power and its supremacy in navy, that gave Victory to the British over

5. Kavlekar, K.K., Non-Brahmin Movement in Southern India, (1873-1949), Shivaji University, Publication, Shivaji University Press, 1979, p.19.

the Marathas. It was also the spread of Brahmins in the Deccan which the British made use of to establish their rule. Brahmins were mainly responsible for the British East-India Company to come into prominence and this further resulted in dividing the whole of Southern India into two main presidencies, the Bombay and the Madras. Both were formerly under one empire viz. the Maratha empire. Under British rule, Bombay and Madras presidencies had come under the same Brahminical influence.

The immediate consequence of British rule was that it helped in increasing the dominance of the caste structure in the society. It created a big gulf between Brahmins and the rest of the society. Brahmins were the first to take to Western education and to enter the various professions through which they patronaged their own caste people. " The British rule never destroyed the power of the Brahmins, but on the other hand, the Brahmins were quick to adapt themselves to Western education and system "6. " The British - as East India Company was reluctant to introduce English education, it also tried not to influence Indian customs or religious

6. Kavlekar, K.K., Non-Brahmin Movement in Southern India, (1873-1949), Shivaji University Publication, Shivaji University Press, 1979, p.19.

belief since it felt that to do so might upset Indians⁷, and hence for a long time the East India Company, thought of only looking after the British interest, by which they limited themselves to a few contacts, especially with the Brahmins. In this process of British politics, it gave Brahmins an opportunity again, and " It was only since 1833, the missionaries started schools and colleges which taught and used English as the medium of instruction at school and college level"⁸. Thus before and after English education was introduced it was these higher castes who took the advantage of this British attitude. The Brahmins regarded themselves as the governing class, enjoying all advantages, and harassed the poor and toiling masses. They were all in all, landlords, agriculturists, white collars and above all professional caste lords. They seized everything from the peasants, in one or the other way, their region, was a region of terror and despotism and they never tolerated any reform in the existing caste system. Those few Brahmins who agitated for reforms, as they felt that society was changing fast under the impact of Western education, came to play the role of reformers.

7. Lamb, B., Pitney, The Nehru's Of India, Macmillan, 1967, p.31.

8. Kavlekar K.K., Non-Brahmin Movement in Southern India 1873-1949, Shivaji University Publication, Shivaji University Press, 1979, p.22.

Brahminical influence right since its past has always played two roles of simultaneously defending its religion and maintaining its superiority and position in tact. Rajaram Mohan Roy, who has been called the father of modern India, worked for reforming Hinduism but he refused to abandon Hinduism, and while re-defining Hinduism, he tended to use Christianity as a norm. Rajaram Mohan Roy was himself a Brahmin of a high order. " The leaders of the higher classes like Ram Mohan Roy and the Government policy makers stood clearly for educating the upper classes believing that education would filter downwards"⁹.

The British were in search of loyal servants, who could also learn English and help them to stabilise themselves in this country. Hence, it was the British policy to relay on the upper caste because of the hold they had on society, and they believed that the 'Filtration' theory would help the other people who were at the bottom of the society. They felt that the Brahmins would prove beneficial to them in every respects, and it is also clearly stated in the introduction of the report in 1818 on the Brahmin domination in Maratha kingdom following the British conquest that " The Brahmins were

9. Keer D., Mahatma Jotirao Phooley: Father of Our Social Revolution, Popular, Bombay, 1964, p.52.

employed by the British in the subordinate positions because they had lost their commanding influence and a certain discontent and longing for a return to power naturally remained"¹⁰.

And to the British it was in their own political interest, to provide employment opportunity to the Brahmins. Hence, Brahmins made all their efforts to gain their last ascendancy, and under the impact of the West they could achieve their objective.

What the British required was loyalty, " and it was also the great administrative abilities which compelled recognition and Chitpavans swarm in every Government office of the Deccan as they did in the days of Nana Phadnavis. They occupied, the bench, dominated Bar, taught as teachers in ^{ho}schools, controlled Vernacular Press, and also furnished almost all the conspicuous names in modern literature and drama of Western India as well as in politics"¹¹. This was the result of the British policy of education known as the Filtration Theory.

10. Eugene, F. Irschick, Op.Cit., p.104.

11. Valentine Chirol, Indian Unrest, MacMillan, 1910, p.21.

The result of such a policy was that the membership of the various local bodies dominated by the upper class, and non-Brahmin became conscious of their rights. " A number of motions tabled, and question asked in Bombay Legislative Council tell the same story"¹². Brahmin domination was the bone of public life in Bombay presidency. English education meant jobs, and this was limited to a section of the society. " Prior to 1856, the Poona Sanskrit College, taught only Brahmin students and refused even to teach the sacred law to any one except the Brahmins"¹³. Hence in the whole of South India, Brahminism was making untiring efforts to continue their ascendancy. Towards the end of the last century Brahmins dominated the public life, the bar and the bench, education especially the university, and the higher clerical grades of Government employment.

" The Indian Public Service Commission reported in 1877, that out of 1,866 Hindu members of the judicial services, as many as 904 were Brahmins and 454 Kayasthas (Prabhus in Bombay). The number of Kashatriyas or Rajputs was 147, of Vaishyas 113, of Shudras 146, and of other 102. The Brahmins were especially dominant in Bombay with 211 out of 328"¹⁴.

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12. Refer Memorandum submitted by the Government of Bombay to the Statutory Commission, 1928, pp. 527-29.
13. A Review of Education in Bombay State Government of Bombay, p. 492.
14. Mitra B.B., The Indian Middle Class, Bombay, 1961, p. 322.

During the academic year 1881-82, there was not even a single backward student in any secondary school or college of Bombay Presidency¹⁵.

British rule in India helped Brahminism to become more dominant in economic, political and social life of India again. Suffering from hunger and suppression, the lower classes of society in the South were economically handicapped. It was virtually slavery that existed and this was continued since thousands of years. In the name of religion the upper caste had divided the society to such an extent that it resulted in slavery. The divisions and separations which took place because of Brahminisation had affected social conditions to such an extent that if one caste or Jati was being tortured, or being subjected to severe discriminations, the other castes did not unite over the issue, but instead, enjoyed seeing the suppressions and tortures. Under such conditions, the upper castes have always made themselves the master of all situations.

British rule in India was both controlled and suppressed by the Brahmin domination. Caste is not static,

 15. D.Keer, Lokmanya Tilak Ani Rajarshi Shahu: Ek Mulyamapan, Shri Gaganan Book Depot, Prakashan Mumbai, 1971, p.62.

it has charged; but in the traditional sense it is still an important feature of social and political life of the country. Because of traditionally based society the British education system which was not obviously unegalitarian further helped the Brahminical tyranny to continue.

Thus in Bombay Presidency, the Brahmins dominated. It may be added that Brahminism was more severe under British days than what it was in the pre-British days. What Brahmins practised before 1864, was different from what they practised under British rule. They had perfectly Brahminized British India, and especially Bombay Presidency suffered a great deal. There was dominance in the economic, political and social field, and perhaps Brahminism itself was an important factor which influenced the growth of the Non-Brahmin movement.

Buddhism, Jainism and even Islamism and the Maratha empire were eclipsed by Brahminism. Under the British rule also they tried in all manners to throw out British if possible and seize political power.

The Brahmins had always shown a clear ^apathy for mass education. But the British rule in Maharashtra planted many missionaries, who were interested in the spread of Christianity.

These missionaries spread a sense of brotherhood, gave the message of service, humanity, equality which had a great impact on the minds of the masses.

Perhaps this is another factor which influenced the rise of the Non-Brahmins. Ignorance and poverty were the two fatal diseases harassing the masses. Education being the monopoly of the Brahmins, they occupied most of the salaried posts. Ignorance and poverty squeezed the life and blood out of the common man. Masses lived in total ignorance, and ignorance itself was the root cause of all the evils and suffering of the non-Brahmins, on which the Brahmins existed. Western education, though it was monopolised by the Brahmins with their control over it, could not control the liberal ideas which were the outcome of British education. They reached the masses and the teaching of the missionaries and their liberal outlook became eye-opening factors to the masses who had been subjected to all sorts of bondages. No wonder the non-Brahmin movement was the natural outcome of the struggle between British Imperialism and the emergent professional classes began to demand for share in administration.

ORIGIN OF THE NON-BRAHMIN MOVEMENT:

Brahminism was the bone of public life in Southern India. The gulf which was created by this domination of the Brahmins over the non-Brahmins was in Bombay and Madras Presidencies. " British in order to pacify Brahmins, to stabilise the British rule in India followed a policy of appeasement towards the Brahmins"¹⁶. The British know that the " Brahmins had a great hold on society. In matter of social structure of the society the Brahmin superiority was unchallenged for centuries. As the Brahmins alone could understand Sanskrit they possessed the key to all sacred knowledge"¹⁷.

The British encouraged the Brahmins in their own interest and introduced western education. But this education influenced the social condition vis-a-vis traditional position of the Brahmins. Liberal ideas of this system of education made the lower classes of the society to realise they were suppressed in the name of Dharma.

The advent of the British rule helped Brahminism to continue their traditions. At the same time the spread of

16. Report of the Board of Education (1840-41), p.24.

17. Report of Board of Education, (1947-48), p.3.

English education affected the traditional politics of caste system (Brahminical). " All education being of secular character, it made the new generation a class of soeptics. People brought up with English ideas, and in atmosphere of secular education, now began to pay less respect to their gurus and hereditary priests, the Guru is Brahma, the Guru is Vishnu, The Guru is Shiva verily the Guru is sublime Brahman ". This idea, this respect the secular education shattered to pieces and so the income and importance of the hereditary priests dwindled down"¹⁸.

With the spread of secular education, the Brahmins had been exposed to the society. The traditional bars which they had set, were being understood by the lower class of the society. This gave rise to the non-Brahmin outlook. The supremacy of the Brahmins was challenged by the non-Brahmin movement.

The beginning of political consciousness on " castelines " came to be first formed in Maharashtra. They are caste-alliances and not caste sabhas. " Caste-Sabhas" i.e. combined association of a number of sub-castes of one caste began to be

18. The Brahmans and Western Education, Quoted by Valentine Chirol, Indian Unrest (Note No.20), MacMillan, 1910, p.353.

formed in Maharashtra at least in the eighties of the last century and became common by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. ' The Deccan Sabha ', a political economic association started by a Justice M.G.Ranade and the Satya Shodhak Samaja founded by Jotiba Phule were the inspirers of these Sabhas. The object of these Sabhas was to, " reunite the sub-castes of a caste and carry on propoganda for the acquisition of higher social status that was generally accorded to the caste"¹⁹.

The term ' Non-Brahmin ' to be clear, assumed importance in the Jotiba Phule era, and this included various castes other than the Brahmins. The Satya Shodhak Samaja was the result of an alliance of all other castes and Jatis except the Brahmins. Further in the later period the term non-Brahmins was also known in vernacular as Bahujan Samaj, which again includes the meaning the ' majority communities '. Under the British rule when this alliance of various communities started protesting, it was also known as 'Brahmanetar Chalval ' which means a movement of all except Brahmins. It is need not be understood or taken as movement against the Brahmins; because the movement is the out come of a protest against the British

19. Ghurye G.S., Caste and Race in India, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, p.342.

to change their policy towards the non-Brahmin masses in the economic, social and political life of the country.

Thus non-Brahmin Movement of Maharashtra, known as the Satya Shodhak Samaja Movement. Jotiba Phule was the chief exponent of Satya Shodhak Samaja. After Jotirao Phule, Shri Shahu Maharaja, Dr. Ambedkar and Karmveer Bhaurao Patil, were great followers of non-Brahmin movement. Jotiba Phule had contributed much to the rise of non-Brahmins and they had faced many problems carried by the Brahmin influence. Shri Shahu Maharaja made the movement so popular that to weaken the non-Brahmin cause the ' Home Rule Movement ' was launched.

Before going into the details of Shri Shahu Maharaja and Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil's concern with the non-Brahmin Movement, it is necessary to assess Jotiba Phule's contribution to the non-Brahmin movement. It was favourable political climate for the non-Brahmin castes to express their views, everywhere in India. The movement, when it was started, was known as ' Non-Brahmin Movement ' but before the movement could arouse considerable interest and become popular, it was to a very great extent the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj. ' movement of Jotiba Phule that was working for protesting the interest of the Non-Brahmins.