

CONCLUSION

The present study tries to assess the contribution made by Satya Shodhak Movement ⁱⁿ Maharashtra. As pointed, the impact of Satya Shodhak Samaj has been in practice even to this day. Perhaps today there is no political party which has not included some or the other aspect of the ideology of the Satya Shodhak Samaj movement.

The period of nineteenth century was a period of tremendous change and activity. It was the British rule which had its legacy and as a result of the English education resulted into some awakening. Jotiba Phule played the role of social engineer to bring a social revolution. The upper castes who again tried to dominate the socio-economic and political life, got questioned in the process because of Jotiba Phule.

British rule in India helped Brahminism to become more dominant in economic, political and social life of India again. Suffering from ^ghunger and suppression, the lower classes of society in the Maharashtra 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 discrimination, 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 masters of all situations. This aspect was to be brought to the notice of the British rule. In this direction Jotiba Phule played a great role and influenced the British policy. The British during its initial period had no knowledge of the social conditions. They patronaged the upper castes with a feeling that they would control the lower castes.

Jotiba Phule stood to the time and rebelled against the domination of upper castes. He established the Satya Shodhak movement. One cannot ^e deny the role played by Jotiba Phule by trying to bring forth the infighting with the Satya Shodhak movement. The Bhalekar - Lokhande - Jotiba Phule controversy need not be attached much importance. Any effort made by the lower castes to challenge the upper caste has resulted in such controversies. One need not forget that various reform movements like Jainism, Buddhism, Virshivaism of recent who tried to fight the rigidity of the caste system resulted into secretarian movements. All these were due to the approach of the Brahmins who did not tolerate any movement of the lower caste who challenged the upper caste.

The Satya Shodhak movement of Jotiba Phule was not exception to this. Perhaps the controversy between Jotiba Phule - Bhalekar - Lokhande had such under-currents. Even Chh. Shahu who tried to propogate the cause was not free from controversy. 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 on by His Highness Shri Shahu Chhatrapati Maharaja of Kolhapur who infused new life into that agitation, so much so that Montague and Chelmsford, in their Indian Political reforms had to grant the demand! 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. Men of wealth and influence actually gathered under Jotiba's banner.

Jotiba Phule's thoughts were wide ranging and were expressed in a number of ways i.e. in politics, public speaking and in writing. There were two main causes to which he was devoted throughout his life time. They were :

a) Social Reform - which meant elimination of the Caste System and

b) Democratic Justice

These causes led him into conflicts, and he allowed himself to be a controversial figure. Concern for the poor, the down-trodden and the weak was the key-note to his life. His personality, his thoughts and actions were, very much influenced by his birth in a lower caste. As a child he showed great intellectual capacity, but he was not correctly understood by his father. His pungent criticism and straight forwardness had brought Brahmins to their toes. Jotiba Phule raised the

level of his movement by his own contribution. Without education, political and economic power, the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' achieved a good deal as a social reform movement. In fact, the real impetus to the non-Brahmin movement was not forthcoming until the formation of the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj'. He wanted revolutionary social reforms, because his very faith in Hinduism was rudely shaken.

Jotiba Phule began to attack the various rituals ceremonies and the priests. He was against idol worship and superstitions and was interested in reviving, the real Indian culture. Jotiba Phule possessed unusual courage and strength of character. It is no wonder that he was greatly disturbed by the precarious position of the down-trodden masses in Indian society. The high esteem and respect in which Jotiba Phule himself held the poor is evident in all his writings. He wanted definite action to counteract the growing unrest, resulting from the ^{economic sufferings of the masses and the alienation of the} intellectuals. He was also endowed with the single-eyed vision of a fanatic Jotirao Phule one year before his death in 1889, called upon the non-Brahmins to condemn congress as an engine of Brahminical despotism.... If the Aryans hold not one but a hundred Congresses, Phule wrote, "no sensible Shudra or Ati-Shudra would become its member. I can confidently state that if shudras do join, our beneficent rulers will be disgusted with them (Congress.)" " In 1890 Jotirao died, the only Pioneer, a solitary beacon light in the darkness of the age, for the guidance of the Non-Brahmin reformers who had yet to come."

This movement was further carried by His Highness Shri Shahu Chhatrapati Maharaja of Kolhapur, who spread the movement far and wide in India.

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