

# **ASPECTS OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY MAHARASHTRA**

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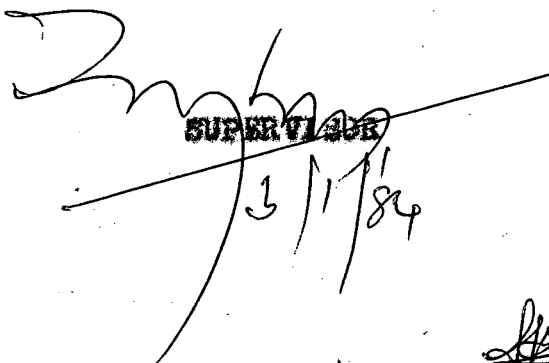
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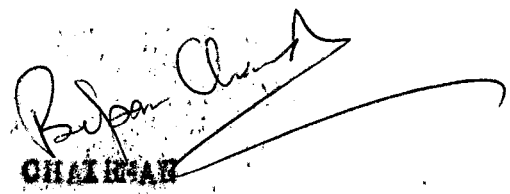
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**DECLARATION**

Certified that the dissertation entitled  
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Nineteenth Century Maharashtra" submitted by  
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This dissertation has not been previously submitted  
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However, I am alone entirely responsible for the ideas and the shortcomings.

New Delhi,  
December 1983

  
Hulas Singh

## ABBREVIATIONS

- BA      Bombay Archives, Bombay
- BUL      Bombay University Library, Bombay
- JAS      The Journal of Asian Studies
- JNUL      Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, New Delhi
- NAI      National Archives of India, New Delhi
- NMML      Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

## INTRODUCTION

The phrase 'moving with the times' is meaningless. Time is no agent; it is men and not time that are the moving springs of society. Society has naturally a tendency to cast its members in the iron mould of custom and superstition; and it is only those who are educated can give it the propelling force. To move with it is to move in the old ways; it is only by moving ahead of it and showing it the way onwards that you can get it move on.

— N.G. Chandavarkar

The evolution that we seek is a change from constraint to freedom, from credulity to faith, from status to contract, from authority to reason, from unorganized to organized life, from bigotry to toleration, from blind fatalism to a source of human dignity.

— M.G. Ranade

Nineteenth century was a very significant phase in the history of modern India. It was during this period that the country witnessed the emergence of a myriad of intellectual currents for national regeneration in all its aspects : religious, social, cultural, economic and political. Although the intellectual endeavours were aimed at all-sided improvement, their main emphasis was on the socio-religious problems. In other words, socio-cultural reform formed the major plank of the nineteenth century Indian intellectual movements. This is, however, not to emphasise that in terms of programmes and perspectives they were fundamentally one-dimensional; in fact,

multi-dimensionality of vision constituted an important facet of the nineteenth century Indian intellectual ideas. What is implied here is that in the intellectual movements of the period social and cultural problems acquired predominance over economic and political ones.

There were two main areas of intense intellectual activity in the country : one was Bengal and the other Maharashtra, although it was not confined merely to these two provincial pockets. Much has been written on the so-called "Bengal Renaissance",<sup>(1)</sup> and the contemporary intellectual currents prevalent in other parts of the country, notably in Maharashtra, have been virtually neglected. As a result, a total picture of the intellectual movement in India as a whole is yet to be delineated.

What happened in Bengal is often taken as an all-India phenomenon. In fact, the former has been presented as representing not only the beginning which it historically did, but quite often also as the end of the Indian intellectual awakening. Moreover, there is a tendency, though quite implicit, among the historians to attach an aura of superiority to the

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(1) To mention a few representative works, Joshi, V.C.(ed.), Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernization in India, Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1975; Helmsath, C.H., Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, Bombay, Oxford Univ. Press, 1964; Kopf, David, British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance, Calcutta, Firma K.L.Mukhopadhyay, 1969; Mukherjee, Amitabha, Reform and Regeneration in Bengal 1774-1823, Calcutta, Rabindra Bharati Univ., 1968; Sarkar, Susobhan, Bengal Renaissance and other Essays, New Delhi, PPH, 1970; Sen, Asok, Iskwar Chandra Vidyaesagar and His Elusive Milestones, Calcutta, 1977.

Bengal movement. It is no denying that the spark of intellectual revolt in nineteenth century India was first lit in Bengal, and was thus a fore-runner of the later intellectual movements during the period. But the fact of the Bengal awakening being the first and the earliest does not necessarily establish its superiority over others, nor does it imply that the other movements were merely an extension of the Bengal event. True, dawn is the harbinger of day, but the day and the dawn are not the same; in fact, the former has its own entity. This is, however, not to suggest that the Indian intellectual awakening was marked by diametrically different intellectual strands, nor to deny the rightful place to the Bengal movement. What is emphasised here is that we cannot properly understand the intellectual phenomenon of nineteenth century India in its complexities without going beyond 'the Bengal complex'. A total and convincing picture of the nineteenth century episode can be had only if we extend our investigation to the movements other than that of Bengal. The present work is a part of a quest in that direction.

We have selected for the study one of the neglected areas of modern Indian intellectual history, namely, the intellectual movement in nineteenth century Maharashtra. Choosing this particular subject is mainly because of our intention to properly understand the all-India nature of the phenomenon. General formulations made on an all-India level about the contemporary movements without being backed up by regional studies have greater elements of inadequacy because of their somewhat distinct and varied characteristics. Their inadequacy is mainly dictated



by the fact that they are not based on the rigorous investigation of the general intellectual currents of the country as a whole. Moreover, the intellectual movement in Maharashtra, particularly during the second half of the nineteenth century, was in no way weaker than and inferior to the Bengal one; it was a very powerful current, a real force to reckon with.

In the attempt, the term Maharashtra has been loosely used to suggest that region of Western India which was Marathi speaking, and it is not intended to necessarily indicate the wider areas covered by present day Maharashtra. In actuality, Maharashtra did not constitute a single administrative unit during the whole of the nineteenth century. It was divided between Bombay Presidency, Hyderabad, Central Provinces and Berar. Poona, "the hub of Maharashtra," fell under the Bombay Presidency. In the Maharashtra of the nineteenth century there were approximately 50 million Marathi speaking people.<sup>1</sup>

It is proposed here to study the basic features of the intellectual consciousness in nineteenth century Maharashtra. Because of the limitations of time and space we have concentrated mainly on the socio-cultural dimensions of the movement, with a suggestion about their implication

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1. Omvedt, Gail, Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society — The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India : 1873-1930, Bombay, Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976, p.1.

in the eventual growth of nationalist consciousness in India. The emphasis is not on the biographical sketch of individual intellectuals, but on their ideas which constituted the central core of the movement. It had been one of the intentions to push the historiography forward from the level of biographies to which it has remained confined. Moreover, the existing biographies in most of the cases lack the rigour of historical writing, and are only of very marginal help in constructing a convincing picture of the formation of intellectuals as a social group in Maharashtra.

We do not claim to reconstruct a picture of the socio-cultural movement in its all possible dimensions. Because of various limitations our attempt to view the phenomenon remains confined mainly to the evaluation of the ideas of the intellectuals. The study of their ideas is, however, very important because they constituted the ideological backdrop of the movement. But this is not to suggest that the intellectual movement of the period was merely an affair of ideas.

The question of colonial context as a constant backdrop of the movement has been kept in the forefront of the analysis,<sup>1</sup> as the movement emerged and operated under the specific economic and political situation of colonial domination which was bound to affect its nature and extent. This would be explained in greater detail in the subsequent discussion.

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1. Bipan Chandra has well emphasised the relevance of keeping colonialism as a constant backdrop of all developments during the modern period of Indian history. See Chandra, Bipan, Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India, New Delhi, Oriental Longman, Paperback, 1981, pp. 1-28.

No doubt, the problem is very difficult to analyse because of its vastness and other ramifications. It covers a period of nearly three quarters of a century. Moreover, the personalities who form the subject of the study were of a very high intellectual calibre, and it is a difficult task to interpret their endeavours and assess their contribution. The problem is further aggravated by the fact that there is a virtual lack of any historical works on the subject. The obvious implication is that one has to first identify and interpret the problem before raising a set of new issues. To further add to our difficulties, a considerable amount of the writings and speeches of a great number of intellectuals is available in their own mother tongue — Marathi. Our inadequate understanding of the language and the resultant inability to adequately use these source-materials might cast a shadow of incompleteness in the analysis and interpretation.

## II

The first soundings of intellectual revolt in Maharashtra were heard nearly three decades later than in Bengal. Among the early intellectuals who initiated

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and led the movement the most prominent were, to name a few : Bal Shastri Jambhekar (1812-1846)<sup>1</sup>, the famous Tarkhadkar brothers — Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadkar (1814-1882)<sup>2</sup> and Bhaskar Pandurang Tarkhadkar (1816-1847)<sup>3</sup>,

1. Born in a Brahmin family, Jambhekar was the pioneer of the intellectual movement in modern Maharashtra. Though he died very early in 1846 barely at the age of 33, his ideas and activities earned him the appellations of the 'Father of modern Maharashtra', 'the Rammohun of Maharashtra', etc. He was a polyglot; he knew nine languages. See B.G.S. Jambhekar, Memoirs and Writings, compiled and edited by G.G. Jambhekar, Vol. I, Poona, 1950, pp.13-76; Jagirdar, P.J., Studies in the Social Thought of M.G. Ranade, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1963, p.26.
2. Dadoba was born in a Vaisya family. It was he who wrote the first Marathi Grammar. He was a man of wider learning on world religions. See Bhate, G.C., History of Modern Marathi Literature 1800-1938, Poona, Aryabhushan Press, 1939, p.107.
3. Bhaskar distinguished himself as the militant nationalist critic of the colonial rule in India, and it was he who first most articulately exposed its exploitative character 'hidden under the garb of law and justice'. He wrote in 1841 a series of eight long letters in The Bombay Gazette, one of the oldest newspapers in the Presidency, founded in Bombay in 1791. Being started as an English weekly, it became a daily on July 1, 1841. Bhaskar wrote in this paper for about four months only. The first of his letters appeared in the issue of 30 July 1841 and the last on 27 Oct. of the same year. Bhaskar published his letters under the pen-name of "A Hindu", "Philanthropy" and "A Fairheart". This has led some to doubt about his authorship of these letters. But on the basis of various evidences it can be well established that they were all written by Bhaskar only. See Priolkar, A.K., Dadoba Pandurang, Autobiography and Biography (ed. and wr.), Bombay, Keshav Bhikaji Dhavale, 1947, p.198; Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. I (1818-1885), Bombay, Government Central Press, 1957, p.viii.

Gopal Hari Deshmukh better known as 'Lokहितwadi' (1823-1982),<sup>1</sup> and Vishnu Bhikaji Gokhale (1825-1873), popularly known as Vishnubawa Brahmachari.<sup>2</sup> Jambhekar was the first intellectual of modern Maharashtra who laid the foundations of the movement in the early 1830s.<sup>3</sup> Dadoba gave it an organisational shape,<sup>4</sup> and Lokहितwadi broadened its scope by providing under dimensions.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Deshmukh published his literary works under the assumed name of 'Lokहितwadi' (Advocate of People's interest), and hence came to be popularly known as Lokहितwadi. Bhatte, G.C., op.cit., p.164.
  2. V.K. Gokhale was a saintly figure. He was known as Vishnubawa Brahmachari, for he remained a life-long bachelor. His great work in Marathi is Vedokta Dharma-prakas (Principles of Hindu Religion). See Ibid., p.105.
  3. In the columns of The Bombay Durpun, an Anglo-Marathi Weekly, founded by Jambhekar in 1832 in Bombay, we find the first expression of intellectual stirrings in Maharashtra. His writings under the headings of 'Editorial' and 'Notes' reflect a scathing attack on the contemporary cultural customs and practices. See The Bombay Durpun, 1832.
  4. In 1840 he founded the Paramhansa Sabha, the first reform organisation of nineteenth century Maharashtra. See Priolkar, A.K., op.cit., p.19.
  5. In the Prabhakar, a Marathi Weekly, founded in 1841 in Bombay, Lokहितwadi published his hundred letters, the famous Shatapatren, between 1848 and 1850. See Bhatte, G.C., op.cit., p.164. The Shatapatren constitutes the magnum opus of the early nineteenth century intellectual endeavours in Maharashtra. These letters very minutely deal with nearly every aspect of the society and the country: social, economic and political. Unfortunately, the Shatapatren could not be entirely utilised in the exercise because they are available in their original language, Marathi, and still await translation. The assessment of Lokहितwadi's ideas in the exercise is mainly based on the translation of certain very limited but relevant portions of the Shatapatren.

One of the characteristic features of the early phase was that while in Bengal the movement had begun with a religious and philosophical note, in Maharashtra strictly social issues came to occupy a prominent place.<sup>1</sup> The movement was initiated not from the pulpit of philosophical abstraction, but from the very ground of the perception of concrete social conditions. The intellectuals of Maharashtra were not essentially religious thinkers, concerned with meticulously and minutely unfolding the philosophical subtilities of world belief-systems in general and Hinduism in particular. Nor were they philosophers of the type "looking for a black cat in a dark room". Their approach to the understanding of Indian problems was, as a matter of fact, much down-to-earth in nature.

During the first half of the nineteenth century the movement remained a feeble force. It was a very small affair of an extremely limited number of individuals whose passion for fighting social obscurantism and other evils could not be transformed into an open challenge at the level of practice. To give an example, Dadoba founded in 1840 a reform-organisation called the Paramahansa Sabha, whose principal objective was the demolition of all caste distinctions. The tenets of the Sabha also included principles like supporting widow marriages and abstaining from worshipping idols.<sup>2</sup> Each new recruit to

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1. The first extant work of Ram Mohan Roy, Tuhafatul Muwahiddin, mainly deals with the question of world belief-systems from a philosophical point of view. It does not take into account the concrete social problems of the time. See Roy, Ram Mohan, "Tuhafatul Muwahiddin", tr. by M. O. E. Obaide, Nineteenth Century Studies, No. 1, 1973. On the other hand, in the writings of Jambhekar in The Bombay Durpan we hardly find any trace of religious and philosophical speculation. He concerns himself more with the concrete social issues like widowhood, infant marriage, etc. See The Bombay Durpan, 1832.

2. Jagirdar, P. J., op.cit., p. 25.

the Sabha had to undergo initiation ceremony, taking the pledge that he would not observe any caste distinction, and would in actual practice strictly stick to the Sabha's principles. He had to eat a slice of bread baked by a Christian and drink milk tasted by the President and others before signing his name in the Sabha's register. During the first few years, drinking of water at the hands of the Muslim also formed a part of the initiation ceremony.<sup>1</sup> The Paramhansa Sabha was, however, a secret society; the meetings of the Sabha were conducted in the strictest secrecy for fear of facing the wrath of the orthodox.<sup>2</sup> The organisational challenge to the caste-system and other social evils thus remained a highly internal and secret affair of its members; they could not at the level of practice come openly against them. No wonder, the orthodox remained ignorant of the Sabha's activities for a long time.

The movement, however, maintained its momentum and reached its peak during the second half of the nineteenth century. The period of three decades between the sixties and the eighties saw the movement in its most vigorous form. The fraternity of the intellectuals during the period considerably expanded with a galaxy of other enlightened individuals joining the fray. The most notable among them dominating the intellectual

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1. Naik, J.V., "Early Anti-caste movement in Western India: The Paramhansa Sabha", A Reprint from Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay, Vols. 449-50-51/1974-75-76 (New Series), 1979, p.148; Phadke, H.A., R.G. Bhandarkar, New Delhi, NBT, 1968, pp.63-64.

2. Naik, J.V., op.cit., p.148.

firmament were: Vishnu Parashuram Shastri Pandit (1827-1876)<sup>1</sup>,  
 Jyotiba Phule (1827-1890)<sup>2</sup>, Vishwanath Narayan Mandlik(1833-1889)<sup>3</sup>

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1. Pandit began his public career by the advocacy of widow-marriage. He was the leading figure in the sphere of the agitation for widow-marriage. He started Vidhava Vivaha Uttejaka Mandal (Society for the Encouragement of Widow Marriage) in 1865 and worked as its Secretary. See Jagirdar, P.J., op.cit., 1963, p.7; Jagirdar, P.J., Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Publications Division, Govt. of India, 1971, p.31; Shete, G.C., op.cit., pp.119-121.
  2. Phule was born as the son of a Mali gardner in Poona. He emerged on the intellectual scene of nineteenth century Maharashtra as a champion of the suppressed sections of the society. Phule was the first to give a mass-touch to the Maharashtra movement. He was the first Indian to start a school for the untouchables in 1834 in Maharashtra. His major work Gulamgiri was published in 1873. See Omvedt, Gail, op.cit., pp.107-113; Kamble, J.R., Rise and Awakening of Depressed Classes in India, New Delhi, National Publishing House, 1979, p.53. We have not included Phule in our study here because he represented an entirely different intellectual trend, though he belonged to the same fraternity of the intellectuals and was a part of the ongoing movement during the period.
  3. Mandlik hailed from the Ratnagiri District of Maharashtra. He was also, like others, western-educated. He went to England and returned the first native civilian of Western India. He emerged on the public scene as a great advocate of social reform, emphasising the "promotion of female education among the countrymen." But in his later days he identified himself as a prominent leader of the orthodox sections. Mandlik's genius was, however, recognised by both the intellectuals and the British Indian Government. In 1875 he was appointed a member of the first Factory Commission. In 1877 in the Grand Delhi Darbar at which Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India, Mandlik was adorned with the exalted title of the 'Champion of the Star of India', the insignia of which was presented to him in 1878. His first major scholarly work- The Manual of Hindu Law - appeared in 1867. See, Mandlik, V.N., Writings and Speeches, (ed.) N.V. Mandlik, 1895, pp.3-24.



Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar (1837-1925)<sup>1</sup>, Narayan Mahadev Parmanand (1838-1893)<sup>2</sup>, Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901)<sup>3</sup>, Vishnushastri Chiplunkar (1850-1882)<sup>4</sup>, Kashinath Trimbak Telang

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1. By his profound scholarship Bhandarkar earned the title of 'Maharshi' for himself. Once a student of the Elphinstone College and a holder of a Dakshina Fellowship, he excelled many others in academic brilliance. Although he lived till the early years of the twentieth century, it was the nineteenth century that saw the best years of his public career. Bhandarkar was one of the few to very strongly advocate Hindu-Muslim unity. See Phadke, H.A., op.cit., pp.2-65.
2. Parmanand wrote his letters in the columns of The Indian Spectator under the penname of the "Political Recluse" in the course of 1889-90. Besides being a great social reformer, he was one of the constructive critics of the British administration. Telang called him the "Silent politician". Parmanand was the first editor of the English columns of The Indu Prakash, an Anglo-Marathi weekly, founded by Lokahitwadi in 1862 in Bombay. He also served as the editor of The Native Opinion, an English weekly, started by Mandlik in 1864. See Parmanand, N.M. Letters to an Indian Raja, Bombay, 1919, pp.1-iv.
3. Ranade was born at Niphad in the Nasik District, Bombay Presidency. His father's name was Govindrao. In 1858 he entered the Elphinstone College, Bombay. He did M.A. and LL.B.; his special subjects were History and Economics. Ranade was Judge of the Bombay High Court during 1893-1901. He was a man of many-sided activity. See Jagirdar, P.J., 1963, op.cit., pp.4-5; Mankar, G.A., Of the Life and Works of M.G. Ranade, Vol.I, Bombay, Caxton Printing Works, 1902, p.21.
4. Chiplunkar was born in Poona. He commenced his great life-work, his famous Nibandhmala in 1874. It was a monthly Marathi magazine devoted to the cause of social reform. He died very young at the age of 32. See Bhate, G.C., op.cit., p.265.

(1850-1893)<sup>1</sup>, Ganesh Vasudev Joshi (1851-1911)<sup>2</sup>, Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar (1855-1923)<sup>3</sup>, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar (1856-1895)<sup>4</sup>, and a host of others. It was mainly during this period that the intellectuals emerged as a powerful social group in Maharashtra.

1. Telang's family belonged to the Vatsa clan of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmins. His original name was Kashinath Telang. He was adopted by his uncle Trimbak who had no issue, and thus came to be styled Kashinath Trimbak Telang. At the age of 14 Telang passed Matriculation in 1864, and joined the Elphinstone College. He did M.A. and LL.B. simultaneously. His earliest efforts were primarily academic and literary. He joined the Students' Literary and Scientific Society in 1868. But in the prime of his intellectual vigour he was greatly devoted to the socio-cultural movement. Telang was instrumental in introducing compulsory primary education in Bombay. He was the first Indian Vice-Chancellor. He also served as the judge of the Bombay High Court in 1889. See Telang, K.T., Selected Writings and Speeches, Vol. I, (ed.), C.V. Chintamani, Bombay, the Gaud Saraswat Brahmin Mitra Mandal, 1916, pp.vii-xvii; Led, P.M., "Biographical Sketch" in K.T. Telang 1850-1893; A Memoir, Bombay, 1951, pp. 1-14.
2. It was in the sphere of politics that Joshi greatly identified himself. He provided a brilliant critique of the economic policy of the British Indian Government. He, however, was one with other intellectuals in emphasising education as the most effective agent of social change. See Joshi, G.V., Writings and Speeches, Poona, Arya Bhushan Press, 1912.
3. Chandavarkar was a man of philosophical bent of mind. He was an eminent Judge of the Bombay High Court and a great leader of the Prarthana Samaj. See Chandavarkar, G.L., A Wrestling Soul: Story of the Life of Narayan Chandavarkar, Bombay, Popular Book Depot, 1955, p.xi.
4. Agarkar expressed his voice in Marathi prose. He was an iconoclast and uncompromising rationalist. See Naik, V.N., Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, Bombay, (n.d.), p.29.

The movement could no longer be ignored by the orthodox sections who, realising the fact of its growing strength, launched a multi-pronged attack on the intellectuals. In fact, the intellectual movement in Maharashtra faced its severest opposition only during the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus, the second phase of the movement constituted a curious blending of ardent reform and blind as well as enlightened reaction.

When in 1869 the intellectuals of Maharashtra arranged a widow-marriage in Poona, the orthodox sections struggled very hard to prevent its consummation. The marriage, first of its kind in the Presidency, was, however, successfully celebrated.<sup>1</sup> The event marked the beginning of active and strong orthodox opposition to the movement and its leaders. A joint debate session of the orthodox and the intellectuals on the legality of the marriage was held at Poona in 1870.<sup>2</sup> The numerical preponderance of the orthodox enabled them to pass a resolution of Prayaschita on those who had participated in the marriage.<sup>3</sup> The Poona meeting also passed a resolution of ostracisation against all those who had attended the dinner.<sup>4</sup> This was a more severe punishment, as dining was viewed by the orthodox to be a

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1. Bhate, G.C., op.cit., p.121.

2. Ibid.

3. Jagirdar, P.J., op.cit., 1963, p.7.

4. Ranade, M.G., His Wife's Reminiscences, (tr.)  
Kusumvati Deshpande, Publications Division, Govt. of India,  
1963, p.137.

graver crime than participating. Moreover, jeering at the intellectuals was a regular phenomenon, and the instances of their often being beaten up were not totally absent.<sup>1</sup>

Dhakji Dadaji and Ramdixit Apte, the leaders of the orthodox camp, represented the most reactionary section of the orthodox opposition. To them any means was justified if it could crush the movement.<sup>2</sup> Mandlik, too, in his later years, sided with the orthodox in opposing the reform measures of the intellectuals. He supported early marriage<sup>3</sup> and opposed widow-marriage.<sup>4</sup> Mandlik proved to be the most formidable opponent of the intellectuals. Learned and scholarly as he was, he could counterpose his arguments with equal soundness.

There was much of intellectual fervour, prolonged agitation and acute discussion during the controversy over the age of Consent Bill. It began with the publication in 1884 by Behramji

1. Onvedt, Gail, op.cit., p.102.

2. Chandavarkar, N.G., Speeches and Writings, (ed.) L.V. Kaikini, Bombay, 1911, p.14.

3. "If evidence is of any value I could cite at least ten times more cases of happy unions in early life, some even beyond the dreams of such persons who oppose it... If in human hands ~~of~~ a few failures appear to have occurred, the system cannot, on the whole, be said to have been without any beneficial results in actual practice.... It is the Hindu rule both of law and practice that the wife must be the husband's junior in age. Any transgression of this rule would be looked upon as a great irregularity." Mandlik, V.N., op.cit., pp.170-179.

4. "Leading an ascetic life for a widow, and not remarriage, is the only balm to a soul so wounded,.... recognized by the highest religious sanctions as well as by the sanction of the society... The Savitri Upadhyaana shows that second marriage of a woman is opposed to Hindu religious convictions. The Savitri day or days are the holiest festival of female India." Ibid., p.170.

Malabari of two tracts on child-marriage and compulsory widowhood.<sup>1</sup> They were circulated among all the officials and also among the leading men in the country. It was after much trauma and vicissitudes that the Age of Consent Bill raising the proposed age-limit from ten to twelve for the consummation of marriage was passed in 1891.<sup>2</sup>

Mandlik opposed the proposal for such legislation very vehemently. He even resorted to personal recriminations and wrote: "Malabari, a Muslim, has no right to talk of Hindu ways and practices.....the widows of India are in excellent company and need no lecture from the present writer."<sup>3</sup> The reaction of Mandlik to social reform was, however, distinctly different from that of the other orthodox sections, and it would be wrong to brand him as belonging to the Dadaji-Apte variety of orthodoxy. Mandlik, in fact, represented a different intellectual trend during the period, and his defence of the status-quo was not based on blind adherence to orthodoxy. He remained a friend of female education to the last.<sup>4</sup> If he dubbed the intellectuals as "Luthers of rose and lavender",<sup>5</sup> that was not so much because he disapproved of their ideas as much because he detested the disjunction between what they preached and what they practised, the gap between theory and practice, ideas and activities.<sup>6</sup> He,

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1. Parvate, T.V., Mahadev Govind Ranade: A Biography, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1963, p.156.

2. Ibid.

3. Mandlik, V.N., op.cit., pp. 170-175

4. Ibid., p.24

5. Ibid., p.171.

6. Ibid.,

unlike the other orthodox sections, was not against social reform as such, but held it to be initiated on the demand of the people at large. Any outside interference like state action in social matters was viewed by him as an encroachment, an undue meddling in the exclusively people's affair.<sup>1</sup> In other words, he was a strong advocate of what was called "reform from within".

Although Mandlik was very critical of the reform movement, his opposition in a way promoted rather than retarded the attempt at social regeneration. Chandavarkar well understood the progressive nature of Mandlik's reaction and took it as a source of help rather than obstruction in the furtherance of the cause of social reform.<sup>2</sup> His was a reaction not of the orthodox but

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1. Reacting to Malabari's notes on child-marriage and compulsory widowhood Mandlik wrote: "The interference of the Government in the social and religious matters of the people would be regarded as an evil of vast magnitude. .... By Act of 1856 enacted by the British Government, any Hindu widow is free to marry if she likes, and her progeny is entitled to succeed as other Hindu children. If the results of the Act of 1856 have admittedly not been realised, it only proves that the Act was premature, and not in consonance with the sentiments of the community. Any outside interference in social matters will be highly demoralising and productive of most serious discontent. There is much life in the society itself to correct the anomalies crept into it, and any reform must correspond to social call... Our greatest social and moral benefactors like Tukaram and Eknath were not helped by armies, councils and governments; they depended on higher power which is the real guide... Institutions must grow, and so must habits; they cannot be imported at the bidding of anybody. Magisterial prosecutions will neither prevent early marriage nor promote second marriage. Running upto Government for the amelioration of every social evil, real or imaginary, betrays moral helplessness and lack of self-respect on the part of people like Malabari. It is a cheap way of gaining popularity". *Ibid.*, pp. 169-182.
  2. Chandavarkar took Mandlik's criticisms as being highly educative. Mandlik's allegation of the "intellectuals' obsession with only talking and doing nothing" and his pinpointing of the flaws in the movement were, according to Chandavarkar, of considerable importance for the development and sophistication of the movement. His criticisms provided the intellectuals an insight into their own defects and compelled them to rethink about the ways of approaching the problems and trying to provide solutions. See Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p. 38

an enlightened sort.

The later phase of the movement was different from the early one in quite another sense as well. The stress on religious reform as a precondition for social change was much more marked in the later phase than in the early one. For example, the Paramhansa Sabha was hardly religious in its appeal; it attempted to tackle social problems not in spiritual but in material terms.<sup>1</sup> Religion was not emphasised to be the medium of social transformation. Quite contrary to this, the Paramhansa Sabha which was reorganised in 1867 in the name of the Prarthana Samaj assimilated religious reform as the guiding principle of social regeneration. It kept in the forefront the principle of the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man as an inseparable tenet.<sup>2</sup> In course of time the members of the Paramhansa Sabha in particular and other intellectuals in general realised that social reform movement could not have a sound footing unless it was based on religious reform.<sup>3</sup>

This is, however, not to suggest that the intellectual movement in Maharashtra during the nineteenth century can be dichotomised into two sharply demarcated phases. In fact, the movement formed a single unified whole throughout the century, and it had a basic unity of purpose, although the intellectuals differed in their views. If it can be divided at all, it can

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1. Naik, J.V., op.cit., p.137.

2. Bhandarkar, R.G., Collected Works, Vol.I, (ed.) N.B. Utigikar and V.G. Paranjpe, Poona, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Instt., 1933, p.480.

3. This is clear from the writings and speeches of the most of the intellectuals of the period. What led them to take religious reform as a necessary precondition for socio-cultural change is a different question which would be taken up in the subsequent discussion.

be mainly on the basis of the fact that the soundings of the awakening in the early phase were perhaps somewhat timorous or at least not so vigorous as in the later one. In other words, the later phase was different from the early one mainly in its tone of expression and wider intellectual stratum and not in its basic nature and purpose. Change in the tone of expression does not necessarily imply a change in the nature of thought. The central concern of the intellectuals — the creation of a new life and society on bourgeois lines — remained the same throughout, although the method of the movement underwent slight modifications. In fact, the later intellectual movement was greatly an extension of the early intellectual ideas and endeavours, although the extension did acquire wider dimensions.

The socio-cultural awakening in Maharashtra was for all practical purposes a nineteenth-century phenomenon; it originated and met its sad demise during the very period. With the emergence of the national movement in the third quarter of the century and its gradual growth, the socio-cultural reform movement tended to progressively recede into the background. By the end of the nineteenth century it began showing signs of the lessening of its initial vigour and vitality, and by the beginning of the twentieth it sharply declined into a dead force. Thus ended the intellectual movement in Maharashtra amidst the hailstorm of political agitation gathering momentum in the country during the period.

Historically, although the growth of nationalism in India during the nineteenth century was a logical culmination of the



intellectual attempt at cultural transformation,<sup>1</sup> the emerging political movement did not or could not assimilate cultural questions as a part and parcel of its activity. Despite the fact that many social reformers such as Ranade and Telang were also simultaneously the leaders of the Indian National Congress, cultural problems remained outside the pale of political agitation.<sup>2</sup> The period 1880s marked the beginning of a phase of severe controversy among the intellectuals of Maharashtra as to whether political or social reform should be given precedence. On the one hand Ranade, Agarkar, Chandavarkar and many others emphasised that social reform should precede political reform,<sup>3</sup> on the other, Telang and Tilak held that social reform had done its job and must now give way to

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1. Jagirdar, P.J., op.cit., 1963, p.26; Panikkar, K.N., "Roots of Cultural Backwardness", Mainstream, Nov. 7, 1981, p.18.
  2. An attempt towards the integration of social and political questions was, however, made in 1895 when the National Social Conference, founded by Ranade in 1887, which was devoted to the cause of social reform, was held at Poona in the Indian National Congress pandal, with Congress delegates actively participating in its deliberations. But this was the first and the last attempt; the practice was soon abandoned. See Parvate, T.V., op.cit., p.149.
  3. See Ranade, M.G., Miscellaneous Writings, (pub.) Ramabai Ranade, Bombay, Manoranjan Press, 1915, p.116; Kamble, J.R., op.cit., pp.46-50. Chandavarkar wrote in 1886, "Political activity, political agitations are certainly good. They have their value. But let us reform and correct the social arrangements first, so that our political activities may be helped and supported, instead of being opposed by them. Let not the social evils be allowed to be a hindrance on the path of political agitation". See Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.177.

political reform.<sup>1</sup> Although the intellectuals were aware that both social and political reforms formed one integral system,<sup>2</sup> they did not or could not try for their integration in their endeavours.

The lack of attempt at integrating these two spheres of activity --cultural and political -- was to an extent determined by the fact that the cultural struggle during the greater part of the nineteenth century was divorced from political reality.<sup>3</sup> The struggle of the early intellectuals against indigenous traditions was not a simultaneous struggle against colonial domination, as the latter was perceived to be a divine dispensation "willed by God to save Indians from moral and material degradation".<sup>4</sup> Their illusion about the "regenerative role" of the British rule ruled out the possibility of the socio-cultural struggle linking itself with a political movement aimed against colonial domination. This explains as to why most of the

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1. Telang wrote in 1886, "In the India of to-day there is no necessary for social reform preceding political reform... If we have to divide our energies between political and social reform, I hold that the greater portion of our energy legitimately can, and therefore ought to be devoted to the former....Let us then all devote the bulk of our energies to political reform". Telang, K.T., op.cit., pp.260-299. For Tilak's ideas on this issue see Nanda, B.R.(ed.), Indian Women from Purdah to Modernity, New Delhi, Vikas, 1976, p.54.
  2. "I consider religious, moral, social and political reforms, and all other reforms whatever, to form one integral system.. The divisions are mainly divisions of convenience. There is no sharp line of demarcation between social and political matters. And even these matters which are mainly and to a great extent social have most important political aspects and vice versa". Telang, K.T., op.cit., pp.260-299.
  3. Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1981, p
  4. Ibid.

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intellectuals such as Phule and Bhandarkar strongly reacted against Tilak's political extremism, which was viewed as being a hindrance to the furtherance of the cause of cultural reform<sup>1</sup>. The nationalists, on the other hand, accused the reformers of their fondness for the alien government.<sup>2</sup> It was under such a situation that the polarisation between cultural and political spheres was greatly sharpened during the last years of the nineteenth century. The cultural question was thus not integrated in the emerging political movement, and it was left to other individuals and organisations to pursue.<sup>3</sup> The nationalist leaders in general and Tilak in particular laid nearly exclusive emphasis on political question, to a virtual neglect of the social and cultural ones.

Whatever the reasons for the lack of integration, the point remains that the greatest tragedy of the nineteenth century for the development of modern India in general and the national movement in particular was the neglect of cultural question in the programme of political agitation in the end of the nineteenth century. The separation between these two spheres of activity was not a short-lived phenomenon; it persisted throughout the course of the political struggle. The Indian national movement could never devise effective methods to integrate cultural issues within its programme,<sup>4</sup> although its importance was realised by some of the national leaders like Gandhi in the twentieth century.

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1. Phadke, H.A., op.cit., p.38; Parvate, T.V., op.cit., p.43; Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., pp.445-448.
  2. Bhat, G.C., op.cit., p.271
  3. Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1981, p.18.
  4. Ibid.

The result of this separation was the premature death of the attempt at cultural transformation. As the cultural movement failed to maintain its vigour amidst the more potent force of the time -- the national movement, it came to a sudden end in the last days of the nineteenth century. One of the saddest outcomes of this was that cultural development could not attain best of its shape. The fact that the development of Indian national movement and India as a nation was greatly inhibited by the doggedness and frequent eruptions of subnational or divisive consciousnesses like casteism, communalism, etc. speaks volumes of the practical implication of the gap created between cultural consciousness and political consciousness. The national movement could have been much more potent and vigorous a force had the socio-cultural questions been integrated within its programme.<sup>1</sup>

The intellectual movement in Maharashtra originated, and greatly operated in the urban areas, Bombay and Poona being the main centres of intellectual activity. The former was the birth-place of the first intellectual soundings, to be followed by the latter.<sup>2</sup> The main means used for the propagation of reform ideas were the press, lectures and Sabhas. Associations constituted the most organised means for furthering the cause

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1. One can even trace the reasons for the post-Independence Indian cultural backwardness to the premature death of the cultural movements in the nineteenth century. This is, however, outside the purview of the present study.
  2. Bombay was the main centre of Jambhekar, Dadoba and Brahmachari's intellectual activities. Poona became famous mainly because of the activities of Lokahitwadi.

of reform. Journals and periodicals were the main vehicle of their propoganda network. Journalism for them constituted an instrument of social education which they valued most. It was only through social education that a favourable public opinion against the existing social ills could be created,<sup>1</sup> and it was only the creation of favourable public opinion that could provide a lasting solution to the social problems.<sup>2</sup> The growth of a myriad of journals and periodicals during the period was the outcome of this general thinking. Most of the intellectuals brought out some papers, and all were associated with some press.

The intellectual movement in Maharashtra despite being a local phenomenon, was, however, not regional in its inspiration and aspirations. Although their activities remained greatly confined to Maharashtra, the intellectuals extended their vision to comprehend the problems of different regions and the country as a whole. In fact, the importance of the nineteenth century intellectual movement in general and that of Maharashtra in particular greatly lay in the fact that it was for the first time that India as a whole was viewed as a corporate or national entity. The medieval mystics had no conception of a national existence and, therefore, did not concern themselves with questions about national weal. More

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1. Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.I, p.438.

2. "If a strong body of reformed public opinion is secured, our half battle is won, for men of sixty marrying a girl of twelve will then be terribly afraid of their deeds." Ibid., Vol.II, 1928, p.527. Bhandarkar, therefore, greatly emphasised the need for the creation of the public opinion. He urged that "we must, by means of lectures, pamphlets and leaflets educate the opinion of our people and bring them to perceive the injustice, and unreasonableness of the reforms we advocate." Ibid., Vol.I, p.438

importantly, one of the conscious attempts of the intellectuals had been to fight against the notion of provinciality and regional distinctions<sup>1</sup>, not to speak of their advocating the concept of national existence. Their appeal was not only confined to the people of Maharashtra but also embraced those of the country as a whole, and their programme for general advancement was loaded with all-India dimensions. The emphasis on the oneness of India as a nation was perhaps the most significant contribution of the nineteenth century Indian intellectual thought. The notion of national unity and the existence of India as a corporate entity was very important for the later crystallisation of national consciousness in the country during the subsequent period. In fact, the idea of national weal and the existence of India as a corporate entity in the nineteenth century Indian intellectual thought marked the starting-point of the growth of Indian nationalism.

Non-conformism was the underlying theme of the movement. It was, however, not confined merely to its non-conformist behaviour. Its non-conformism was inseparably mingled with the notion of social reformism. In other words, the nineteenth century Maharashtrian pioneers were not merely social critics but more importantly, they were social reformers, they were intellectuals. To clarify, their interest about the problems of the society was not merely academic; they were actively involved for the attainment of their social mission. Moreover,

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1. "We should similarly aim at the destruction of provincial distinctions; Marathas, Punjabis...and others should be fused together into one mass of humanity... In social matters also our aim must be the same, and we should seek provincial reform, regulated and controlled by the necessities of a general Indian Social Reform." Ibid., Vol.II, pp. 485-486.

their criticism of the existing society and culture was not directionless; they had a vision, a model for the future socio-economic development of India, and all their ideas and activities were geared to the attainment of that goal.

A social critic can provide a critique of the society and be satisfied with it. But for an intellectual a critique is not enough; it only helps him understand the problem and locate the issues. After locating the issues he proceeds with his programme for finding solutions to the social problems, success or failure. Intellectuals are thus not silent spectators of social scenarios; they are the creators and custodians of the tradition of creative and critical thinking about the problems of society. They represent the effort of men who relate themselves to symbols of meaning outside their immediate self-interest and experience, and try to steer the society on the path of change and progress. They have a perspective, a vision of the society they want to change, and they are conscious of their special mission. Intellectual ideas are, as a matter of fact, an expression or articulation of social problems and perspectives, and it is mainly in the sphere of their concern for society and culture that they are distinguished. In other words, it is social meaning and motive that gives an idea the status of intellectuality.

The Maharashtrian intellectuals' concern centred on the socio-cultural transformation of the country. They did not sit idle, waiting for the change to occur in its normal social process but earnestly worked for it. Their belief in social

change was transformed into an ideology, an objective which was sought for its realisation. Their notion of change was, however, not a vague concept; it was inseparably mingled with the notion of progress. In fact, nineteenth century was a period when faith in progress was a robust plant in Maharashtra.

The intellectuals of Maharashtra were greatly related to the problems of the present.<sup>1</sup> The present was not only the battleground of the movement but, more importantly, it was the major issue at stake.<sup>2</sup> It was the present that formed the focal point of intellectuals' attention, and the whole history of the movement is essentially a history of their perception and repudiation of the present. It is in this sense that it can be argued that the intellectual movement in Maharashtra had a break with the present,<sup>3</sup> and not with the past.

Theoretically speaking, non-conformism and social reformism essentially denotes a break with the present, and not with the past. Intellectuals or reformers rivet their

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1. K.N. Panikkar formulates that "all meaningful intellectual activity is related to the problems of the present" See Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1981. p.15
  2. Chandavarkar very explicitly pointed out, "Needless to say, the present is the central issue; it is the present which we have to answer for and to work in." See Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.52.
  3. This does not, however, mean the intellectuals' repudiation of the present in physical terms -- in terms of their mode of living, an impossibility. A person can intellectually transcend the existing social boundaries, but not the mode of life.



attention on the 'concrete' present which constitutes the arena of their enquiry, investigation and reform. They have a critical eye on the existing social structure and aim at its amelioration. The stage of social evolution already gone by does not concern them much, although they may refer to the past in order to substantiate their advocacy for change in the present order. Obviously enough, changes which is central to their concern has to be brought about in the present, and not in the past.

Historically, the movement in Maharashtra represented a break with the tradition and a march towards modernization. The intellectuals denounced the indigenous traditions and advocated the modernisation of Indian society and culture. Their denunciation of the 'inherited traditions' was, however, not because they were derived from the past but because, and this was more crucial, they were the corrosive realities of the present, and it was their present forms and implications that they attacked. If they traced the origins of these traditions to the post-Vedic period, it was not because they were fundamentally concerned with the traditions as such in their past forms or shape, but because to expose their present retrogressive nature and forms they attempted to establish their falsity since their very inception. Had they not been the retrogressive realities of the present working as an impediment to progress, they would not have to trace their origins.

To conclude, the central concern of the intellectual endeavours in Maharashtra was the reformation of the existing society and culture. The precondition for the desired change was the denunciation of the present socio-cultural set-up, as

without the ideas of dissent, protest and non-conformity, the very fact of change would be nullified. As the intellectuals denounced the existing social order, it can be safely said that the movement represented a break with the present. This break was, however, not a total break; in fact, it was very limited in its nature, and highly discriminatory in its choice. The intellectuals denounced only those elements of the present which they perceived to be backward and detrimental to the progress of the society and the 'nation'. In other words, this break was with what they perceived to be the negative features of the existing society, and not with what they perceived to be its positive aspects.

The movement, in fact, had a definite intellectual link with the past. The Vedic period formed a reference-point of the intellectuals' advocacy for change in the present social order. The Vedic tradition of society and culture was thought to be an advanced stage of India's cultural development. The praise of the Vedic ways and practices was, however, dictated by the fact of the intellectuals' break with the present, and not by any revivalist consideration. This would be explained in greater detail in the subsequent discussion.

The break with the present was primarily motivated by the urge for a better future. It was the faith in futurity that provided sustenance to their ideas and activities. Futurity connotes the idea of change in the temporal structure of human experience in which the future becomes a primary orientation for both imagination and activity.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Berger, Peter L., Facing Up to Modernity, Penguin, New York, 1977, p.104.

## II. THE EMERGENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS : A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CRITIQUE

The literature on the intellectual awakening in nineteenth century India is considerably large. As mentioned earlier, the main concern so far has been on the developments in Bengal, to a virtual neglect of movements in other parts of the country. The importance of the Bengal movement is so much highlighted that the nineteenth century Indian phenomenon has come to be almost identified with the former. Although the interpretation is generally based on the Bengal event, the formulations are often extended to the whole of the country. It is, therefore, relevant for our study to critically examine one of the highly discussed subjects of the nineteenth century Indian intellectual history, namely, the question of the emergence of the awakening.

The major problem confronting historians engaged in the study of intellectual history of modern India has been to seek an explanation for the emergence of socio-cultural consciousness in the nineteenth century. Despite the fact that most of the scholars have tried to provide an answer, this question still remains an enigma. We propose here to critically examine the viewpoints of the historians on this question, as a point of departure. The critique is based on an understanding of the Indian intellectual awakening in general and the Maharashtrian one in particular. This is, however, no comprehensive bibliographical survey; the focus is primarily on the selected representative works.

The historiography on the emergence of the Indian intellectual awakening, despite its numerical preponderance, is marked by an obvious lack of diversity of perspectives. There are, in the main, three distinct approaches which preponderate the literature on the subject: Colonial, Liberal and Marxist.<sup>1</sup> In the following portion we will try to examine in detail the viewpoints of these historiographical perspectives on the subject under separate heads.

### 1. Colonial Historiography

The writings of Europeans, such as Henry Beveridge, James Mill

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1. This is in contrast to the literature on the Russian intellectual developments during the nineteenth century. The literature on the Russian phenomenon is very rich, besides others, in its application of diverse perspectives which range from Liberal to Marxist, and Psychological to Sociological. The major liberal works are: Brower, D.R., "The Problem of the Russian Intelligentsia", Slavic Review, Vol. 26, No. 4, Dec. 1967; Billington, J.H., Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1958; Berlin, Isaiah, "A Marvellous Decade (I) 1838-48: The Birth of Russian Intelligentsia", Encounter, Vol. IV, No. 6, June 1955; Pipes, Richard (ed.), The Russian Intelligentsia, New York, Columbia Univ. Press, 1961; Malia, Martin, "What is the Intelligentsia?" in Pipes, Richard (ed.), op.cit., Among the Marxist works, the prominent one is: Wallicki, A. The Controversy Over Capitalism, Oxford, 1969. Those employing the psychological approach are: Brym, R.J., The Jewish Intelligentsia and Russian Marxism, London, Macmillan Press, 1978; Wortman, R., The Crisis of Russian Populism, London, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967. Among the works based on the sociological approach the prominent ones are: Churchward, L.G., The Soviet Intelligentsia, London, Routledge and Kenan Paul, 1973; Raef, M., Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia, New York, 1966.

John Clark Marshman and others<sup>1</sup> represented the beginning of a historiographical tradition on the nineteenth century Indian intellectual awakening. They however, did not deal with the question of the emergence of intellectual consciousness in India as a distinct movement, but emphasised that the development of modern India in the realm of intellectual ideas in general was the result of the British rule in general and its educational policy in particular.<sup>2</sup> The pre-British Indian society and culture was characterised as decadent and backward.<sup>3</sup> The eighteenth century was pointed as a "Dark Age", a period of political anarchy, intellectual stagnation and social degeneration.<sup>4</sup> The British rule, "a representative of modern, civilised and modernised nation", they emphasised, intervened to perform its "civilising role". It "restored law and order, maintained tranquility ... assured security of property and of person, increased trade and agriculture....., and introduced modern education under its supervision and patronage."<sup>5</sup> It was, in short, the impact of the West through the agency of the British rule that led to the intellectual developments in the nineteenth century. The awakening, in other words, was nothing but a Western-impact-and-Indian-response phenomenon.

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1. See Beveridge, Henry A., A Comprehensive History of India, 3 Vols., London, First Published 1862, also published by Associated Publishing House, New Delhi, 1974; Mill James, The History of British India, Vol.III, London, Wertheimer and Co., 1817; Marshman, John Clark, The History of India, New Delhi, Lal Publishers, 1st Indian Edition 1982.
  2. See Mill, James, op.cit., Vol.III, p.396
  3. Ibid., p.395; Beveridge, Henry A, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.3-262
  4. Mill, James, op.cit., Vol.III, p.395; Marshman, John Clark, op.cit., pp. 371-379.
  5. Mill, James, op.cit., Vol.III, pp. 394-396.

The interest of colonial historians in Indian civilisation was, however, not academic but was prompted by the political consideration of knowing the society and culture of a country the British were ruling.<sup>1</sup> The idea of providing justification for the imposition and perpetuation of British rule in India may also have been a motivating factor in their analysis of Indian <sup>society</sup> history. As the colonial historians proceeded from that standpoint, it was but natural that they would suppress or distort the facts of Indian history. They shared a common lack of respect for the medieval Islamic heritage of India, and they showed their distaste for Indian cultural tradition. Their interpretation of the eighteenth century as a period of decadence of Indian culture, thus, reflects, as a matter of fact, an ideological bias against that period, and is based on a distortion or an inadequate understanding of the facts of India's cultural life.<sup>2</sup> This contention would be illustrated and substantiated in the subsequent discussion. Critically viewed, the colonial historiography on the awakening can better be termed a mythography. This is, however, not to totally dismiss it as an imaginary construction, nor to deny its significance in laying down the foundations of the historiographical tradition on the subject. What is emphasised here is that it is mainly a subjective interpretation, biased in its inspiration, investigation and objective.

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1. De, Barun, "A Preliminary Note on the Writing of the history of Modern India", The Quarterly Review of Historical Studies, Vol. III, Nos. 1-2, 1963-64, p.41.
  2. Bearce, George D., "Intellectual and Cultural Characteristics of India in a Changing Era, 1740-1800", JAS, Vol. XXV, No.1, Nov. 1965, p.3.

## 2. Liberal Historiography

The era of classic liberal historiography on the subject began with the writings of Western liberal historians engaged in the study of the nineteenth century Indian intellectual awakening. Charles H. Heimsath, Percival Spear, David Kopf and others were its true representatives. The liberal historiography reached its peak with the coming of the works of Indian liberal historians such as K. Mukherji, T.L. Shastri Joshi, N.R. Phatak, P.J. Jagirdar, R.C. Majumdar, Amitabha Mukherjee, H.A. Phadke, Arabinda Poddar, Sibnarayan Roy, J.V. Naik, and a host of others.

The basic characteristic of liberal view of history is its emphasis on the primary role of ideas in history, and therefore, by implication of the makers of ideas, a belief that history is shaped by ideas rather than social relations and the interplay of economic interests.<sup>1</sup> Besides, it has an elitist bias and holds the assumption that the so-called cultural and political elite is the element in any society that determines the course of events and that the historians' main task is to discuss their thoughts, attitudes, decisions and actions.<sup>2</sup>

Now coming to the subject the view that the awakening occurred primarily as a result of the Western impact is held by all the liberal historians, both Western and Indian. The difference, however, lies in terms of their according primary to a certain specific factor or a set of factors. Their viewpoints can broadly be categorised into two: English Education

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1. Barraclough, Geoffrey, "Liberals and German History", Nov.2, 1972, (Reprint).

2. Ibid.

and the Impact of the West. This is, however, not to suggest that these categories are mutually exclusive. What is indicated here is simply that some give primary to the influence of exclusively Western ideas, while others take into account the role of other factors as well such as Western institutions, culture, economic change, etc. etc. Nearly all of them, some explicitly, others implicitly, tend to emphasise that the eighteenth century was a period of cultural decadence and social stagnation.

A. English Education : Some historians have viewed the nineteenth century Indian intellectual movement as a hothouse growth, a product of the dissemination of Western ideas, mainly through the agency of English Education.<sup>1</sup> Now when English education is postulated as a causal factor in the emergence of the intellectual consciousness, it is related to elites.<sup>2</sup>

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1. See Spear, Percival, A History of India, Vol.2, New York, Penguin (1965), Reprinted with revisions, 1978, p.14, pp. 158-168; Mukherji K., The Renaissance in Bengal and Maharashtrian Thought from 1850 to 1920, Poona, Gokhale Instt. of Politics and Economics, Reprinted from Artha Vijana, Vol.4, No.4, Dec. 1962, p.335; Majumdar, R.C.(ed.), British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, Part II, Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965, pp.31-89; Priolkar, A.K., "Telang and Marathi Literature" in K.T. Jelang 1850-1893: A Memoir, op.cit., p.98; Phadke, H.A., op.cit., p.32; Naik, J.V., op.cit., pp.137-138; Kumar, Ravinder, Western India in the Nineteenth Century, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968, p.265.

2. Simply put, elites are those who have the power and non-elites are those who do not have power (i.e. the masses). In other words the elites, a minority, rule over the majority. It is in this sense that the term elite is generally used. See Bottomore, I.B., Elites and Society, New York, Penguin, Reprinted 1979, pp.7-9. It pertains in Indian context, however, to those relatively privileged in the society, the important or dominant social groups, and necessarily the power-wielding minority.



True, the basic thrust of the socio-cultural consciousness in India came from the educated sections of the society, and most of the intellectuals of the period were English-educated. It is also true that the model of socio-economic development which the intellectuals had in mind was the British (bourgeois) one. The intellectual origins of social consciousness among the educated Indians, therefore, can in part be certainly traced to Europe. But this explains little, and is certainly not a causal explanation. It fails to answer the basic question as to why the awakening occurred when it did. In other words, what was its historical necessity?<sup>1</sup>

If English education was the causal factor, why did all those educated in English not transform themselves into intellectuals? After all, the number of those educated in English was not confined to these handful of individuals. In fact, the number of those who received their learning in English and lived their life merely as the members of the social group called the intelligentsia was greater than these English-educated who turned into intellectuals. In other words, the transformation was of individuals and not of the English-educated as a 'class', even if most of the intellectuals happened to be educated in English. Why did only certain members of the social category of the English-educated become critical to their customs and practices? The above interpretation fails to answer this question.

Historically speaking, all the nineteenth century English-educated Indians were not necessarily intellectuals nor were all

1. This is not to be confused with historical inevitability.

the intellectuals necessarily English-educated. To give an illustrative example, Durgaram Mancharam (1809-1876), a Gujarati intellectual, had no knowledge of English at all but was the active advocate of widow-marriage and the admission of converts into Hinduism,<sup>1</sup> the issues very clear to the nineteenth century general Indian intellectual concern.

Most of the students of English education joined the services, private or governmental, and were apathetic to or oblivious of the social problems.<sup>2</sup> They never appeared on the social scene of public life. Not to speak of their advocating reforms, most of the English-educated in Maharashtra were even defending the customs of infant marriage and enforced widowhood.<sup>3</sup> The English education thesis expressed in terms of an outright impact and response, cause and effect, fails to explain these phenomena. It also loses sight of the social function of the nineteenth century Indian intellectuals. Moreover, this analysis not only misses the complexities of the social and intellectual developments during the nineteenth century but also overlooks the elements of dissent and protest in the very Indian intellectual tradition of pre-British times, remarkably in the eighteenth century before the British intervention.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Naik, J.V., op.cit., p.143.

2. The Times of India, (Bombay), 8 Dec, 1887.

3. Ibid.

4. Panikkar, K.N., "Presidential Address: Section III", Aligarh, Indian History Congress, Thirty-sixth Session, Dec. 29-31, 1975, p.3. For details see Ibid., pp.3-5.

The interpretation that English education was the determining factor remains terribly simplistic because it does not take into account the economic and social transformation of India under the colonial rule. Ideas are seen as the moving force in history, as autonomous causal factors shaping social reality. The interaction, the dialectic, between the two is totally ignored. Like the German philosophers which Karl Marx attacked, the historians have "turned the whole material world into a world of ideas and the whole history into a history of ideas.....that the real world is the product of the ideal world."<sup>1</sup> According to Marx, "it has not occurred to anyone of these philosophers to inquire into the connection of... philosophy with....reality,"<sup>2</sup> that "it is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness".<sup>3</sup>

In a similar manner the "philosophers" of the awakening ascribe its emergence to the germination and the subsequent development of the ideas of social consciousness without finding out whether it had any grounding in social reality. They have not studied this dissemination in conjunction with certain objective developments: the unification and centralisation of Indian polity and economy under the British rule, the changes introduced in the economic sphere, the 'hegemonising role of the Raj in the propagation of colonial ideology and culture', the contradiction between the newly evolving social structure and the traditional fetters and the consequent consciousness/realisation of this. The emergence of the awakening can only

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1. Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1976, p.30.
  2. Ibid., p.36.
  3. Ibid., p.42.

be explained adequately if we go beyond a conception of history in terms of the intrinsic dynamism of ideas to relating these ideas to social reality; or in Weberian terms, to see the elective affinity between Indian awakening and Indian economy, society and polity.

In short, the interpretation that English education was the causal factor is highly inadequate. It views the phenomenon in terms of the march of an idea without relating it to socio-economic and political reality, and therefore, fails to explain the historical necessity of its emergence. This is, however, not to imply that the interpretation is completely wrong; it is just that the interpretation is lop-sided.

B. Impact of the West: Other historians of the liberal hue are not satisfied with the explanation that the awakening was the result of the working of a single factor -- English education. They emphasised that it was the general impact of the West including the influence of English education that led to the emergence of the nineteenth century Indian phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> To

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1. Helmsath, Charles H., op.cit., p.3; Kopf, David, op.cit., pp. 2-5, 178-285. Ray, Sibnarayan, "Introduction" in Roper Lethbridge (ed.), A History of the Renaissance in Bengal, Calcutta, Indian Edition, 1972, p.V; Jagirdar, P.J., op.cit., 1963, p.22; Kamble, J.R., op.cit., p.29; Phatak, N.R., "Gopalrao Deshmukh 'Lokहितwadi' : Rationalist and Reformer" in N.R. Phatak and others, Rationalists of Maharashtra, Dehradun, Indian Renaissance Institute, 1962, p.3; Joshi, T.L. Shastri, "Jyotirao Phule: Rebel and Rationalist" in N.R. Phatak and others, op.cit., p.15; Poddar, Arabinda, Renaissance in Bengal: Quarta and Confrontations, 1800-1860, Simla, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1970, pp.16-30; Mukherjee, Amitabha, op.cit., pp.1-70, 312-313.

quote Arabinda Poddar, for example:

"The introvert Indian society was stirred by the impact of Western Civilisation, leading to the growth of the awakening. The British rule broke the isolated character of Indian villages and the spell of introvert outlook was definitely lost... Trade and commerce led the Bengalis into European contact which infused an element of dynamism into the apparently inert society... The British agrarian reforms led to the growth of money economy which affected social relations. All these led to the growth of individuality... The English education completely changed the social scene. It played an important role in the evolution of the awakening".<sup>1</sup>

But there are some nuances in their interpretations in terms of slight shifts in emphasis. For example, Charles Heimsath holds that "the social reform movement was uniquely a result of English education... and the second major stimulus was the work and the ideas of Christian missionaries; their proselytising activities roused the Indians to revolt."<sup>2</sup> David Kopf emphasises the British cultural policy of Orientalism pursued and promoted during the period between 1772 and 1830 as the factor of overriding importance in the emergence of the awakening.<sup>3</sup> Amitabha Mukherjee, on the other hand, takes the forces and activities — namely, English education, the eighteenth century heterodox sects such as the Karta Bajas, the Balramis, etc. and missionary activities — at work mainly between 1774 and 1823 as the determining factor.<sup>4</sup> He, however, singles out English education as more important than the other factors listed above.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, he does not subscribe to the

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1. Poddar, Arabinda, op.cit., pp.16-30.
  2. Heimsath, Charles, op.cit., pp.47-51.
  3. Kopf, David, op.cit., pp.2-5, 178-285.
  4. Mukherjee, Amitabha, op.cit., p.313, pp.125-153.
  5. Ibid., pp.121-125, 203.

view that the eighteenth century was a period of darkness and decadence.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the nuances or differences, these historians are unanimous on the note that the awakening occurred under the Western impact, due to the East-West contact.

That the British rule and its attendant paraphernalia did leave an indelible mark on the emerging intellectual ideas is, however, not denied. Ideas, institutions and culture of a fairly advanced variety were bound to influence the social set-up and mental make-up of the people under their umbrella. But this again does not explain as to why the awakening occurred only when it did.

A major weakness of this brand of liberal historiography, like its twin, is that it does not try to locate the intellectual and cultural awakening within the structure of society and politics in India.<sup>2</sup> Some of them do enumerate and examine in somewhat detail the changes such as those in the realms of education, cultural policy, law, etc. introduced by the British in India, but changes in the sphere of economy and polity are left nearly untouched as if they did not or could not have any bearing on the emergence of the intellectual movement. Moreover, even if the changes in economic and political spheres are also to an extent taken into account, as in the case of

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1. He, however, adds a qualification on this position. By the eighteenth century not being dark he means only the last quarter of the century, and not the whole period. According to him the last quarter of the eighteenth century was not dark because of the positive measures of the British administration, esp. in the field of education, the missionaries and religious preachers. He characterises the rest of the eighteenth century "as a period of social stagnation and cultural devitalisation... largely due to the lack of contact with progressive forces of the world" See *Ibid.*, pp. 312.31.

2. Panikkar, K.N., *op.cit.*, 1981, p.16.

Arabinda Poddar,<sup>1</sup> they are posited in the manner of compartmentalisations and not in that of an inter-related totality. As a result, the historians fail to establish the interrelationships between these changes and the evolving cultural and intellectual matrix of the society during the nineteenth century. Their methodology does not allow them to view the phenomenon as being the consequence of this interactional process and its crystallisation. As a result, their explanation remains simplistic and inadequate.

These historians have, however, made one remarkable advance; they are willing to accept multiple <sup>causation.</sup> The multiple causation of the liberal method is, however, not to be confused with multiple causation in the Marxist sense. The latter traces the dynamic of social activity and historical development to its roots in the production and reproduction of the means of existence. It is on the material base, itself continually changing as men establish greater powers of control over their environment, that the superstructure of culture, institutions, laws and political systems arises. It should, however, be emphasised that the materialist conception of history is not the crude kind of economic interpretation. Nor does it see human development as the product of separate 'factors' of which the economic is the determining one. It assumes the totality of relationships, traces out the interrelationships between various levels (political, economic, social, ideological, etc.) and seeks the source of historical change not in motives, not in ideologies but in the

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1. Poddar, Arabinda, op.cit., pp. 16-30.

material basis of the society in question. Liberal historiography fails to see this interrelated totality and compartmentalises the political, economic, religious, social and ideological levels.<sup>1</sup> In fact, it begins to explain why it happened but eventually comes to tell how it happened. As a result, historical causation is not properly located in this interpretation.

Charles Heimsath and David Kopf deserve a special mention. As indicated earlier, according to the former, it was mainly the English education coupled with the missionary activities of proselytisation that led to the emergence of the awakening in the nineteenth century. The reason for his singling out English education as the major factor in the growth of the awakening is that "rationalism and utilitarianism in the nineteenth century Indian intellectual thought was derived from the writings of Western thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham, James Mill...Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, etc."<sup>2</sup> It is not denied that Western thinkers exerted considerable influence on the nineteenth century Indian intellectuals. But that was not the sole formative influence on them. The intellectuals, particularly the Maharashtrian ones, heavily leaned towards the indigenous intellectual tradition for inspiration. Moreover, the question of greater significance is that what actually made the nineteenth century Indian intellectuals to select only rationalism and utilitarianism from the Western

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1. Amitabha Mukherjee is a classic case in point. He takes the English education, heterodox sects and the missionary activities as being more or less autonomously responsible for the awakening. The elements of what is called Historical Causation is missing in his interpretation, although he lays emphasis on English education as a factor of greater importance. See Mukherjee, Amitabha, op.cit., p.313, pp.121-125.

2. Heimsath, Charles H., op.cit., pp.47-49.



intellectual tradition, and not any other systems of thought such as socialism which were becoming quite influential in nineteenth century Europe. Helmsath fails to answer this question.

According to David Kopf, "the Bengal Renaissance was the child of the general impact of the policy of Orientalism followed in the eighteenth century and built around the need for an acculturated civil service class."<sup>1</sup> The Orientalists, the argument goes, initiated the process of the discovery of the ancient Indian heritage which eventually culminated in the growth of intellectual consciousness in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Kopf goes on to discuss the dynamics of the Orientalist policy in practice and tries to link it up with the movement on the basis of a similarity that both went to the past.<sup>3</sup> In his own words:

"Spurred on by Orientalists engaged in a scholarly reconstruction of the Hindu tradition, a newly formed intelligentsia selectively reinterpreted their heritage and strove to reshape their culture in the new image"<sup>4</sup>

He comes to the conclusion that the awakening was mainly a result of the Orientalist endeavour of discovering the ancient Indian culture.<sup>5</sup> In other words, Orientalism was the originator-predecessor of what he calls the "Renaissance"; it was the preparatory ground.

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1. Kopf, David, op.cit., p.283.

2. Ibid., pp.280-283

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p.283

5. Ibid.

That the intellectuals reinterpreted the past is not denied, but they did so not because the past as such was important for them but because the considerations for changing the 'present' into a better future dictated them to reinterpret the past. In other words, it was the present and not the past that constituted the focal point of their attention. They went to the past from the 'present' and not vice-versa. Moreover, as Susobhan Sarkar points out, liberal westernism played historically a more significant role in the Indian Renaissance than traditional orientalism.<sup>1</sup> "The true impulse of the movement lay not in 'rediscovery' of the remote past but the 'discovery' of the recent new which implied Western education, Western science and the liberal rational thought of Europe".<sup>2</sup> This debt to the West was freely recognised by most of the intellectuals.

The attempt at discovering the ancient Indian culture was merely a part, however important, of the contemporary intellectual endeavours. The movement was much broader in its basic nature and purpose. On the basis of this simplistic analogy the attempt at explaining the historical causation of the movement is not only unscientific but it also betrays a misunderstanding of the basic nature of the phenomenon. A fundamental weakness of Kopf's interpretation is that he has equated stimulus with historical causation. In the attempt he often tends to lose sight of the central question as to why the awakening occurred, and comes to concentrate on how it happened.

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1. Sarkar, Susobhan, On the Bengal Renaissance, Calcutta, Papyrus, 1979, p.158.

2. Ibid., p.157.

Moreover, if the awakening was "the child of the general impact of the policy of Orientalism...built around the need for an acculturated civil-service class" <sup>1</sup> as Kopf holds, what made the intellectuals to endeavour for the creation of a new social order and not try to confine themselves to "the need for an acculturated civil-service class"? Kopf fails to explain as to what made the movement to make a departure from the objectives of the British cultural policy of Orientalism. To put it differently, if the administration-oriented Orientalist policy was the causal factor, what made the movement to be society-oriented? Thus, Kopf's attempt at explaining the emergence of the movement in terms of its being the result of the British cultural policy of Orientalism is highly unconvincing. It reduces the whole multi-faceted intellectual movement to mainly, if not merely, the discovery of ancient Indian heritage.

It has been indicated earlier that the other viewpoint of the liberal historiography on the question of the emergence of the awakening is that the eighteenth century was a period of cultural decadence and social stagnation. To quote Arabinda Poddar, for example:

"Pre-British India in the eighteenth century was closed, introvert, and hence also masochistic.... the closed society because submerged in the deepest layers of darkness.... There was no spirit of independence and individuality. There was conformity to institutions...."<sup>2</sup>

Initially, the main propagators of this view were the colonial historians. It is imperative, therefore, to critically examine in somewhat detail the validity of the view in the light of the facts of eighteenth century Indian history.

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1. Kopf, David, op.cit., p.283

2. Poddar, Arabinda, op.cit., pp. 2-5.

To begin with, one of the assumptions of the view that the eighteenth century was a period of darkness is that the pre-British Indian society was stagnant, as its economy was self-sufficient and introvertive, not tending to go beyond its limited needs and requirements.<sup>1</sup> Another assumption is that the political life of the period presented a picture of pandemonium, political chaos, confusion and anarchy.<sup>2</sup> In dubbing the pre-British period as dark the crucial argument is that it was marked by cultural decadence and intellectual decay.

Theoretically speaking, however, the assumption that the society was static is based on a misconception about the nature of society itself. A society by its very nature is never stagnant; change, perceptible or imperceptible, is its inherent attribute. It is erroneous, therefore, to take the lack of acceleration in the process of change for the absence of the process itself. Concretely speaking, too, the pre-British Indian society was not static at all. The urban economy witnessed large-scale craft production, long distance trade and the growth of commercial capital.<sup>3</sup> The village peasantry

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1. Ravinder Kumar holds this position in the context of pre-British Maharashtra. See Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1968, p.319.
  2. James Mill, a colonial historian, was the great exponent of this view. See Mill, James op.cit., vol.III, p.395.
  3. Habib, Ifan, "Colonialization of the Indian Economy, 1757-1900" (cyclostyled), (n.d.), p.3.

was stratified, and there existed private property.<sup>1</sup> Cash nexus was not absent, nor was the existence of market.<sup>2</sup>

As to the political condition, there is no denying that the decline of the Mughal power was accompanied by political instability, administrative inefficiency and social insecurity.<sup>3</sup> But the disintegration of the Empire represented a political trend of the emergence of autonomous states and their consolidation, rather than chaos and anarchy.<sup>4</sup> In reality, the new political structure emerging in the eighteenth century was not devoid of vigour and vitality. For example, Tipu Sultan's administration in the eighteenth century was <sup>at</sup> the the acme of its political sagacity and administrative efficiency. His measures in the direction of social reform such as the ban on prostitution, the abolition of the Nayar practice of polyandry in Malabar and Coorg, the repeal of the custom of human sacrifice in the temple of Kali near Mysore town, etc. stand in sharp opposition to the view that Bentinck, from among the rulers, was the originator of social reform in India.<sup>5</sup> Above all, Tipu's attempt, though unsuccessful, to modernise the economy of his empire indicates the concern from above for the needs of modernisation.<sup>6</sup> This is, however, not to deny the

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1. Ibid., p.4.

2. Ibid..

3. Panikkar, K.N., "Cultural Trends in Pre-colonial India: an overview" (cyclostyled), 1982, p.3.

4. Ibid.

5. Sen, Asok, "A Pre-British Economic Formation in India of the late Eighteenth Century: Tipu Sultan's Mysore" in Barun De(ed.), Perspectives in Social Sciences I, Calcutta, Oxford Univ. Press, 1977, p.67

6. Ibid., p.103

role of certain inherent weaknesses of Indian political structure affecting the emergence of new socio-economic formations. What is emphasised here is that political fragmentation does not necessarily mean chaos and anarchy. The polity in the eighteenth century did not collapse, although the empire did get fragmented.

Moreover, political instability in the eighteenth century did not lead to an overall decline in culture. Infact, great artistry existed during the very period. Dance and music were part of daily life; Ram Singh and Bhawani Das were the great musicians of the period.<sup>1</sup> Painting was fairly developed.<sup>2</sup> The eighteenth century was a vital period for the flowering of poetry. Urdu poetry virtually originated in the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Sauda (1713-80), Mir (1728-1810) and Dard (1719-85) were some of the notable Urdu poets of the period.<sup>4</sup>

The eighteenth century was a period of considerable growth in Marathi literature. Saint-poets such as Sridhar, Mahipati, Moropant and others laid the solid foundations of its development. The Santallilarit and the Bhaktallilarit written by Mahipati in 1737 and 1762 respectively still constitute the core works on the socio-religious development of the period.<sup>5</sup> Moropant's Mayur (a peacock), Kekavali (cries of a peacock),

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1. Bearce, George, D., op.cit., p.5.

2. Ibid., p.8

3. Ibid., p.7.

4. Penikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1982, p.12

5. Bhate, G.C., op.cit., p.45.

and Samsavaratmala (a garland of gems of doubt) written during the very eighteenth century are still considered the gems of Marathi literature.<sup>1</sup> In an age of no printing machine this was no mean achievement. Remarkably enough, the heyday of Marathi folk literature was the very eighteenth century; in the nineteenth under the British rule it underwent a period of neglect and stagnation.<sup>2</sup>

It is true that the period before the British intervention was beset with numerous evils such as polytheism, casteism, idolatry, ritualism and the dominance of the priests. But all were not the silent spectators of these social evils and corrupt practices. In fact, there are numerous instances of a vigorous attempt to fight against these evils and to purify the religious life of the people. Pre-British India, especially during the eighteenth century, witnessed the emergence of a myriad of heterodox sects all over the country. The Satanami, Appanathi and Shivanarayan sects in Uttar Pradesh, Karthe Bajas and Balramis in Bengal, Charandasis and Ramsanehi in Rajasthan and Veerambhramas in Andhra Pradesh were some of them.<sup>3</sup> Pre-British Maharashtra in particular represented a classic case of a vigorous indigenous intellectual tradition of dissent and protest. The sect of Varkaris was very active in

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1. Ibid.

2. Bebar, S., Folk Literature in Maharashtra, New Delhi, Maharashtra Information Centre, 1968, pp.1-5.

3. Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., pp.17-19; op.cit., 1975, pp.3-5; Datta, K., Survey of India's Social Life and Economic Condition in the Eighteenth Century, Calcutta, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1961, pp.2-7.

the eighteenth century in Maharashtra.<sup>1</sup> During the Bhakti period, mainly between the <sup>twelfth</sup> and seventeenth century, several heterodox religious movements in Maharashtra were presenting important challenges to the cultural dominance of Brahmanic orthodoxy.<sup>2</sup> Anti-caste sects such as Nanth Panth and Mahanubhay cult were contending for acquiring support and strength among the Marathi speaking masses.<sup>3</sup> The personalities who initiated and carried forward the process of revolt against socio-religious evils of the period were mainly the Bhakti saint-poets of Maharashtra such as Dnyanadev, Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram and a host of others.

Nearly all of them denounced polytheism, ritualism, caste distinctions, idolatry and priestly domination.<sup>4</sup> All emphasised monotheism and simple devotion to God without priestly intermediation and ritualism. They, like the nineteenth century intellectuals, attached supreme importance to morality.<sup>5</sup> A remarkable feature of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra was that the saint-poets impressed upon the 'enlightened' to do

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1. Bhatte, G.C., op.cit., p.18

2. Omvedt, Gail, op.cit., p.53

3. Ibid.

4. See Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1982, p.17; op.cit., 1975, p.4; Raghuvanshi, V.P.S., Indian Society in the Eighteenth century, New Delhi, Associated Publishing House, 1969, p.144; Dandekar, S.V., Dnyanadev, New Delhi, Maharashtra Information Centre, 1969, p.4; Karandikar, M.A., Namdev, New Delhi, Maharashtra Information Centre, 1970, pp.20-24; Belsare, K.V., Tukaram, New Delhi, Maharashtra Information Centre, 1967, p.63.

5. Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1975, p.4; Raghuvanshi, V.P.S., op.cit., p.145; Karandikar, M.A., op.cit., pp.20-22.



their social duty of enlightening the masses.<sup>1</sup> In other words, theirs was not an individual escapism; they firmly held that the true purpose of man's spiritual endeavour was not to seek liberation by escaping from the world of mortals but to live in it and share the transcendental joy and knowledge with the ignorant masses.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, they had a touch of scientific temper in their approach to superstitious and blind beliefs. Eknath, for example, regarded an eclipse as nothing but a natural phenomenon and ridiculed the popular representation of it as devouring of the Sun or of the Moon by 'Rahu'. He ruthlessly exposed the fallacy underlying it by pointing out the impossibility of anything coming anywhere near the Sun without being reduced to ashes.<sup>3</sup> Another remarkable characteristic is that nearly all of them wrote and preached in the language of the common masses. In fact, these sects, being movements of basically lower castes, were, unlike the nineteenth century reform movements, concerned with the problems of mass culture.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, we see that the pre-British period was neither socially stagnant nor culturally decadent as has generally been pointed by colonial and liberal interpretations. This is,

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1. Dhyansdev held: "A man apart from society is an abstraction. The society has its claim on him. It is a man's obligation to do his social duty." Quoted in Dandekar, S.V., op.cit., pp.62-63.
  2. Kulkarni, S. Eknath, New Delhi, Maharashtra Information Centre, 1967, p.20.
  3. Ibid., p.21.
  4. Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1982, p.17.

however, not to suggest that the nineteenth century awakening was more or less synonymous with the pre-British movements. What is emphasised here is that India had a very strong intellectual tradition of dissent and protest before the British intervention, and the viewpoint that the awakening in the nineteenth century occurred solely due to the Western connections does not seem to have historical validity.

Although polytheism, caste distinctions, idolatry, priestly domination, etc, came under severe intellectual attack in the nineteenth century also, the movement was diametrically different from the eighteenth century revolts. The pre-British Indian movements riveted their attention primarily on the religious sphere of the society. The nineteenth century awakening, on the contrary, although it did lay predominant emphasis on the socio-cultural problems, was concerned with the megastructures of Indian society. Moreover, the pre-British religious leaders offered no alternative programmes of social and economic reorganisation of Indian society. Mysticism, renunciation of worldly or bodily pleasures, spiritual pursuit and realisation as the goal of man's life constituted the central core of their thoughts. Tukaram, for example, held:

"Spiritual life is the only good life for man; it is the end for which everything else exists... Man's speciality as a human being, therefore, lies in living on the spiritual plane."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, salvation was sought in 'renunciation' rather than in reformation or rectification. Their appeal was mostly emotional rather than rational.

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1. Quoted in Belegare, K.V., op.cit., p.40

In the nineteenth century awakening the emphasis shifted from the spiritual to the material, from other-worldliness to this-worldliness, from emotion to reason. Phule, for example, pointed out:

" Man should not vainly try to go to the heavens, or attain salvation, or see God; for all these things are impossible. Man should, on the other hand, endeavour to live the life on this earth in the best possible manner."<sup>1</sup>

It is precisely in the engineering of this break that the impact of the West in the formation of intellectual ideas in nineteenth century India can certainly be attributed to. Perhaps, the modernisation of Indian intellectual thought during the nineteenth century was greatly the result of the East-West contact through colonialism. But this again does not explain as to why the awakening occurred when it did; it simply assesses the role of the East-West contact in the evolution of a particular type of intellectual thought. In other words, the impact of the West was operative mainly in giving a particular nature or character to the movement rather than in its emergence. <sup>The</sup> To answer to the questions of the emergence of the movement has to be sought primarily in the context of changes introduced in the contemporary Indian society, economy and polity. The role of the indigenous intellectual tradition has also to be duly appreciated and linked up with the emerging intellectual consciousness in the nineteenth century. It is the application of only this method that can provide an explanation for the historical necessity of the movement.

To conclude, the liberal historiography, instead of

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1. Quoted in Joshi, T.L. Shastri, op.cit., p.27.

questioning the colonial interpretation on the emergence of the awakening, has more or less accepted its two basic assumptions -- namely, (a) the awakening was a Western-impact-and-Indian-response phenomenon, and (b) the eighteenth century was a period of decadence -- with slight shifts in emphasis here and there. Moreover, colonialism in liberal interpretation is not viewed as a constraint in the process, but as an active agent of social and intellectual development during the period. Liberal historians in general hold that the British rule had positive aspects, and the linkage between India and Britain through colonialism was beneficial to the course of Indian development. In short, there is a lack of a critique of colonialism in the liberal interpretation. The historiography has thus, under the historians of liberal hue, not made any remarkable advance in explaining the historical causation of the movement; there is no major departure as far as this question is concerned. Another significant limitation of the liberal interpretation is that it does not make a distinction between the role and function of Western ideas at the sources of their origin and that when transplanted into a colony. Of late, the liberal standpoint of the progressive function of Western ideas in the Indian context has been questioned. Toru Matsui holds, "In India under British rule, often a doctrine played a different role, a policy took a different meaning from the beginning".<sup>1</sup>

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1. Matsui, Toru, "On the Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History -- A Review of a " Reinterpretation" in Morris, Morris D, and others, Indian Economy in the Nineteenth Century: A Symposium, Delhi, Delhi School of Economics, 1969, p.29.

This is, however, not to deny or underestimate the significant contribution made by the liberal historiography in understanding the nineteenth century Indian awakening. One of its major contributions is that liberal historians have brought to light a huge corpus of facts about the phenomenon. They have greatly relied on facts, and their interpretation is not coloured by any political considerations as was the case with that of the colonial historians. In fact, it is the liberal historians who have actually initiated a tradition of empiricism in the study of the Indian intellectual awakening. As a result, the liberal historiography is very rich in its collection of empirical evidences. It has thus been able to prepare the groundwork for further exploration and interpretation. In fact, one cannot make any further advance in understanding the problem without taking the help of the liberal historiography. More significantly, the major contribution of the liberal historiography lies in its interpretations of the nineteenth century Indian ideas and activities, the nature of the movement, its limitations, success and failure, etc., although it has failed to provide a satisfactory explanation for their emergence.

### 3. Marxist Historiography

The Marxist historiography on the awakening is relatively recent in its evolution; it developed as a historiographical tradition mainly in the nineteen-seventies, although A.R. Desai's work which inter alia dealt with this question was published as early as in 1948. A.R. Desai, Susobhan Sarkar, Asok Sen, K.N. Panikkar, Sumit Sarkar and Barun De are the representatives of Marxist interpretation on the nineteenth century awakening.

The Marxist works on the subject are not as numerous as the liberal ones. As the Marxist historiography has developed recently, it began mainly as a critique of earlier interpretations. True, the birth of a new historiographical tradition preconceives an attempt at demonstrating the inadequacies in the existing interpretations. It constitutes the first step into a historiographical departure. But this historiography has largely remained confined to criticism, and has not yet been able to blossom into a full-fledged tradition explaining the causes of the emergence of the movement.

The involvement of the Marxist historians with the causes for the emergence of socio-cultural consciousness in the nineteenth century has been of a limited nature, though they have focused attention on the limitations of this consciousness as well as its consequences. For instance, Asok Sen's main emphasis is on the former,<sup>1</sup> while A.R. Desai's is on the latter.<sup>2</sup> Susobhan Sarkar has shown some interest on the question. His view is as follows:

"The impact of the British rule, bourgeois economy and modern Western culture was first felt in Bengal and produced an awakening known usually as the Bengal Renaissance".<sup>3</sup> "The European impact was indeed a driving force behind our awakening".<sup>4</sup>

Susobhan Sarkar has, however, not made any further attempt to

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1. See Sen, Asok, op.cit., 1977.
  2. See Desai, A.R., Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, First Published 1948.
  3. Sarkar, Susobhan, op.cit., 1970, p.3.
  4. Ibid., op.cit., 1979, pp.157-158.

substantiate his contention in the context of the changes introduced by the British rule in the realms<sup>of</sup> economy, culture, etc., which are inherent in his statement. It is, therefore, not desirable to accept his viewpoint in toto, as it lacks substantiation. After all, the question is not to negate the impact of the West engineered through the agency of the British rule in India but to locate historically the areas under the British influence, the changes introduced by the British rule and their precise role in the evolution of the intellectual consciousness during the period.

As far as the other Marxist historians are concerned, they are unanimous in that the "impact-response" schema is a simplistic conceptual framework employed to analyse the evolution of the intellectual awakening in nineteenth century India.<sup>1</sup> But why it is so has not been elaborated by some of them like Barun De<sup>2</sup> and Sumit Sarkar.<sup>3</sup> Nor an alternative to the impact-response schema is suggested or its limitations have been brought out.

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1. Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1981, p.17; op.cit., 1975, p.3; De, Barun, "A Historiographical Critique of Renaissance Analogues for Nineteenth Century India" in Ibid., (ed.), op.cit., 1977, pp.197-198, 212-213; Sarkar, Sumit, "Rammohan Roy and the Break with the past" in V.C.Joshi (ed.), op.cit., p.53.
  2. See De, Barun, op.cit., 1968-64; op.cit., 1977; "Some Implications of Political Tendencies and Social Factors in Eighteenth Century India" in O.P. Bhatnagar (ed.), Studies in the Social History, Allahabad, St Paul's Press Training School, 1964.
  3. See Sarkar, Sumit, op.cit., 1975; "The Complexities of Young Bengal," Nineteenth Century Studies, Nov.4, Oct.1973.

An attempt in this direction is available in the writings of K.N. Panikkar. While not totally dismissing the influence of Western ideas and institutions in the formation of intellectual ideas during the nineteenth century he has challenged the viability of the "impact-response" schema because it accords primary to the exogenous factors, to the virtual neglect of the endogenous ones.<sup>1</sup> More importantly, he has questioned on empirical grounds the assumption that the eighteenth century was a period of darkness and decadence. On the basis of the facts of the eighteenth century Indian social and cultural life Dr. Panikkar has attempted to identify the elements of dynamism in the period before the British rule.<sup>2</sup> It is to be emphasised that K.N. Panikkar stands distinct from the other Marxist historians not so much because of his denunciation of the impact-response framework as much because of his attempt to falsify on empirical grounds the basic assumption of this framework that the eighteenth century was a dark age. The inadequacy of the "impact-response" scheme is demonstrated by the fact that there was an indigenous Indian intellectual tradition of dissent and protest in pre-British times, that pre-British India had definite potentialities for social development.<sup>3</sup> However, in an attempt to emphasise the prevalence

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1. Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1981, p.17.

2. Ibid., op.cit., 1975, pp.3-5; op.cit., 1982.

3. Ibid., 1975, p.3.



of pre-British indigenous intellectual tradition of dissent and protest in order to demonstrate the inadequacy of the impact-response framework, he often tends to lose sight of the fact the nineteenth century phenomenon was diametrically different from the pre-British movements, and that this argument cannot, therefore, be stretched very far.

The Marxist historiography has thus made a distinct departure from the traditional interpretations on the emergence of the awakening. Moreover, unlike the liberal interpretation, it does not subscribe to the view that the British rule was beneficial to the cultural and intellectual development of the country. Most of the Marxist historians have viewed colonialism as a constraint in this process.<sup>1</sup> The Marxist historiography has, however, as indicated earlier, not been able to answer the question: "What can be attributed to as the historical causation of the movement?" The Marxist historians are, in fact, silent on this question. Their muteness is perhaps dictated by the fact that there is a lack of rigorous historiography on the socio-economic and political life of nineteenth century India. A convincing Marxist interpretation as to the historical causation of the awakening is not possible unless the social, economic and political history of the period is available. In fact, the latter is the precondition for the fuller development of the former. It is only then one can establish the inter-relationships between intellectual ideas

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1. Sarkar, Sumit, op.cit., in V.C. Joshi (ed.), op.cit., 1975, p.63; Sarkar, Susobhan, op.cit., 1970, p.150; Sen, Asok, "The Bengal Economy and Ram Mohan Roy" in V.C. Joshi (ed.), op.cit., 1975, p.110; Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1975.

and social reality and suggest the historical necessity which led to their emergence.

This is, however, not to deny the otherwise noteworthy contribution of Marxist historians in the understanding of the nineteenth century phenomenon. They have analysed different aspects of the awakening, although their attempt centres around the evaluation of the significance of the nineteenth-century ideas. Susobhan Sarkar, for example, has mainly dealt with the ideas of individual intellectuals such as Ram Mohan, Derozio, Rabindranath Tagore, etc. within the broad framework of the "Bengal Renaissance".<sup>1</sup> Barun De, on the other hand, has analysed the question of the applicability of the term, "Renaissance", for the nineteenth century phenomenon.<sup>2</sup>

The lack of detailed and rigorous historical writings on the socio-economic and political life of the period should, however, not be extended very far, and used as a permanent 'scapegoat'. An attempt has to be made in however sketchy a fashion to construct a picture of the contemporary society, polity and economy. We have tried to provide in the next chapter a picture of the changing social scenario in Maharashtra during the nineteenth century. The idea is not so much to answer the complex question of the causes of the intellectual and social awakening as much to initiate the discussion towards arriving at an understanding of the phenomenon.

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1. Sarkar, Susobhan, op.cit., 1970.

2. De, Barun, op.cit., 1977.

### III. FORMATION OF INTELLECTUALS

In the preceding chapter we have suggested that the intellectual awakening in India during the nineteenth century cannot be viewed as being merely the result of English education or Western impact. We have also viewed that its emergence cannot be adequately accounted for unless the history of the socio-economic and political life of the period is available. In this section we would attempt to draw a picture of the actual historical context in which the social consciousness emerged and operated in Maharashtra during the nineteenth century. The fact that the awakening occurred at a time when Maharashtra, like the rest of the country, was passing through a period of transition makes it imperative to have first an idea of the historical context of the movement, before generalising about it. An attempt has also been made to briefly discuss the formative influences that went into the shaping of the intellectuals. The intention is, to repeat, not so much to explain the question of its emergence as much to have an idea of the social and intellectual background of the formation of the nineteenth century ideas in order to understand the movement from a broader perspective.

Unfortunately, historical research on the socio-economic and political life of nineteenth century Maharashtra is still very limited. Therefore, it is not possible to place the intellectual movement in its total historical context. What is attempted here is to examine the process of social transformation in Maharashtra during the nineteenth century and evaluate its

relationship with the emerging socio-cultural consciousness. A discussion of the pre-British socio-economic organisation has been taken as a point of departure in order to locate the nature of change under the colonial rule.

### Pre-British Socio-Economic Set-up

The hub of pre-British Maharashtra society was agrarian economy. The rural socio-economic activities centred around the village communities. These were mainly three sections of the village population that constituted the village community, viz., the cultivators, artisans and traders, and the village officers,<sup>1</sup> each one having a special importance in the agrarian set-up.

The peasantry constituted the largest section of the village population. On the basis of land-tenure they were divided mainly into two categories: the mirasdars and the uparis.<sup>2</sup> The former were the owners of the land they cultivated. The mirasi tenure was hereditary and saleable.<sup>3</sup> A mirasdar could not be dispossessed of his land while he continued to pay the land-tax. The upari tenure signified the right to cultivate the lands which were not one's own.<sup>4</sup> It was held by a temporary lease, the terms of which varied. With the expiry of the lease, the uparis ceased to have their claim and duties on the lands they cultivated.<sup>5</sup> An upari was thus a tenant-at-will and

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1. Territories Conquered from the Paishwas: A Report by Mountstuart Elphinstone, Delhi, Oriental Publishers, 1973, p.21. Hereafter referred to as A Report by Elphinstone.

2. Ibid., p.23, 113, pp.126-136.

3. Ibid., p.22.

4. Ibid., p.134.

5. Ibid.

not an owner of the land he cultivated. Village officers, namely Patel and Kulkarni, were mainly in charge of the upari land, who leased it to others for cultivation.<sup>1</sup> The birth of the upari lands was given mainly by the failures of the mirasdars to pay their land-tax, and thus the confiscated land was turned into upari by the village officers.<sup>2</sup>

There was a numerical preponderance of the mirasdars in the village life; the uparis formed a very small section of the cultivating classes.<sup>3</sup> There was always an attempt on the part of the uparis to turn themselves into mirasdars, mirasi tenure being an object of envy.<sup>4</sup>

Besides the two land tenures, there was yet another -- the vatan tenure. The highest officers of the pargana(district) like Deshmukh and Deshpande or the village-officers like the Patel and Kulkarni were vatan-holders.<sup>5</sup> The term vatan signified the benefits accruing to a person from the office or position he held in the Peshwa's administration.<sup>6</sup> Vatan tenure was thus chiefly an office tenure. It was hereditary

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p.135

3. Ibid., p.134

4. Ibid.

5. Desai, Sudha V., Social Life in Maharashtra under the Peshwas, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1980, p.4.

6. Ibid.

and saleable.<sup>1</sup> At the lowest rung of the agrarian society was a fourth stratum, though very small, of the landless labourers.<sup>2</sup> They had no right whatsoever in land and worked on daily wages.<sup>3</sup>

Mirasi land can be considered as private property in so far as its being hereditary and saleable. It was confiscated by the government only in the case of non-payment of land-tax, or that of not being claimed by the mirasdar or his kin for thirty years.<sup>4</sup> The mirasdar could also let his lands to any other person, being himself answerable to government for rent.<sup>5</sup>

As the chief function of the government was mainly fiscal—the collection of revenue, and to a very small extent judicial—the maintenance of order, the village communities had to solve their problems internally, whether economic or administrative.<sup>6</sup> The administrative machinery of the village communities comprised the Patel or Mukadam, the Kulkarni, the Chaugula and the Mahar.<sup>7</sup> The Patel was the most important functionary of the village administration. He was a government servant and held a portion of free-hold land by virtue of his vatan or office.<sup>8</sup> His office

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1. Ibid.

2. A Report by Elphinstone, op.cit., 120.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p.133

5. Ibid.

6. Desai, Sudha V., op.cit., p.16

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

and emoluments were hereditary and saleable.<sup>1</sup> The one who held the seniority-share was given the title of Mukadam.<sup>2</sup> His main duties were to ascertain and collect the land-tax for the government from the cultivators. He sent the entire collection to the Mamlatdar or district manager under the charge of the Chaugula and the Mahar.<sup>3</sup>

The Patel had magisterial duties as well. He could handle minor offences but was not allowed to impose fines.<sup>4</sup> Cases of more serious nature were referred to the higher officers. The Patel's role as a judicial authority was more of an arbitrator than a judge. He was also responsible for the safety of the village, and the village Mahar or watchman worked under him. The Patel was a very powerful and influential person in the village. He was not only a government servant but also a head of the village.<sup>5</sup> Quite often he functioned more as a chief or leader of the village community than as a government agent or nominee.<sup>6</sup> Thus in his dual capacity the Patel combined both legal and traditional domination.

The Kulkarni kept numerous records and accounts of the village. He ranked next to Patel and assisted him in his work of revenue collection. It was the duty of the Kulkarni to keep the records of the entire village-lands and their detailed

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p.17.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p.16

5. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1968, p.26.

6. Desai, Sudha, V., op.cit., p.24.

description concerning their size and quality, the name of the tenant or owner, the terms by which they were held, etc.<sup>1</sup> The office of the Kulkarni was also hereditary and saleable.<sup>2</sup> The Chaugula, ranking next to the Kulkarni, assisted the latter in the maintenance of village-records.<sup>3</sup> The Mahar was, as mentioned earlier, a village-watchman.

Although the village administrators such as the Patel, Kulkarni, etc., held lands by virtue of their office, they differed from the mirasdars in that they paid no rent to government. But at the same time they were also often mirasdars, having mirasi tenurial rights on certain plots of their lands for which they had to pay rent to government.<sup>4</sup> It is to be noted that the intermediaries such as the Patel and Kulkarni constituted the dominant section of the pre-British rural administration. The cultivators had no direct relationship with the government, and it was these revenue-farmers who provided the link between them and the government.

During the pre-British days the mirasdars bore the collective responsibility of a village for its rent.<sup>5</sup> Once the revenue demand had been fixed through negotiations between the Patel, the Mamlatdar and the Deshmukh, it was again the mirasdars who distributed the total demand on the village into the shares of individual cultivators.<sup>6</sup> Rent was fixed according

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1. Ibid., p.21; Choksey, R.D., The Aftermath 1818-1826, Bombay, 1950, p.151.

2. Choksey, R.D., op.cit., p.151

3. Desai, Sudha V., op.cit., p.23

4. A Report by Elphinstone, op.cit., p.135.

5. Kumar, Revinder, op.cit., p.110.

6. Ibid.



to the quality and extent of lands.<sup>1</sup> Land tax was paid mostly in cash.<sup>2</sup> The standard of land measure was, however, not uniform under the Peshwar.<sup>3</sup>

Another striking feature of the pre-British Maharashtrian agrarian structure was the absence of landlordism.<sup>4</sup> Although there flourished under the Peshwas a class of landed chiefs or Deshmukhs (district administrators) whose office was hereditary,<sup>5</sup> the majority of the agrarian classes consisted of small-holding peasants. There was absence of sharp economic differences, and the majority of the peasants lived on the margin of subsistence.<sup>6</sup> Their numerical preponderance in a way determined the limited extent of market operations. Subsistence economy could not provide enough prop to competitive market organisations. Another factor for the lack of development of competitive market organisations in the agrarian structure was the nature of the relationship between the peasants and the artisanal/trading sections. The artisans and village traders catering to the village needs were dependent for their living on the cultivators.<sup>7</sup> Their dependence on them for

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1. Choksey, R.D., op.cit., 1950, p.29
  2. Ibid., p.147
  3. Ibid., p.151
  4. A Report by Elphinstone, op.cit., p.133
  5. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., p.12
  6. Ibid., pp.21-25.
  7. A Report by Elphinstone, op.cit., p.120.

existence provided them little scope for furthering independent economic activities. Thus the artisans could not emerge as an independent social group in pre-British Maharashtra, and remained a service-group. Services from the artisans were repaid in kind in the form of agricultural produce.<sup>1</sup> Generally, the means of economic exchange within the village was the barter system, money-economy, despite its being existent, was not the dominant mode of exchange.<sup>2</sup> But where the exchange occurred on the inter-village level, cash replaced kind as a means of exchange.<sup>3</sup>

Money-lending was done on a fairly large scale.<sup>4</sup> Rural indebtedness was a widespread phenomenon in Maharashtra. The cultivators depended on the rural money-lenders for seeds and capital. The money lenders could, however, not greatly harass the cultivators for the recovery of their debts because they did not have any juridico-political powers in their hands.<sup>5</sup> The only judicial institution to which they could appeal was the village panchayat. The panchayat was the only institution which dispensed justice and settled village disputes.<sup>6</sup> It was an assembly of village elders functioning under the chairmanship of the village

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1. Ibid.

2. Desai, Sudha, V., op.cit., p.15

3. Ibid.

4. A Report by Elphinstone, op.cit., p.120

5. Kumer, Ravinder, "The Deccan Riots of 1875", JAS, Vol.XXIV; No.4, Aug. 1965, p.618

6. Desai, Sudha V., op.cit., p.6.

headman or patel. Since the panchayat was dominated by the patel and other influential members of the cultivating classes, it generally tilted its decision in favour of the peasants.<sup>1</sup> Thus the moneylenders could expropriate the surplus produce of the cultivators in recovery of their debts, but not their holdings.<sup>2</sup> Thus the moneylenders remained confined to money-lending activities and could not turn into landowning classes as it happened under the British. The rural moneylenders, however, advanced only small loans to the cultivators. The major ones were advanced by urban moneylenders to the village as a community under the headmanship of the patel in order to enable it to fulfil its revenue obligations.<sup>3</sup>

The socio-economic organisation was based on the caste system.<sup>4</sup> It was caste order that determined an individual's position in the society. It regulated the nature and extent of social relationship by imposing many restrictions on social intercourse. The Chitpavan Brahmins, by virtue of their being at the apex of social hierarchy, dominated the Maharashtra society. They had mobilised the institutions of religion, the administration and the ownership of land.<sup>5</sup> The religious orthodoxy in the form of Brahmanism and casteism gained

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1. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1965, p.618

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Choksey, R.D. (ed.), The Last Phase 1815-1818, Bombay, Phoenix Publications, 1948, p.258.

5. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1968, p.44.

ascendency during the Peshwa period.<sup>1</sup>

In such a Brahmin-dominated social organisation women, with regard to property rights, were relegated to a secondary position. They had no right of inheritance to the property of their father, even in the absence of brothers.<sup>2</sup> Whatever property rights a woman was entitled to lay entirely in the property of her husband.<sup>3</sup> Even these rights were limited. Wives enjoyed only a right to maintenance in their husband's property.<sup>4</sup>

There was sufficient spread of general education in pre-British Maharashtra.<sup>5</sup> There was a fairly widespread network of indigenous schools in all parts of the State of Bombay.<sup>6</sup> The City of Poona alone had the total of 222 schools.<sup>7</sup> These institutions were primarily of two types — Schools of Learning and Elementary Schools.<sup>8</sup> The former imparted the ancient traditional sacred knowledge and the latter restricted themselves to the teaching of three R's . Although the exact

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1. Desai, Sudha V., op.cit., p.198
  2. Ibid., p.83; A Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955, Poona, Govt. of Bombay Publication, 1958, p.386.
  3. Desai, Sudha V., op.cit., p.83
  4. Ibid.
  5. Parulekar, R.V. (ed.), Selections from the Records of the Govt. of Bombay, Education, Part II, 1813-1840, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1953, p.21.
  6. A Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955, op.cit., p.1.
  7. Ibid.
  8. Ibid.

statistics of the Schools of Learning is not available, the evidences suggest their existence in all parts of the State. Poona alone had 164 such schools out of the total of 222 schools in the City.<sup>1</sup>

The Elementary Schools were mostly private ventures, started by the teachers in response to the local demand and were maintained with the fees in cash or kind and the presents given by the pupils<sup>2</sup>. They were open to all who could afford to pay for their schooling except the Harijans, but the strong popular prejudice against the education of women restricted their attendance to boys only.<sup>3</sup> The course of instructions included reading, writing and simple arithmetic. The method of learning was through memory, as there were no regular text books.<sup>4</sup> Children were also taught at home by either tutors or parents.<sup>5</sup>

The total extent of education was, however, very meagre.<sup>6</sup> Women were hardly provided formal education, except in the rare

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p.2

4. Ibid.; Parulekar, R.V.(ed.), Survey of Indigenous Education in the province of Bombay (1820-1830), Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1945; p.7.

5. A Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955, op.cit., p.2.

6. Ibid.

cases of those from aristocratic or Muslim families.<sup>1</sup> Higher learning was exclusively the privilege of the members of high castes above. Education in general was mainly elementary and minimal.<sup>2</sup> The indigenous education was, moreover, primarily religious, although in some schools logic, medicine and philosophy were also taught.<sup>3</sup> Secular Schools had never taken root in the village system as it had in Bengal.<sup>4</sup> The content of education was devoid of emphasis on science and technology.<sup>5</sup> It was largely tradition-bound, with overstress on literary texts, grammar and metaphysics.<sup>6</sup> In short, the native learning was not conducive to the material development of the society.

To sum up, Maharashtra in its pre-British days represented a classic pre-capitalist socio-economic organisation in nature and substance. The social framework in terms of economy, education, outlook, etc. was totally traditional. The village communities were economically self-reliant and administratively autonomous.<sup>7</sup> There was a lack of occupational and educational

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1. Ibid., p.387.

2. Desai, Sudha V., op.cit., p.198.

3. Report of the Indian Education Commission, Calcutta, 1883, p.59.

4. Ibid., p.67.

5. Parulekar, R.V.(ed.), Survey of Indigenous Education in the Province of Bombay, op.cit., p.4.

6. Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1982, p.25.

7. Desai, Sudha, V., op.cit., p.28.

diversification in the social order. The pillar of the society was agrarian economy, the land-revenue being the main source of surplus extraction. The urban economy largely rested on this agrarian surplus, although it had its own separate economic activities. There was a lack of meaningful interaction between the urban and rural life, which were different in more than one way. While the economic organisation of the urban life was based on commerce and crafts, that of the rural life rested on cultivation with little scope for large-scale trade. The lack of interaction between the two reinforced the rural structure to acquire a world of its own. This is, however, not to say that there was no link with the urban life at all. The market, the flow of credit from the city to the village, etc. were the factors that provided the means of link and acted against the possibilities of villages becoming isolated communities. But the link being weak could not lead to an active process of synergistic interaction, a factor essential for modern socio-economic development.

A very significant feature of the social scenario of pre-British Maharashtra was the absence of middle class<sup>1</sup>. Although the potential for a middle class bourgeois development did exist,

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1. The middle class, to define briefly, is a composite intermediate social layer consisting of a wide heterogeneous range of occupational interests but bound together by a common style of living and behaviour pattern. Historically, this class arose with the rise of capitalism. See Mayer, Arno J., "The Lower Middle Class as Historical Problem", Journal of Modern History, V 47(3), Sept. 1975, pp.409-411; Misra, B.B., The Indian Middle Classes, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1961, pp.7-13.

the immobility of the caste organisation and bureaucratic despotism precluded such a development.<sup>1</sup> Thus the middle class elements in the society could not become a stratified order, each individual or group having freedom to move in social space.<sup>2</sup> They remained divided into water-tight status groups according to the caste to which they belonged; they could not form themselves into a unitary middle class social order.<sup>3</sup>

The emergence of a stratified social order depended on occupational and educational diversification missing in the pre-British structure. Land economy and limited education were both obstructive to social stratification and the proliferation of social groups. But more important still was the backwardness of technology, the existence of a domestic system of production, from which no stratified order could emerge.<sup>4</sup> The small-scale handicraft production afforded little scope for a multiplicity of economic activities. Thus, the pre-British Maharashtrian society was divided into fixed status groups. There were, of course, intermediate categories but no middle classes. Elements which formed the basis for a later middle class growth on modern lines were, however, not absent in pre-British Maharashtra. There were a number of functional groups which in point of income as well as respectability came next to the upper class of aristocracy.<sup>5</sup> These

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1. Misra, B.B., op.cit., p.9.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p.10.

5. Ibid., p.57.



were the mamlatdars, the patels and Kulkarnis, pandits, writers, poets, etc.<sup>1</sup> These groups lay in between the deshmukhs or landed chiefs at the top and the cultivators at the lower rung of the society.

### British Rule and the Social Change

Maharashtra was brought within the colonial grip in 1818. Henceforth, it was increasingly put on the path of change. The date, therefore, marked a change not only in the political sphere but also the beginning of a tangible process of alteration in the overall socio-economic organisation of the region. As a result, there grew a new social structure in the nineteenth century, different from the old in more than one way.

The process of transformation was, however, gradual and long. The specific situation the British were initially faced with would not allow them to go in for a drastic change in the agrarian administration of the region. After the establishment of political power, the matter of primary importance was the consideration of the acquisition. Violent and abrupt alterations were, therefore, off the cards of the British policy, as they involved the fear of potential native reaction which would be detrimental to the stability of the empire.<sup>2</sup> Colonial reformism' rashly initiated had immense potentiality for provoking popular revolt. Mountstuart Elphinstone, the

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1. Ibid., p.61

2. Johnson, Gordon, "Chitpavan Brahmins and Politics in Western India in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries" in Edmund Leach and S.N. Mukherjee (ed.), Elites in South Asia, Cambridge, 1970, p.101; Choksey, R.D. (ed.), op.cit., 1950, p.17.

Governor of Bombay (1818-1828), therefore, stressed the policy of 'caution and continuity in the process of social change'.<sup>1</sup>

The plan was "to show the utmost possible moderation to preserve the institutions of the natives."<sup>2</sup> This first aim was to reconcile all those who were connected with the administration of the Peshwa government.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, he did not intend to antagonise the Brahmins, a powerful section of the society.<sup>4</sup> This is, however, not to totally dismiss his personal preference for or respect to indigenous tradition. What is stressed is that in the matter of policy he was essentially a conscious tool of his time and situation.

a. Agrarian Scenario: Under Elphinstone no changes of far-reaching importance were introduced in the agrarian structure. But, however limited in scope the nature of rationalisation introduced in the old system, he certainly laid the foundations of the British agrarian policy. The actual state of cultivation and not the size of holding was made the basis of revenue assessment.<sup>5</sup> Assessments were made much more uniform and clearly defined.<sup>6</sup> As noted earlier, under the Peshwas lands were appraised according to their size and quality - utam, madhyam and kumisht,<sup>7</sup> and the standard of land measure varied from one place to another. Under the British rule a uniform pattern of land measurement and revenue

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1. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1968, p.71.

2. A Report by Elphinstone, op.cit., p.IV.

3. Ibid., p.V.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p.41; Choksey, R.D. (ed), op.cit., 1948, p.215.

6. A Report by Elphinstone, op.cit., p.41.

7. Choksey, R.D., op.cit., 1950, p.146.

assessment was introduced. Although the old system of revenue collection through the Patel was maintained by Elphinstone, as the ryot paid the agents of the Government through him, his power was considerably curtailed. The Patel's judicial functions were taken over by the newly instituted courts of Law.<sup>1</sup> Not only the Patel, even the Deshmukhs and Mamlatdars could not retain their former power under the British rule. Now their obligations, unlike during the Maratha rule, were clearly defined, and they were subject to rigid rules.<sup>2</sup> Their former autonomy of decision-making regarding revenue assessment and collection was taken away by the British Government.<sup>3</sup> Thus the new system of land revenue administration robbed most of the traditional powers off these intermediaries.

Elphinstone in his zeal for maintaining the native institutions upheld the panchayats. However, they ceased to be effective judicial organ and they were allowed only to resolve trivial issues.<sup>4</sup> He superimposed upon them an imposing structure of courts of law which dispensed justice according to Western legal principles.<sup>5</sup>

Elphinstone was succeeded by Sir John Malcolm as the Governor of Bombay in 1828. The expiry of his Governorship marked a clear break with the traditional revenue system. Robert Keith Pringle introduced the Ryotwari system of land-revenue in Bombay, a

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1. Ibid., p.48.

2. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1968, p.71.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p.78.

5. Ibid.

system first initiated in 1820 by Sir Thomas Munro, the Governor of Madras. This new system meant individual ownership of land and the system of fixed money payments to be made by the individual landed proprietors.<sup>1</sup> As noted earlier, under the Peshwas the revenue demand was fixed through negotiations between the Patel, the Mamlatdar and the Deshmukh in which there was always a chance of variation in the assessment. Under the British the revenue demand once fixed could not be changed according to the will of the officers concerned. Moreover, in the Ryotwari arrangement the proprietary rights of the peasants were inalienable as long as they paid the revenue and renewed their arrangements every year with the Government.<sup>2</sup> Now tax to be paid by the peasants was fixed by the government officers of revenue, instead of by the Patel, Mamlatdar and Deshmukh. The system of revenue farming was brought to an end, and direct settlements were made with the ryots.<sup>3</sup> Besides, the collective responsibility of a village for the payment of revenue was replaced by the individual responsibility of a peasant.<sup>4</sup> Thus the new land settlement eliminated the intermediaries, the dominant section of the pre-British rural administration.

The avowed objective of the Government was the attainment of material prosperity in general and the fostering of a class of rich peasants in particular in rural Maharashtra.<sup>5</sup> The precondition for the material prosperity of the rural society was thought to be

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1. Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government: Papers of the Joint Report of 1847 (No. 532, New Series), Land Records Dept., Nagpur, Govt. of Maharashtra, 1975, p.4.

2. Ibid.

3. Choksey, R.D., op.cit., 1950, p.48.

4. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1968, p.110.

5. Ibid., p.117.

individual responsibility and individual initiative. The new revenue arrangement was geared, at least at the level of policy, to instilling individual acquisitiveness among the agricultural population. It seems, however, that the idea of providing a stable social base for the British rule by stimulating the growth of rich peasants was no less decisive. Whatever the underlying objective, the notion of private property was made a social reality in the real sense of the term.<sup>1</sup> Peasants were thus stimulated to take part in market operations on a more extended scale.<sup>2</sup>

The results of the British revenue policy in Maharashtra were, however, not congruous to its avowed objective. Over-assessment of land revenue<sup>3</sup> and the rigorous methods of collection without respect to crop conditions resulted eventually in agrarian misery rather than prosperity.<sup>4</sup> There was a gradual but perceptible increase in the revenue collection over the years throughout the region.<sup>5</sup> Historically speaking, heavy taxes go well along the colonial administration.

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1. This is, however, not to deny the existence of private property during the Peshwa times. Private property did exist but not in its total sense. The mirasi land was saleable but the mirasdar had to take the prior permission of the Government before sale, although this was not strictly followed. Under the British rule the sale of land and produce entirely depended on the individual peasants.
  2. A Report by Elphinstone, op.cit., p.44.
  3. Selections from the Records of the Bombay Governments Papers of the Joint Report of 1847, op.cit., pp.58-82.
  4. Provincial Reports on the Material Condition of the People 1881-1891, Simis, 1894, p.6.
  5. Bombay Revenue Administration Reports, 1874-75 to 1875-76 (n.d.)

The inevitable result of the British agrarian policy and practice was the mounting indebtedness of the peasants.<sup>1</sup> They were helplessly driven into the clutches of moneylenders in order to meet the revenue demands. Moneylending in rural Maharashtra rose phenomenally during the nineteenth century under the British rule.<sup>2</sup> The position of moneylenders was further buttressed by the legal protection which the new legal framework extended to them. They could file civil suits against the peasants to reclaim their debts.<sup>3</sup> The peasants' ignorance of the complexity of the judicial regulations and operations further gave the moneylenders an upper hand. The situation was such as would never give them a chance of loss. If their loan was repaid, they benefitted from a high rate of interest; if not repaid, they would get the peasants' land through a government decree.<sup>4</sup>

This specific situation played a crucial role in the process of the restructuring of social relations in rural Maharashtra. This is, however, not to minimise the important functions performed by other factors. In fact, the role played by the factors such as extended market mechanisms, transport and communication, urban development, and the increase of rural-urban interaction was no less significant.<sup>5</sup> With the introduction of money as the dominant mode of exchange and the growth of market,

1. Provincial Reports on the Material Condition of the People 1881-1891, op.cit., p.6.
2. Report of the Commission on Riots in Poona and Ahmedabad District 1875, (Zerex), pp.30-31.
3. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1965, p.616.
4. Natarajan L., "Makatha Uprisings:1875" in A.R.Desai (ed.), Peasant Struggles in India, Bombay, Oxford Univ.Press,1979,p.160
5. This could not be elaborated as the available sources, both primary and secondary, could not provide much help.

village economy was linked up with the national and world economy at large.<sup>1</sup> Now the peasants took the harvested produce into the local market, and not to the local 'baniya'.<sup>2</sup> The development of transport, greater interaction between the urban and rural structures and the consequent circulation of goods and services were typical inductors of modern market relations in the agrarian structure.

The enhancement of the moneylenders' power and position, however, proved a catalyst in the process of class differentiation in the agrarian arena. There accrued an endless chain of dispossession of peasants' lands by the moneylenders. This can be ascertained by the number of civil suits filed by them to take possession of the peasants' land.<sup>3</sup>

	1851	1861	1865
Ahmednagar	98	318	689
Poona	75	282	632

In nearly all the cases the result of judicial action was the transfer of holdings from the owner-cultivators to non-cultivating moneylenders.<sup>4</sup> Thus the new legal arrangement went a long way in turning the moneylenders into landowners. The moneylenders had sufficient education to understand the law and the procedure of the courts, and they could manipulate the cases in their favour.<sup>5</sup>

1. Provincial Reports on the Material Condition of the People 1881-1891, op.cit., p.6.

2. Ibid.

3. Natarajan, L., op.cit., p.160.

4. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1965, p.617.

5. Report of the Commission on Riots in Poona and Ahmedabad Districts, 1875, op.cit., p.31.

The moneylenders did not, however, engage themselves in agricultural production, partly because of their caste restrictions and mainly because of their allurements of moneylending as the most lucrative business. They let the lands to the former proprietors, and appropriated the major chunk of the surplus produce for themselves. The transfer of land was so all-embracing that nearly all old landed peasants, even patels and the principal cultivators, were reduced to the status of tenants tilling the fields of the moneylenders.<sup>1</sup> Thus came into being 'absentee landlordism' and large-scale tenancy in agricultural cultivation in Maharashtra.

The working of the colonial land policy also stimulated the growth of rich peasants in nineteenth century Maharashtra, although their number was very small.<sup>2</sup> The rich peasants of nineteenth century Maharashtra were, however, not capitalist agriculturists. There was no large-scale accumulation in the agrarian sphere nor was there any capitalisation of agriculture during the whole of the nineteenth century. But a section of the peasantry did accumulate more wealth during the period. They cultivated large fields of superior quality and possessed adequate stock and capital.<sup>3</sup> They also occasionally employed others on their fields and can be regarded as independent. The big peasants were, however, eclipsed by the growing dominance of landlord-moneylenders. Another class that emerged out of the colonial agrarian policy and practice was that of the landless labourers.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1965, p.618.

2. Johnson, Gordon, op.cit., p.97.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.



The process of the concentration of land in fewer hands and the pauperisation of the majority ultimately resulted in the events of 1875 known as the Deccan Riots. The oppressed peasantry rose in revolt against their oppressing class - the landlord moneylenders. The result was the passing of the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act in 1879, restricting to an extent the transfer of peasants' lands and restraining usury.<sup>1</sup> The Act could not, however, reverse the direction of the emerging trend of change in the agrarian structure.<sup>2</sup>

The evolving social classes in rural Maharashtra during the nineteenth century can be broadly classified into three: non-cultivating class under which fell the landlord-moneylenders; cultivating land occupants of which the rich peasants, the small-holding peasants and tenants broadly formed the main pillars; and agricultural labourers having meagre, or no, land.<sup>3</sup> The percentage of the first to the whole of the rural population was roughly 2.12, that of the second 77.68 and the third 20.20.<sup>4</sup> This picture is valid for the most of Maharashtra during the nineteenth century.

To conclude, the emerging agrarian structure was not the logical development of the pre-British socio-economic set-up. It was largely the product of the nineteenth century colonial agrarian policy and practice. One of the significant features of the changing agrarian scenario in Maharashtra was the emergence of a class of landlord-moneylenders, not found as a class in pre-

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1. The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. VIII, Berthampore to Bombay, Oxford, 1908, p. 354.
  2. Provincial Reports on the Material Condition of the People 1881-1891, op.cit., p. 7.
  3. Ibid., p. 1.
  4. Ibid.

British days. The growth of rich peasants was another significant development, although agriculture did not go capitalistic. The growth of landlord-moneylenders, the rich peasants and the small-scale peasant proprietors formed the three main segments of a newly evolving social category called the landed middle class in nineteenth century rural Maharashtra.<sup>1</sup>

Changes in the rural society such as the substitution of custom by law, the growth of a highly centralised administrative apparatus, the decline of the functions and importance of the traditional village communities, the elimination of the intermediaries, etc. played a great role in encouraging a middle-class growth in the agrarian arena.<sup>2</sup> The British agrarian measures shifted the basis of the society from status to contract and created conditions for social mobility.<sup>3</sup> More significantly, changes in the rural sphere had a direct bearing on the changes in the overall social structure. The new revenue laws, the creation of private property in land and the freedom with which it could be alienated resulted in an unprecedented increase in the volume of litigation. This produced a corresponding increase in public business which necessitated on the one hand hierarchies of officials and on the other professional hierarchies of lawyers.<sup>4</sup> Both swelled the number of the modern educated middle class the study of which would be the focus of attention in the subsequent discussion.

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1. Misra, B.B., op.cit., pp.123-144.

2. Ibid., p.15.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

**b. Urban Areas** The main economic activity in urban Maharashtra centred around commerce and crafts from pre-British days. Bombay had been a centre of commerce since the seventeenth century. The British first acquired Bombay in 1661 as a dowry of Catherine of Portugal to Charles II who subsequently transferred ownership to the East India Company in 1668.<sup>1</sup> Thus was started the commercial activity of the Company in Bombay. The penetration of the Company into the commercial activities of the city was a significant landmark for the development of Bombay commerce and the eventual evolution of Bombay into a modern metropolis. Another significant step towards the development of Bombay commerce was the transfer of the headquarters of the Company trade from Surat to the island.<sup>2</sup> Thus Bombay was put on the path of gradually developing into the chief centre of English commerce in Western India. It was, however, mainly during the period of British political domination that the commercial development took place rather propitiously.

Initially, the Company greatly depended on the native commercial communities for their cooperation in order to communicate with the native population for the purposes of business transactions.<sup>3</sup> During the greater part of the nineteenth century this commercial partnership was maintained, and the eventual growth of a commercial middle class in Maharashtra was greatly dictated by their commercial association with the British.<sup>4</sup>

1. The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island, Vol. I, Bombay, 1909, p.274.

2. Ibid., p.407.

3. Dobbin, Christine, Urban Leadership in Western India: Politics and Communities in Bombay City, 1840-1885, London, Oxford Univ. Press 1972, p.2.

4. Miera, B.B., op.cit., p.13,80.

The period between 1818 and 1870 was a period of the City's unprecedented economic development. It was during this period that the beginnings of modern transport facilities were established, international trade connections were developed, and the ground was laid for the development of modern industries in urban Maharashtra.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the introduction of transport network, particularly railways, laid the infrastructure for industrialisation which inevitably followed by the end of the nineteenth century.

Commerce during the period paid rich dividends. It led to the accumulation of wealth and social influence in the hands of the merchants. A direct corollary of this development was the infusion of a sense of commercial competition in the urban economic sphere.<sup>2</sup> The main factors which contributed to the growth of commercial capital in Maharashtra were, to mention a few, the emergence of joint-stock principle, the establishment of banks, etc. If the former helped the process of capital concentration, the latter provided an added impetus to that process. The Bank of Bombay was established in 1840, to be followed by the Bank of Western India in 1842 (renamed in 1845 the Oriental Bank) and the Commercial Bank of India in 1845.<sup>3</sup> The introduction of momentary uniformity on an all-India level greatly helped this development. The coinage of India was made

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1. Morris, Morris David, The Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force in India: A Case Study of the Bombay Cotton Mills, 1854-1947, Bombay, Oxford Univ. Press, 1965, p.13.
  2. The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island, Vol.I, op.cit., p.170.
  3. Ibid., p.288

uniform in 1835.<sup>1</sup>

The leading merchants did not confine themselves to only bank shares, but also extended their enterprises <sup>in other fields such as railways and insurance companies.</sup> Two main factors which unprecedently increased the material prosperity of the Bombay merchants were the opium trade with China<sup>3</sup> and the American Civil war. During the War the export of cotton from the U.S.A. to England ceased, and India was called upon to come upto the British Industrial needs.<sup>4</sup> Thus the American War gave an enormous stimulus to the cultivation and commercial circulation of cotton. This sudden commercial boom resulted in large-scale reserves of capital in the hands of the merchants.

The foundations of industrial infrastructure and the accumulation of capital paved the way for the emergence of manufacturing entrepreneurship in Bombay. The first industry to be established was cotton-mill industry in 1850s. In 1851 Cavajjee Nanabhoj Davar set up his first steam-driven cotton-spinning factory in Bombay.<sup>5</sup> It was India's first factory.

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1. Ibid., p.283.
  2. Dobbin, Christine, op.cit., p.18.
  3. Opium was not grown in the Bombay Presidency. It was cultivated in Malwa and imported into the Presidency. See The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol.VIII, op.cit., p.354.
  4. Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p.58; Report of the Commission on Riots in Poona and Ahmedabad Districts, op.cit., pp.27-28.
  5. Misra, B.B., op.cit., p.117.

By 1865 there were ten mills in Bombay with 6,600 employees.<sup>1</sup> Remarkably enough, it was mainly the Indians who ran the textile concerns; they had soon outnumbered the Europeans.<sup>2</sup> However, the industrial development in Maharashtra during the nineteenth century was not rapid and remained largely stunted. But however limited the development, the period saw the birth of two modern social classes in Maharashtra: the commercial bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The former tended to function on class lines crossing all divisions of caste or community. They were conscious of their class interests, and there was united action on their part to promote these interests. Their united endeavours in this direction found concrete manifestation in the establishment of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce in 1836, the Bombay Millowners' Association in 1875, and the Bombay Native Piece-Goods Merchants' Association in 1881.<sup>3</sup> The reigning ideology of these associations was the protection and promotion of the interests of the industrialising commercial capital. Furthermore, they established newspapers and journals to voice their interests, the Bombay Times and the Journal of Commerce being some of them.<sup>4</sup> The dominant castes among commercial bourgeoisie were mainly Brahmins, Gujars and Marwaris.<sup>5</sup> They had a vast reserves of

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1. The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island, Vol.I, op.cit., p.486.
  2. Census of India, 1911, Vol.VII, Bombay, Part I, Bombay, 1912, p.324.
  3. The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island, Vol.I, op.cit., pp.455-457.
  4. Dobbin, Christine, op.cit., p.3.
  5. Omvedt, Gail, op.cit., p.74.

wealth and social influence and were generally known as the Shetias.<sup>1</sup>

The process of the emergence of entrepreneurship and its expansion tended to create divisions in the mercantile community which once together had served as 'middlemen' of the Company. It tended to perform the twin functions of enriching the few on the one hand, and endangering the independent existence of artisans and small merchants engaged in petty trade on the other<sup>2</sup>. The groups of artisans and small traders were thus getting isolated from the emerging commercial bourgeoisie by the very logic of the development of the latter. They had, however, acquired sufficient wealth from their commercial association with the British to grow into the stature of middle-class merchants during the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

The growth of commerce and industry during the period had another significant dimension. It tended to increase the avenues of employment by an extension of specialised services, however underdeveloped they might have been. It brought into being a group of specialists in business administration. New

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1. Dobbin, Christine, op.cit., p.9.

2. The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island, Vol.I, op.cit., pp.289-290.

3. Misra, B.B., op.cit., p.106.

functional groups such as technicians, supervisors, managers, inspectors, etc., arose with the increase in the size and variety of business.<sup>1</sup> Thus the society was getting proliferated into numerous new groups and categories, which were non-existent in the pre-British days. It was precisely at this stage that the new education played a significant role in ensuring the growth of such new groups during the nineteenth century.

Growth of Education and the Rise of Educated Middle Class.

The architect of modern education in Maharashtra as of other changes was Mountstuart Elphinstone. Before the establishment of the British rule, however, the history of the development of modern education was that of mainly the work of missionary societies.<sup>2</sup> The American Missionary Society opened a school for boys in Bombay in 1814, and ten years later in 1824 established the first school for native girls in Western India.<sup>3</sup> By 1829 the American Missionary Society had 9 schools for both boys and girls, and nearly 400 girls were receiving instruction in their schools.<sup>4</sup> Many schools were also established by other

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1. Ibid., p.75.
  2. Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p.12.
  3. Ibid.; A Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955, op.cit., p.387.
  4. Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p.14; A Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955, op.cit., p.387.



missionaries.<sup>1</sup> During the initial phase of colonial rule prior to 1854, the missionary activities in the field of education were further accentuated. The services of the missionary schools were valuable especially in two fields which had been ignored by the later Board of Education, namely, the education of women and that of the backward classes.<sup>2</sup> The missionaries, however, took education as a means of proselytisation.<sup>3</sup>

Another step towards the development of modern education in Maharashtra was the formation of the Bombay Education Society in 1815 designed principally to educate European children on Christian principles.<sup>4</sup> It did not, however, confine its efforts to the education of European children only; native boys were also encouraged to attend schools till at least 1822 when it confined itself solely to the education of European children.<sup>5</sup> It was Elphinstone who made the first official attempt to educate the natives on modern lines. He encouraged the Bombay

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1. A Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955, op.cit., p.387.
  2. Ibid., p.7.
  3. Ibid., p.403.
  4. Parulekar, R.V.(ed.), op.cit., Part II, p.1.
  5. Ibid.; Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p.12; The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island, Vol.III, op. cit., p.101.

Education Society to open in 1820 a branch called the Native Education Society with the object of providing facilities for the education of the native community through the acquisition of already existing schools and also through the institution of new ones.<sup>1</sup> The Native Education Society aimed at providing schools under its aegis with teachers trained in English, and in Western science and philosophy.<sup>2</sup> In 1822 the task of providing instruction to the native population was taken up by a new association founded the very year, which was called the Native School-Book and School-Society<sup>3</sup>. Elphinstone became its first President. Its sole object was to promote modern education among the Indian people through native languages.<sup>4</sup> The Society started a central English School in Bombay in 1824, which later on developed into the Elphinstone High School and the Elphinstone College, both of which came to be collectively called the Elphinstone Institution.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1968, p.53.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p.12.
  4. Parulekar, R.V.(ed.), op.cit., Part II, p.43;  
A Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955, op.cit.,  
p.4.
  5. A Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955, op.cit.,  
p.5.

The Society established a number of English schools all around the State.<sup>1</sup> It came to acquire the appellation of 'The Bombay Native Education Society' from 29th January, 1827.<sup>2</sup> The Poona School Society was founded in 1832 with the same objective of providing modern education, and the Poona English School was founded the very year.<sup>3</sup>

The Government encouraged not only English education but also the establishment of many vernacular schools. In 1826 two government Marathi schools were opened : one at Dharwar and another at Hubli.<sup>4</sup> In 1840 the Government appointed a new body called the Board of Education, and all the educational institutions of the state were brought under its jurisdiction.<sup>5</sup> The Board established many schools and laid special emphasis on the establishment of vernacular schools.<sup>6</sup> In 1854-55 it conducted nearly 240 vernacular schools in the Bombay Presidency educating more than 19,000 students.<sup>7</sup> The stress was, however,

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1. Ibid.
  2. Parulekar, R.V.(ed.), op.cit., Part II, p.43.
  3. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1968, pp.269-270.
  4. Parulekar, R.V. (ed.), op.cit., Part II, p.43; Ibid., Part III, p.X.
  5. A Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955, op.cit., p.5.
  6. Ibid.
  7. Ibid.; Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p.90.

given on English education, and by the year 1842 English schools were established all over Maharashtra,<sup>1</sup> although the exact statistics is not available. The statistics of the number of schools for the later period is, however, available. There were 5,586 primary schools, both English and Vernacular, with 3, 26, 434 students in 1906-07 in the Bombay Presidency; and the number of high schools in the Presidency was 106.<sup>2</sup> It is to be noted that primary education in Maharashtra was built upon from the beginning, by the direct instrumentality of the government.<sup>3</sup>

As suggested earlier, there was an official neglect of the education for women and backward classes till 1854. Even Elphinstone was absolutely silent on this issue. The efforts of the Government during the initial period were first directed to the education of the upper classes of society, as the Government wanted to win the goodwill of the influential sections with a view to consolidating the empire.<sup>4</sup> The same reason led them to be negligent about the education of women, as popular prejudice ran against it. It was only during the second half of the nineteenth century that the education of

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1. Phadke, H.A., op.cit., p.2.
  2. Progress of Education in India 1907-1912, East India (Education), 1914, p.97.
  3. Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p.33.
  4. A Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955, op.cit., p.403.

women and backward classes came to draw attention of the Government mainly under the pressure from the native intellectuals.<sup>1</sup> The Government finally accepted the responsibility for the education of women in 1854.<sup>2</sup> By 1870s the number of girls' schools rose to 218, as against 23 in 1864-65 in the Presidency, with 9,190 girl students.<sup>3</sup> The natives also organised a number of schools for girls during the second half of the nineteenth century. The government efforts backed up by the native support during the period bore perceptible fruit. By 1891-92 the number of girls at schools rose to nearly 27,000 in the Presidency, a number higher than in any other province of India.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the statistics of the members of the backward classes receiving education is not available.

The efforts towards the development of modern education in Maharashtra were not merely confined to schools, primary or secondary; higher education was also given administrative encouragement, although the latter was not accorded corresponding emphasis. Elphinstone established in 1821 in Poona the first college in Maharashtra named the Hindu College.<sup>5</sup> Initially it was designed for the encouragement of the study of Sanskrit and ancient Hindu literature and Science.<sup>6</sup> Subjects like Advaita, Jyotish, Alankar, Nyaya and the Vedas were taught at the Hindu College.<sup>7</sup> This was done primarily with a view to pacifying the

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p.388.

3. Ibid., p.389.

4. Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p.35.

5. A Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955, op.cit., p.4.

6. Ibid.; Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p.261.

7. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1968, p.267.

reaction of the orthodox sections who were getting dissatisfied with the devolution of their traditional dominance under the colonial rule.<sup>1</sup> But gradually efforts were afoot to undermine the hold of traditional values and to expose the students to the influence of Western ideas. In 1836 the Hindu College was reconstituted and the emphasis greatly shifted to the instruction of Western ideas.<sup>2</sup> From 1837 onwards certain branches of Hindu learning were dropped and the study of English introduced.<sup>3</sup> From 1850 onwards the College was thrown open to all castes, and finally in 1864 it was renamed the Dacca College.<sup>4</sup>

Other centres of higher learning during the nineteenth century were the Elphinstone College, St. Xavier's College, both in Bombay, and the Fergusson College in Poona, founded in 1836,<sup>5</sup> 1869 and 1885 respectively.<sup>6</sup> The Elphinstone Institution (having high school and college) had 961 students on its rolls in 1855 and the Hindu College had 502 students.<sup>7</sup> In 1855 the Government of Bombay created the Department of Education whose sole concern was <sup>the promotion and management of education in</sup> the Presidency.<sup>8</sup> The University of Bombay, the second oldest

1. Richey, J.A. (ed.), Selections from Educational Records, Part-II 1840-1859, Calcutta, Bureau of Education, 1922, p. 155.
2. Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p. 261.
3. Ibid.
4. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1968, p. 274.
5. Christine Dobbin, however, dates 1834 as the year of the founding of the Elphinstone College. See Dobbin, Christine, op.cit., p. 27.
6. Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p. 262.
7. A Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955, op.cit., p. 5.
8. Ibid., p. 1.

university of India, was formally inaugurated in 1857.<sup>1</sup> It continued to be the only university in the State till 1947.

The Bombay University curriculum was marked by its heavy stress on classical languages and literature, classical history and mathematics, and its paucity of science courses.<sup>2</sup> Although technical education was generally given a low profile in the British educational policy, in 1845 the Grant Medical College was established in Bombay, and in 1854 an Engineering Class and Mechanical School was started in Poona.<sup>3</sup> It is to be emphasised again, however, that there was very little impetus given to higher education, as compared to primary education, in Maharashtra. 'Downward filtration theory' was not followed in Bombay Presidency.<sup>5</sup>

As to the medium of instruction in the nineteenth century, no English was taught in the primary and middle schools, the medium being the vernacular.<sup>6</sup> In the high schools the medium was throughout English, although the vernacular was also taught side by side. In the colleges the medium was entirely English.<sup>7</sup>

Elphinstone, while introducing the new educational system, always took into account the question of the overall structural stability of the colonial rule. Being aware of the importance

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1. Ibid., p.235.

2. McDonald, Eldon E., 'English Education and Social Reform in Late Nineteenth Century Bombay' . JAS, Vol.XXV: No.3, May 1966, p.455.

3. A Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955, op.cit., pp.5-6.

4. Ibid., p.246.

5. Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p.68.

6. Bannerjee, G.C., 'Telang as Educationist' in K.T.Telang 1850-1893: A Memoir, op.cit., p.67.

7. Ibid.

of the Brahmins and their dominance in the Maharashtrian society, he decided to continue the Dakshina system,<sup>1</sup> inherited from the Peshwas. The motive behind the continuance of dakshina was mainly political, as Elphinstone himself was personally against it; it was done primarily with a view to minimising hostile reactions of the orthodox to the Raj.<sup>2</sup> Although the system was continued, there was, however, a change introduced in its mode of distribution. It was to be gradually conferred on those "engaged in more useful branches of learning - Law, Mathematics, etc., instead of pampering proficient in Hindu divinity."<sup>3</sup> A consideration was also asst to appoint a certain number of professors out of the dakshina fund to teach these sciences.<sup>4</sup>

The efforts towards the elimination of the dakshina were hastened after the expiry of Elphinstone's Governorship. The Government of Bombay stopped entertaining any new candidates to the dakshina after 1836.<sup>5</sup> From 1836-38 onwards the Government reserved some amount of money from the Dakshina Grant for educational institutions.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the expenses of the Hindu College of Poona were originally met from the Dakshina Fund.<sup>7</sup>

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1. The dakshina owed its origin from the days of Shivaji (1674) to the end of the rule of the Peshwas (1818). It was a system greatly nurtured by the Peshwas to the members of the Brahmin caste for their role in fostering cohesion among Hindu community on the basis of spirituality. In concrete terms, it was a charitable grant, an annual allowance, distributed chiefly to learned Brahmins. See Richey, J.A. (ed.), op.cit., Part II, p.149; Parulekar, R.V. (ed.), op.cit., Part I, p.XIII.
  2. Elphinstone held: "The amount of dakshina is enormous waste, although the abolition of the institution would be extremely unpopular, keeping in view the influence of the orthodox." See Parulekar, R.V. (ed.), op.cit., Part I, p.91.
  3. Ibid., p.92.
  4. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1968, p.274.
  5. Ibid., p.268.
  6. Parulekar, R.V. (ed.), op.cit., Part I, p.VII.
  7. Ibid.



In 1857 the sum of money distributed to the shastris was reduced was reduced from Rs.28,000 in 1839 to Rs.12,000.<sup>1</sup> Finally, in 1859 the dakshina fund was completely taken over by the Department of Education, and a number of Fellowships were instituted, which were awarded to candidates of all castes to enable them to receive a secular education in the schools and colleges of the State.<sup>2</sup>

The British attempt at spreading English education found favourable social climate as it carried with it the allurements of getting governmental jobs.<sup>3</sup> It was, however, the traditional upper sections of the society who most enthusiastically responded to the new educational opportunities. Mention may be made of the Chitpavan Brahmins and the Pathare Prabhus in particular. Their tradition of learning and government service under the Peshwas had made them aware of the advantages of education,<sup>4</sup> and it was they who flocked in great numbers to the schools and colleges opened by the British government. For instance, of the 152 students who left the higher classes of the Elphinstone Institution between 1827 and 1842, 71 (47 per cent) were Prabhus, 28 (18 per cent) Parsis, 16 (11 per cent) Brahmins and 12 (8 per cent) Saraswat Brahmins.<sup>5</sup> The remainder comprised a number of lower Hindu castes. There were no Banias, Bhatias or Muslims in the Elphinstone Institution during the period.<sup>6</sup> Even by 1860s there was no marked alteration on this situation. But gradually the sons of trading

1. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1968, pp.273-274.

2. Ibid., p.274.

3. A Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955, op.cit., p.6.

4. Dobbin, Christine, op.cit., p.80.

5. Ibid., p.31.

6. Ibid.

community and of landowners were coming in for higher learning. For instance, of the 179 students in the Elphinstone College in 1870 30 per cent were the children of government employees or pensioners, 23 per cent the children of merchants, 12 per cent the children of professional men and 11 per cent the children of landowners.<sup>1</sup> However, the traditional higher castes still preponderated the educational institutions. For example, 34 per cent of all the students of the Elphinstone College in 1870 were Parsis, 34 per cent Brahmins and 9 per cent Prabhus,<sup>2</sup> These three still forming the largest individual groups. The Brahmins continued to occupy a virtual monopoly over the new education till the end of the century. In 1885 they averaged about 43 per cent of all college students in Bombay, Parsis about 23 per cent and Gujarati trading castes about 7 per cent.<sup>3</sup> If we take into account the social position of students in Maharashtra as a whole, the predominance of the Brahmins in educational institutions becomes much more conspicuous. The following is the caste breakdown of students in the colleges of Maharashtra in 1884.<sup>4</sup>

Institution	Brahmins	Kshatriyas	Vanis
Elphinstone College, Bombay	59	10	38
Deccan College, Poona	107	1	1
Xavier's College, Bombay	15	1	5
Rajaram College, Kolhapur	23	-	-

It is significant to note that in the Deccan College in Poona more than 97 per cent of the students were Brahmins, although the caste constituted only 4 per cent of the total population of the region.<sup>5</sup>

1. Ibid., p.35.

2. Ibid.

3. McDonald, Ellen E., op.cit., p.454.

4. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1968, p.283.

5. Ibid., pp.282-283.

It was the government service which attracted the greatest number of the educated sections in nineteenth century Maharashtra. To give an example, of the 152 students who left the higher classes of the Elphinstone Institution between 1827 and 1842, 61 per cent entered government services as writers, accountants or translators in the various governmental offices, 8 per cent took educational appointments, 11 per cent went to work in commercial offices, mainly as clerks, and another 11 per cent became merchants.<sup>1</sup> Between 1850 and 1855 the government employment still retained its firm hold.<sup>2</sup> In the 1860s the students flocked in greater numbers to the government educational services. For instance, 61 per cent of all the B.A.s and M.A.s between 1862 and 1870 had taken educational appointments.<sup>3</sup> The next highest figure 14 per cent represented those who entered the legal profession, followed by 9 per cent who accepted other government appointments.<sup>4</sup> The legal career was pursued by mainly those whose chief interest was commerce, or who were rich and influential in other ways.<sup>5</sup> The law was the only profession respected by the English governing class.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the legal career provided an access to much of the mystique of the ruling order.

Thus, there was emerging an educated middle class<sup>7</sup> in nineteenth century Maharashtra with government service as its main

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1. Dobbin, Christine, op.cit., p.39.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p.40.

5. Ibid., p.46.

6. Ibid.

7. The term 'educated middle class' is used here to signify mainly those who had received higher education in English and were engaged in the various recognised professions in the nineteenth century.

profession. This class came to be constituted from different social layers such as the traditional administrators, rich peasants and the commercial community. Most of the Maharashtrian intellectuals, particularly in the early phase of the nineteenth century, belonged to this newly emerging educated middle class, and nearly all of them came from the ranks of government service. In fact, those who were more socially inclined from among the intelligentsia eventually turned into intellectuals and devoted themselves to the problems of their society and culture. It was their social mission that distinguished them from the main body of the intelligentsia, and they came to constitute a distinct social stratum. It should be, however, pointed out that for becoming an intellectual the knowledge of English was not necessary at all.

To sum up, the Maharashtrian society underwent fundamental transformation during the nineteenth century. One of the significant aspects of this change, for the purpose of the study of the intellectual movement, was the emergence of a number of new social categories loosely called the middle class. The formation of this class was the result of the changes introduced by the British government in the realms of economy, education, law and administration. In fact, they formed the various nuclei for the growth of modern middle class in Maharashtra.

The growth of middle class in the nineteenth century was, however, not endogenous; they did not evolve by force of the working of the endogenous forces of social change, by inner social dynamics. They did not grow from within.

They were created exogenously by the superimposition of the socio-economic and politico-ideological superstructures over the indigenous traditional society without a comparable development in its economy and social institutions.<sup>1</sup> Its emergence was, therefore, not a natural growth, for the British rule did not introduce structural transformation in the economy of the region at the base level. Agriculture remained backward and industrialisation stunted, despite the fact that the system of revenue extraction and market mechanisms was at the acme of its development. Commercialisation of agriculture did take place but not its capitalisation during the entire period of colonial domination.

In England the middle class emerged basically as a result of the economic and technological changes; they were for the most part engaged in trade and industry.<sup>2</sup> In Maharashtra, on the contrary, they emerged more in consequence of changes in the system of law and public administration than in economic and institutional development, and the majority of them belonged to the learned professions.<sup>3</sup> The intelligentsia thus became the dominant strand in the composition of the Maharashtrian middle class. The members of the educated professions such as government servants, lawyers, college teachers, writers, scholars etc., constituted the dominant sections of this class.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Misra, B.B., op.cit., p.11.

2. Ibid., p.V.

3. Ibid.

4. Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p.286.

Moreover, the increase in the number of these groups was not so much due to technological and industrial progress as much to educational, judicial and administrative development. As their power, prestige and social position depended mainly on their access to education and employment opportunities, they came to occupy a virtual monopoly over the new education, and filled up most of the permitted ranks of the administration.<sup>1</sup>

Another noteworthy feature of the emerging social scenario of Maharashtra in the nineteenth century, as suggested earlier, was that the educated middle class was emerging mainly from among the traditional upper sections of the society. Despite the British attempt to minimise Brahmin monopoly over education and spread it to other sections of the society, the lack of development of popular education helped ensure Brahmin monopoly.<sup>2</sup> Although the traditional hegemony of the Brahmins, especially the Chitpavans, had increasingly been undermined since 1818, they remained the most influential social group in Maharashtra.<sup>3</sup> It was they with an intellectual tradition who were best able to take advantage of Western education and its associated employment opportunities.<sup>4</sup> The intellectuals of the nineteenth century,

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1. The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island, Vol.I. op.cit., p.176.
  2. Omvedt, Gail, op.cit., p.76.
  3. Johnson, Gordon, op.cit., pp.101-107.
  4. Omvedt, Gail, op.cit., p.76.

forefathers when the latter migrated into the power positions under the Raj.<sup>1</sup> This was, in short, the historical context under which the intellectuals emerged and functioned in Maharashtra during the nineteenth century.

### Formative Influences

Nearly all the intellectuals in nineteenth century Maharashtra happened to be English-educated, and the imprint of Western ideas is clearly discernible in their thought. In their writings and speeches they profusely quoted the ideas of Western philosophers. More significantly, the model of socio-economic development which the intellectuals had in mind was the British (bourgeois) one. The intellectual origins of socio-cultural consciousness among the educated Maharashtrians, therefore, can certainly be to an extent attributed to English education and their introduction to the modern Western thought. But English was not the sole formative influence on them. They were grounded in the Indian philosophical thought as much as they were in the Western. In fact, the influence of the indigenous intellectual tradition was greatly marked in the nineteenth century Maharashtrian thought, more than anywhere else in contemporary India. Besides, they knew not only English but also were well-versed in the Indian classical languages like Sanskrit. Mention may be made of Mandlik and Bhandarkar in particular.

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1. Ibid., p.335.

A considerable number of Maharashtrian intellectuals were greatly impressed by the egalitarian ideas of the Bhakti saint-poets, and they had immense reverence for the medieval mystics.<sup>1</sup> The latter exerted considerable influence on the nineteenth century pioneers, so much so that they proudly took themselves to be the successors of the Bhakti saints, destined to extend and elaborate the mission of the latter to its logical conclusion.<sup>2</sup> They praised them for their denouncing caste tyranny, polytheism, idol-worship, ritualism

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1. See Ranade, M.G., Religious and Social Reform : A Collection of Essays and Speeches, collected and compiled by M.B. Kolaskar, Bombay, G. Claridge and Co., 1902, pp.225-227; Ranade, M.G., Rise of the Maratha Power, Delhi Publications Division, 1961, p.64; Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.II, p.615; Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.42.
2. Bhandarkar held : " The slogan of devotion, purity of heart and social equality we have inherited from our reverend Bhakti saints. Our mission is to extend and elaborate the mission <sup>of</sup> ~~and~~ the Bhakti saints to its logical conclusion." See Bhandarkar, R.G. op.cit., Vol.II, p.615. " The Bhakti prophets have left us a rich legacy... The prophets and preachers of the Bhakti school have inspiration of the right sort in their teachings to fill us with healthy ideas of holiness." Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.42.



and religious formalism,<sup>1</sup> the issues against which the nineteenth century intellectuals endeavoured throughout the period. Ranade was highly impressed by the efforts of the Bhakti saints to steer the society on the principles of egalitarianism.<sup>2</sup> He greatly admired them for their emphasis on the mass culture and the upliftment of people in general without any distinctions.<sup>3</sup> He called them "the preachers and prophets of Hindu Protestantism". Chandavarkar held them in high esteem especially for their espousal of the cause of the depressed classes.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Chandavarkar wrote : " It is no exaggeration to say that what has kept up the heart of the Hindu, be he high-caste or low-caste, is the music, the poetry, the life of the saints of devotional school. The saints denounced dogma, formalism in religion and caste tyranny. By their preachings the saints tried to save Hinduism from decay and degeneration." See Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., pp.144-145. Ranade held : "Polytheistic worship was condemned both in theory and in practice by the saints and prophets of Maharashtra. Tukaram and Ramdas denounced idol-worship, and rites and rituals. See Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1961, pp.72-73.
  2. "The principal features of the religious movement commencing in the fifteenth century with Dnyandev were the attempt at the modification of the strictness of the old spirit of caste exclusiveness, the raising of the Shudra classes to a position of spiritual power and social importance almost equal to that of the Brahmans; it raised the status of women, made the nation more humane. It subjected and partly carried out a plan of reconciliation with the Mohamedans. It subordinated the importance of rites and ceremonies... to the higher excellence of worship by means of Love and Faith. It checked the excesses of polytheism. It tended in all these ways to raise the nation generally to a higher level of capacity both of thought and action." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1902, pp.227-228.
  3. Ibid., pp.207-208.
  4. Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.146.

It should, however, be emphasised that the intellectuals <sup>of</sup> and Maharashtra were not so much concerned with the source of knowledge (or inspiration) as with the knowledge itself. Any source, foreign or indigenous, was welcome and desirable if it was capable of visualising them about the problems of their own society.<sup>1</sup> Their selection of the source was discriminatory. In other words, they were <sup>eclectic</sup> eclectic and not synthetic

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1. Chandavarkar explicitly pointed out : " Social reformers are charged with seeking to introduce Western ideals in our society. Why should we be afraid of any ideal if it is good and suited to our age and our needs, merely because it appears Western? No isolation and exclusion but cooperation and coordination is the spirit of the age. The East and the West are all open to us. I am not afraid of Western or Eastern ideals so long as they are good, and so long as they are fitted to visualise us. Let us accept light whence-soever it comes; it will do us good... No society has improved by drawing its light from its own antiquity and refusing to receive light from outside ... Let us not refuse to receive light from outside while we are receiving light from within. See Ibid., pp.93-204. Bhandarkar held: " The doors of our mind should be kept open to what is true (Satyam), good (Sivam), and beautiful(Sundaram), and we need not be worried as to the place where it comes from... Let us exert ourselves to bring into practice the teachings of the old Rishis and learn from all the sources, now available to us, indigenous as well as foreign." Quoted in H.A. Phadke, op.cit., pp.27-83.

in their choice. But they generally preferred to be inspired and guided by the indigenous gurus, instead of foreign philosophers.<sup>1</sup>

It should, however, be pointed out that our idea of the formative influences on the intellectuals is not based on adequate sources. It is primarily based on an understanding of what they subjectively thought and held, and not on what objectively went into the making of their ideas. Because of the paucity of the required sources and other limitations, this could not be sufficiently analysed. The existing biographies are hardly of any help as far as the formation of intellectuals as a social group is concerned. The fact remains, however, that the intellectual link of the nineteenth century pioneers of Maharashtra with the indigenous intellectual tradition was very real and intimate, whatever the objective role of the other influences in the making of nineteenth century mind.

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1. Ranade held : " Our domestic guides are in such matters to be preferred to foreign guides, because the last have not been the flesh of our flesh, the bone of our bone." See Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1902, p.205. "Our inspiration to the teachings of the prophets of the Bhakti, and ancient ways is national in the sense that our inspirers will be our own prophets of the old." Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., pp.43-44.

The regeneration of Indian society was the central theme of the intellectual endeavours in nineteenth century Maharashtra. The concern of the intellectuals centred largely on social and cultural questions. The identification of the socio-cultural evils constituted an important starting-point of their attempt at social renewal. True, the first condition of all improvement is the recognition of existing evils and defects in the society. The identification of evils by the Maharashtrian intellectuals was followed by an attempt at providing solutions to them.

Social issues, customs and practices constituted the focus of attention of the intellectuals. A host of social customs and religious practices such as the degraded position of women, child-marriage, polygamy, enforced widowhood, caste, idolatry, polytheism, priesthood, ritualism and other superstitions prevalent in the society were brought under severe intellectual attack in the nineteenth century. They were highlighted as denoting all-round social decay and degeneration. In an attempt to renovate the social order, the intellectuals advocated the upliftment of the position of women, marriage only after the attainment of puberty, monogamy, widow-marriage, elimination of caste distinctions, monotheism, spiritual worship and the end of social bigotry and superstitions. The underlying concern was the all round progress of Indian society on the foundations of a reformed socio-cultural system. In this section

we would try to study in somewhat detail the complexities of the intellectual ideas in nineteenth century Maharashtra around these problems.

Social Questions: As the intellectuals viewed the existing socio-cultural scene of the country, they came to the conclusion that "the condition of women in India is deplorably bad and wretched".<sup>1</sup> Their pitiable plight was viewed by them as a highly pressing problem of the time. The question of women was, therefore, given special attention in the nineteenth century Maharashtrian intellectual scheme of social transformation. Nearly every intellectual was concerned with women-question. The existing practices of child-marriage, enforced widowhood, polygamy, female seclusion, prostitution, etc. were highlighted as the evils of monstrous magnitude.<sup>2</sup> Child-marriage was thought to be at the root of other social evils and injustice.<sup>3</sup> It was child-marriage that often resulted in the early widowhood, and promoted polygamy.<sup>4</sup> Polygamy was viewed as "the fertile source of evil, moral as well as physical ... and a relic of barbarian and primeval necessity".<sup>5</sup>

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1. Deshmukh, G. H., Lokhitwad inchi Shatapatren, No. 30, (ed.) N. R. Inamdar, Poona, Deshmukh Prakashan, 1963, p. 213.
  2. See Jambhekar, Bal Shastri, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 69; Telang, K. T., op. cit., p. 240; Bhandarkar, R. G., op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 468-469; Chandararkar, N. G., op. cit., p. 71; Pandit, Vishnu P. Shastri, Vidhavodvahniviveka, Bombay, Indu Prakash Press, 1968, p. IV.
  3. "Child-marriage is a crime against half of our beloved humanity. Its monstrousness lies in the fact that it opens the flood-gate of other corruptions." Deshmukh, G. H., op. cit., No. 30 p. 213. Bhandarkar writes: "Child-marriage of girls to a full-fledged man is a human sacrifice. It, therefore, deserves greater condemnation." See Bhandarkar, R. G., op. cit., Vol. II, p. 490.
  4. Jambhekar, Bal Shastri, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 69.
  5. Parnanand, N. M., op. cit., Letter No. III, pp. 25-26.

Enforced widowhood and polygamy involved untold miseries inflicted upon the female folk; they signified a cruel crime against humanity.<sup>1</sup> To Bhandarkar enforced widowhood denoted barbarity and low level of social development. He held:

"The society which allows men to marry any number of times, even upto the age of sixty, while it strongly forbids even girls of seven or eight to have another husband after one is dead ... a society which sets very little value upon the life of a female human being, and places women on the same level with cattle, is in an unsound condition, disqualified for a successful competition with societies with a more healthy constitution".<sup>2</sup>

Jambhekar condemned the system of dancing and singing girls, as it was based on human degradation and exploitation.<sup>3</sup>

† The amelioration of the condition of Indian women was emphasised as a matter of utmost urgency and necessity in the Maharashtrian intellectual scheme of social change. The intellectuals held that social and national progress could not be achieved unless women were liberated from the shackles

1. "Deshmukh held: "Enforced widowhood is a murder of a living human being. It involves the killing of human passions, feelings and emotions. You are butchering your own daughters in cold blood. Should not your blood boil with rage?" Quoted in Jagirdar, P. J., *op. cit.*, 1971, p. 37; also see Deshmukh, G. H., *op. cit.*, No. 7, pp. 126-127. "Enforced widowhood and disfigurement and the destruction of home sanctity by polygamous contacts inflict life-long and undeserved misery on helpless victims." M. G., *op. cit.*, 1915, p. 83.

2. Bhandarkar, R. G., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 488.

3. "This system signifies humiliation and an act of conscious mockery of poverty, misery, misfortune and helplessness of the weaker sex." The Bombay Durpan, Sept. 11, 1832.

of social tyranny and corrupt practices. They sought alternative solutions to women problems in the consummation of marriage after the attainment of puberty,<sup>1</sup> monogamy,<sup>2</sup> and widow-marriage.<sup>3</sup> The question of widow marriage received greater attention of the intellectuals. Although the Indian Government had legalised the marriage of Hindu widows by the Act of XV of 1856 passed by the Legislative Council, it made little progress on account of popular feeling against the reform.<sup>4</sup> It was, therefore,

1. "The celebration of marriage after the attainment of puberty is the ideal marriage; it will be the harbinger of conjugal happiness." Jambhakar, Bai Shastri, op.cit., Vol. II, p.135.
2. "One sovereign remedy to these troubles and dangers is strict monogamy. Monogamy is nature's own sacred law, and therefore, its violation is invariably visited with distressing evils as its consequences". Parmenand, N.M., op.cit. Letter No. III, pp.25-26.
3. See Telang, K.T., op.cit. Vol. I, p.298; Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. II, pp.468-469; Deshmukh, G.H., op.cit., No.16, pp.221-235; Pandit, Vishnu Shastri, op.cit., p. IV; Agarkar, G.G., Agarkar-Darghan, Poona, Modern Book Depot, 1956, p.92; Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.72. Brahmachari and Dadoba also strongly advocated widow-marriage. See Bhate, G.C., op.cit., p.106; Priolkar, A.K., op.cit., 1947, p.21.
4. Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1902, p.XVII.

found highly desirable especially in the Bombay Presidency to drive this issue to the people's conscience.<sup>1</sup> It should, however, be emphasised that the intellectuals of Maharashtra never advocated compulsory widow-marriage; what they wanted was simply the elimination of social obstacles in the way of realising voluntary widow-marriage.<sup>2</sup>

Vishnu Shastri Pandit was the staunch advocate of widow-marriage. He devoted his whole life in furthering the cause of women.<sup>3</sup> He translated Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's works into Marathi in order to strengthen his arguments for widow-marriage. Under his leadership and guidance the Widow Marriage Association was formed in 1865 whose sole objective was to encourage such marriages and to create favourable public opinion. Sincerely concerned with the problem of Indian widowhood, Pandit set an example by remarrying a widow in 1875.<sup>4</sup> To most of the intellectuals the daring deeds and ideological commitment of Pandit to woman-emanicipation were a source of inspiration and courage. Bhandarkar, in the teeth of conservative opposition which involved a threat to excommunicate him, allowed the remarriage of his daughter Shantabai with Palandikar in 1891.<sup>5</sup> Despite the sincere attempt of the intellectuals, however, the problem of Hindu widowhood remained as pressing as ever.

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1. Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1902, p. XVII.

2. "The object of reform is only to remove the obstacle enforced by custom, not to compel every widow to marry, but to allow a feeling to grow in society that it is permissible to a widow to marry if she chooses". Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit. p. 72; also see Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p. 84.

3. Gidmal, D., Bahramji M. Malabari: A Biographical Sketch,

London, 1888, p. 200.

4. Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1963, p. 40.

5. Phadke, H.A., op.cit., p. 71.



Although most of the intellectuals emphasised monogamy and widow-marriage, Jambhakar and Deshmukh stood distinct from others on the question of solutions to women problems. They sought a permanent solution to the problems of women not in monogamy and widow-marriage, but in equal distribution of rights to women.<sup>1</sup> Their subordinate position in the society was viewed to be the result of the lack of equal rights to them.<sup>2</sup> But they did not single out the loss of property-rights to women to be the root cause of their subordinate position in the society as Rammoan Roy had done in Bengal.

To conclude, the question of women was viewed on humanistic grounds. Their emancipation was, therefore, not the emancipation of simply female folk, but that of the humanity. The humanism of the Maharashtrian intellectuals was, however, shrouded in their concern for the national and social development. In other words, they viewed the women-question not solely from humanist viewpoint but also from the national standpoint, as the subordination of women signified social degeneration and national backwardness.<sup>3</sup> The amelioration of the lot of Indian women was, therefore, not simply a humanist necessity, it was essential for the progress of the society and the country as a whole.

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1. Jambhakar, Bal Shastri, Darpan Sangraha, (ed.) V.K. Joshi and S.M. Shahastrabudhe, Bombay, Maharashtra Granth Bhandar, 1946, pp. 88-98. "The lasting solution to women problems and for the prosperity of the nation is the distribution of equal rights to women." Deshmukh, G.H., op. cit., No. 30, p. 213.
  2. "The subordination of women has emanated from the absence of equal rights to them. The country which does not give equal rights to women and thus keeps them in subordination to man is a dead society; it cannot prosper." Deshmukh, G.H., op. cit., No. 30, p. 213.
  3. Jambhakar, Bal Shastri, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 69.

The issues of sati and infanticide were not fervently taken up by the Maharashtrian intellectuals, although they were given occasional attention, as is clear from their writings and speeches. The fact is that these issues were no longer the burning problems, as they were on their wane during the hectic days of the movement. They had already been banned by the British Government; the practice of sati was abolished in 1829. Practices of sati and infanticide had, however, not entirely disappeared from the social scene. Such cases, though increasingly decreasing, often came to the fore here and there particularly in the 1830s in Maharashtra.<sup>1</sup>

Caste was another issue under severe attack in nineteenth century Maharashtra.<sup>2</sup> It was seen as a divisive factor "weakening the bonds of humanity"<sup>3</sup> and deterring the growth of national consciousness in India.<sup>4</sup> The caste system was abhorrent as it did not recognise the claims of justice and equality.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid., p.70.

2. See Chandrasekar, N.G., op.cit., p.72; Jambhakar, Bai Shastri, op.cit., 1946, pp.52-56; Telang, K.T., op.cit., Vol.I, p.256; Deshmukh, G.H., op.cit., p.23, pp.242-246, Bhandarkar held: "We have been subject to three-fold tyranny: political tyranny, priestly tyranny and a social tyranny or tyranny of the caste." See Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. II, p.469.

3. Deshmukh, G.H., op.cit., p.23.

4. "The narrowness and want of self-sufficiency of the caste system constitutes a greater danger to the growth of the higher or national feeling." Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. II, p.485.

5. "Caste distinction is the main blot on our social system. In the social sphere of our activities all castes and even creeds are alike defective in not recognising the claims of justice and equality." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, pp.236-237.

Paxmanand viewed caste as a contributory factor in social stagnation and retardation of progress. To quote him:

"Our present social systems and practices combine in themselves all the elements of temporal tyranny and sacerdotal despotism, and embody their essence in the baneful maxim so eminently calculated to repress all originality of thought, of moral vigour and independence and force of character, to arrest progress, and to pave the way of national weakness and degradation. The caste system silently contributes its due share to this state of stagnation; it checks conscious and real progress."<sup>1</sup>

Caste was, in short, viewed as a great social evil<sup>2</sup> and the elimination of caste distinction, therefore, became an everlasting obsession with nearly all the intellectuals in general and Dadoba in particular. Dadoba emphasised that caste distinctions had to be eliminated in its entirety,<sup>3</sup> and so did Agarkar.<sup>4</sup> Brahmachari was dead against caste distinctions and believed in the oneness of humanity.<sup>5</sup> He was one of those who openly challenged the rigidity of the caste system. Though

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1. Paxmanand, N.M., op.cit., Letter No. IX, p.81.

2. "Caste is the greatest monster we have to kill." Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. II, p.515.

3. Priolkar, A.K., op.cit., Autobiography, p.263.

4. Kamble, J.R., op.cit., P.46; Agarkar, G.G., Agarkar Lekh-Sangraha (Selections from the Writings of G.G. Agarkar), (ed.) G.P. Pradhan, New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1971, p.99.

5. Parvate, T.V., op.cit., 1963, p.40.

himself a Brahmin, he employed a Muslim cook and ate food served by anyone.<sup>1</sup> Jambhekar stressed Brotherhood of Man as the cardinal creed of humanity.<sup>2</sup> He made no distinction between caste and creeds in his daily life.<sup>3</sup> As noted earlier, an organisational challenge to the caste system was given by the Paramhansa Sabha whose functioning involved non-observance of caste distinctions.

The intellectuals' attack on the caste system in general often came to concentrate on Brahmanism. The Brahmins as a caste were castigated for their attempt at maintaining the caste hierarchy and their superiority in the Indian society. They were held responsible for giving birth and prop to other social inequalities.<sup>4</sup> The present social degeneration was greatly attributed to Brahmin bigotry.<sup>5</sup> The existing customs and practices were viewed as being nothing but the selfish inventions of Brahmins.<sup>6</sup> The greatest violence to the society

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1. Bhate, G. C., op.cit., p.105.

2. Jambhekar, Bal Shastri, op.cit., Vol. I, p.70.

3. Ibid.

4. See Deshmukh, G. H., op.cit., No. 7, pp.100-137. "The Brahmins... have kept for their own aggrandisement the depressed classes out of the pale of the Hindu society. It was the Brahmins who kept the low castes and untouchables under the conditions of perpetual suppression." Chandavaskar, N. G., op.cit., pp.148-149.

5. "A great deal of our present degeneration is undoubtedly due to the narrowness and bigotry of Brahmanism." Chandavaskar, N. G., op.cit., p.145.

6. "The Brahmins created these beliefs and practices in order to meet their selfish ends." Deshmukh, G. H., op.cit., No. 7 pp.135-140.

committed by the Brahmins was their deliberate attempt to perpetuate the condition of ignorance among the people in general and among women in particular.<sup>1</sup> They did so mainly in order to maintain their traditional superiority and dominance in the society. In short, Brahmanism was held to be a bolt on Indian society.

The intellectuals, therefore, took the task of exposing the facade of Brahmin superiority as a matter of utmost necessity. Lokahitwadi posed a serious intellectual challenge to the traditional superiority of the Brahmins over all other castes, and exposed the utter hollowness of its foundations.<sup>2</sup> Chipiunkar was very harsh on those Brahmins who were educated and still attempted to preserve the caste system and other social evils. He dubbed them as 'the herd of demi-semi-educated Brahmins.'<sup>3</sup> While condemning the Brahmin dominance, the intellectuals advocated the upliftment of the lower castes and depressed classes.<sup>4</sup>

The battle against Brahmanism was, however, not confrontationalist in nature. The intellectuals tried to consciously

1. "The Brahmins' greatest crime against social development is their avoidance of <sup>and</sup> opposition to female education." Ibid., No.10, p.217. "The Brahmins maintain their superiority by keeping the people in ignorance. Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.II, p.492."
2. See Deshmukh, G. H., op.cit., No. 7, pp.100-137.
3. Chipiunkar, V. S., Kirakol Lekhanch Sangraha, (ed.) C. B. Belsare, Bombay, K. C. Kulkarni, 1902, p.266."
4. "There can be no reform or hope for the higher so long as the so-called lower castes are despised. We must take care to plead the cause of the untouchables." Chandravarkar, N.G., op.cit., pp.145-148. Also see Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.II, p.30.

avoid caste-hostility.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, anti-Brahmanism in Maharashtra was not a class war.

In conclusion, the fight against the caste system in the intellectual thought of nineteenth century Maharashtra was, in actuality, a fight not against the system itself but against its regulations and restrictions. In other words, the battle was waged mainly against caste distinctions and other evils emanating from them, and not against the very basis of the system. Anti-casteism in its true sense did not constitute the practical programme of the intellectual endeavour in nineteenth century Maharashtra. Although caste was denounced, the ways of fighting it remained confined to negative methods like inter-dining and non-observance of other caste regulations. The positive methods like negating the very existence of caste could not constitute the central theme of the intellectual scheme of social regeneration.<sup>2</sup>

The intellectuals of nineteenth century Maharashtra laid greater emphasis on social reform, as social problems "bear greater responsibility for our backwardness."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, there

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1. "One caution, above all, is needed. We must take care to ~~not~~ plead the cause of the untouchables without importing a spirit of narrowness and rivalry into it. It can do no good to the cause to support it by abusing the Brahmins and denouncing them as a class which has kept for their own aggrandisement the depressed classes out of the pale of Hindu society. Was not Eknath a Brahmin, if Brahmanism has done mischief, it has produced heroes to remove it." Chandavaekar, N.G., op.cit., pp.148-149. "We should not fight Brahmanism by unfurling caste-hostility, but by gradual process." Telang, K.T., op.cit., Vol. I, p.254.
  2. "Brahmanical dominance, child-marriage, caste and low position of women bear greater responsibility for our backwardness." Chiplunkar, V.S., Chiplunkar Lekhsandrah: Selections from the Writings, (ed.), M.G. Buddhisagar, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1953, p.276.

was a common realisation among them that without social reform as the basis society could not progress. Social reform was considered a stepping-stone into political independence, economic development and the attainment of national vigour and vitality.<sup>1</sup> It had a broader objective of "removing all obstacles towards developments in all departments."<sup>2</sup>

Religious Ideas: The religious ideas of the Maharashtrian intellectuals greatly centred around the existing religious practices in the Hindu society. They were one in denouncing idolatry,<sup>3</sup> polytheism and priestly intermediation in the religious matters of the people. Priesthood was viewed as the most dangerous development in Hinduism,<sup>4</sup> it was considered an

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1. "Without a reform of our social institutions real political advance is impossible." Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. I, p. 453. "Social reform is a stepping-stone into political independence." Ibid., p. 446. "The object of social reform is to render us for the exercise of political powers and pave the way for economic development. Demolition of social obstructions and restrictions is a precondition for rendering the nation vigorous." Ibid., op.cit., Vol. II, p. 520. Bhandarkar further asserted: "There can be no advancement politically without social and moral advancement." Quoted in Phadke, H.A., op.cit., p. 73. "In a situation when the inhabitants of our country are divided into a number of separate communities and castes hostile to each other, national or political independence can only mean the possession of one community or one caste of power over others. What should, therefore, be attained at first is to set our own house in order in order to secure a lasting political solution to our problems." Ibid., op.cit., Vol. I, p. 445.

2. Ibid., op.cit., Vol. II, p. 520.

3. Agarkar, G.G., op.cit., 1971, p. 64.

4. Priolkar, A.K., op.cit., Autobiography, p. 7.

unnecessary "dalai" between man and God. The Brahmanical priests were held responsible for the social degradation of the society and other social evils.<sup>1</sup> It was the Brahmin priests who for sheer considerations of promoting their self-interests manipulated and twisted the true teachings of Hinduism.<sup>2</sup> They invented the practice of polytheism, idolatry and a host of rituals in order to exploit the people under the garb of religion.<sup>3</sup> Keeping the people under the darkness of ignorance was the weapon they used to ensure their exploitation.<sup>4</sup>

The intellectuals' attack on the existing Hindu religious system was, however, diametrically different from the attack of missionaries on the Hindu faith. The intellectuals denounced priesthood and other anomalies crept into Hinduism for the purpose of reformation; the missionaries denounced Hinduism essentially for that of proselytisation. But when Hinduism was attacked by the Christian missionaries, the intellectuals of Maharashtra openly came to the defence of Hindu religion. In other words, the existing Hindu belief-system did constitute a target of attack by the intellectuals, but when it was viewed in relation to Christianity, they came to its defence. Right from Jambhakar to Dadoba, nearly all the intellectuals held that

1. Agarkar, G.G., op.cit., 1971, pp. 80-81.

2. "The Vedas have been turned and twisted in the hands of the Brahmin priests into all sorts of contortions and deformities... the genuine truth of Hinduism is thus hidden from the people. The self-interests of the intermediaries have robbed this religion of its pristine glory." Tarkhadkar, D.P., A Hindu Gentleman's Reflections on the Writings of Swedenborg, London, James Speirs, 1878, p. 7.

3. Deshmukh, G.H., op.cit., No. 7 pp. 135-140.

4. Ibid., p. 136.



Hinduism was the most liberal and rational belief system.<sup>1</sup>

The proselytising activities of the Christian missionaries often backed up by official support despite the Government's pronounced policy of maintaining neutrality in religious matters, had acquired menacing proportions by the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> This greatly influenced the response of the native intellectuals to Christianity. Concerned with the problems of the indigenous society and culture, they took up the task of counteracting missionary influence as one of the important items of reform. They attempted to expose the contradictions inherent in the Christian faith itself, thus attacking the intellectual rationale of conversion into Christianity. Dadoba wrote:

"The Christian doctrine of Holy Trinity does not reconcile with the Unity of God, which all the Christian missionaries so promptly proclaim to the heathens in India and other countries, trying in the same breath to dissuade them from the polytheistic notions which they employ in the worship of many gods and goddesses. I could no more believe in the mystery of a Trinity in Unity or of a Tri-personal God, as it is called, than I could believe in three dollars being in one dollar, or three apples in one apple, the very notion being paradoxical on the very face of it."<sup>3</sup>

The existing tradition of Trinitarianism was highlighted as one of the most glaring contradictions of the Christian faith, and the

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1. Jambhekar, Bal Shastri, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 70;  
Priolkar, A.K., op.cit., Autobiography, p. 321.

2. Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. I (1818-1885), op.cit., p. 171.

3. Tarkhadkar, D.P., op.cit., 1878, pp. 11-12.

'eloquence' employed to explain this phenomenon was dubbed as "a long coveb of stultiloquence."<sup>1</sup> Christian missionaries and priests were declared to be the real enemies of Christianity, as it was they who distorted its true teachings by employing numerous modifications for the sake of furthering their narrow self-interests.<sup>2</sup> Dadoba took the missionaries to task for their attempt at establishing the Christ to be the whole and sole embodiment of Divinity. To him the Christ represented "a personal manifestation of only a very small drop of the great unbounded ocean of the divin essence."<sup>3</sup>

Although Chiplunkar and others severely criticised missionary activities of proselytisation,<sup>4</sup> the greatest challenge to Christian influence in Maharashtra was exerted by Vishnu Bawa Brahamchari.<sup>5</sup> The major chunk of his intellectual endeavours riveted on repulsing the attack of Christian missionaries on Hinduism. He used to give lectures on the sands of the Chaupati

1. "The eloquence employed by the missionaries to explain this phenomenon (the contradiction) appears to be after all a long coveb of stultiloquence .... I could more easily believe in the Hindu Trimurti of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva - personalities of the three qualities in the energy of one God - than I could believe in the existence of three distinct persons in the one Godhead, as is taught in the ordinary Christian doctrine of Trinity." Ibid.
2. "Christianity with all those numerous modifications of its forms and phrases has frequently been the victim of various manipulations in the hands of missionaries and priests, no less violent than those of the Brahmans in the case of Hinduism. The truth of Christianity is manipulated and deformed into various forms, not unfrequently grotesque. The cause is one and the same - the self-interests of the intermediaries." Ibid., p.7.
3. Ibid.
4. Bhat, G.C., op.cit., p.265.
5. Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. 1, op.cit., p.171.

of Bombay, giving open challenges to the missionaries for a debate on the issue.<sup>1</sup> He pointed out the failings and shortcomings of the Christian faith, and acted as an intellectual bulwark against missionary proselytisation. The agitation with its wordy crusade, although gagged by the press, went on vigorously till about 1857.<sup>2</sup>

The intellectual attack against Christian influence in Maharashtra was, however, theological, and not communal, in nature. It was not directed against the Christian community nor was it intended to create communal tension or animosity. More significantly, the intellectuals had a healthy attitude towards other religions including Christianity, and they were not shy of deriving inspiration from them for the sake of progress and the realisation of the 'essence'.<sup>3</sup> By implication, the movement against conversion into Christianity was essentially, though not being explicitly spelt out, a movement of Indian 'cultural defence'. The defence of Hindu religion by the intellectuals came as a <sup>consequence</sup> ~~consequence~~ of the cultural encroachments

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1. Bhat, G.C., op.cit., p.105.

2. Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. I, op.cit., p.171.

3. "There is truth in all the religions - Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and others - and all have something objectionable.... The comparisons of different religions that prevail in the world enables to determine the significance of each, the idea or ideas which it elaborates and to distinguish the essence from the accidents." Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. II, pp.608-609. Bhandarkar further held: "Religion is inseparable from humanity and therefore, not confined to a particular people or country. We should maintain an attitude of sympathy and reverence towards all religious beliefs." Quoted in Phadke, H.A., op.cit., p.78. "The development of progressive lines must receive as it has received its impetus from the spirit of Christ too." Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.44.

by colonialism. The spread of Christianity in India was not simply a religious phenomenon; it had the implication of cultural subjugation by the British. If the intellectuals defended the Hindu religion and tried to repulse Christian influence, it was because the latter was seen to be a threat to the indigenous culture and religion. The central point of the attempt at 'cultural defence' was the rejection by intellectuals of colonial culture which was here being propagated by the means of religion. Christianity.

The nineteenth century Maharashtrian intellectuals' fight on the religious front was two-pronged: one against the missionary attempt at proselytisation and the other against the Brahmin priests and their manipulations. Jambhekar's successful attempt at readmission into Hindu fold of Narayan Sheshadri from Christianity to which he was converted was a blow on both Christian missionaries, and Hindu pandits who refused to readmit him owing to his alleged impurity.<sup>1</sup>

It is, however, to be emphasised that the intellectuals never attacked religion as such; the attack centred only on religious perversions and intrusions. The intellectual consciousness in nineteenth century Maharashtra was not an atheistic movement. In fact, the belief in the existence of God was one of the characteristic features of the nineteenth century

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1. Jambhekar, Bal Shastri, op.cit., Vol. III, pp. 70-72;  
Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., pp. 93-98.

Maharashtrian intellectual thought,<sup>1</sup> Ranade held:

"God exists, a living being or spirit, exists as one Supreme Being, Cause of all causes, unconditioned in time and space, Supreme Ruler of the Universe which is regulated by his Providence, Preeminent in Power, wisdom, goodness, love, justice and holiness; Lord, Father, Judge and Moral Governor of all human souls."<sup>2</sup> "The winds blow from fear of Him, and the Sun rises and sets as He directs, Fire and Indra and even Death run of His errand."<sup>3</sup>

Parmanand also echoed the general intellectual understanding that "God is ever present in all objects, giving them better and noble forms."<sup>4</sup> But in their religious notion polytheism, idolatry and priesthood had no accommodation. They emphasised, on the other hand, monotheism,<sup>5</sup> and spiritual worship,<sup>6</sup> without

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1. see Deshmukh, G.H., op.cit., No.28, p.170. "We believe God to be immanent in the world directing the process of physical and spiritual evolution that has ever been going on." Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.II, 620.
  2. Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1902, pp.262-263.
  3. Ibid., p.18.
  4. "The doctrine of evolution represents God to be ever present in all objects, giving them better and noble forms ... God dwells in the heart of all things, the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Earth, the Wind and the Soul of man, and controls them and carries them through all their changes." Parmanand, N.M., op.cit., Letter No.II, p.10.
  5. "God is one, not a triad, nor a duality of persons," Ranade held, quoted in Ravinder Kumar, op.cit., 1968, p.292. "God is one ... Although we are divided into creeds and sects, the division is only external ... creeds and modes of worship may differ but the idea that the God is one is common to the whole race." Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.533.
  6. Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.II, p.616.

any ritualism and religious intermediation. Bhandarkar was against the existing mode of worship and firmly believed in prarthana (prayer) as the only way for purification and elevation of the heart.<sup>1</sup>

Religion had, in fact, a very significant place in the nineteenth century Maharashtrian intellectual thought. Religion to them was not merely a matter of emotion but a matter of intellect as well. It was considered 'inseparable from humanity;<sup>2</sup> "without religion man is but the creature of the moment; with it he is the child of eternity."<sup>3</sup> Religion was viewed as an interlinked and integral aspect of society;<sup>4</sup> "no nation could live without faith in God."<sup>5</sup>

It was the realisation among the intellectuals of the interconnection between religion and society and the significance of the former to the healthy evolution of the latter that they emphasised religious reform to be the precondition for progress and enduring social change.<sup>6</sup> To Chandavarkar, the stability of a

1. Phadke, H.A., op.cit., p.76.

2. "Religion is inseparable from humanity. Man has always believed in some invisible power from which all that is visible has sprung." Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. II, p.605.

3. Parmanand, N.M., op.cit., Letter No. II, p.18, 23.

4. "The foundation of society is essentially bound up with man's religious belief...." Ibid., p.18. "The first and the most important of our social ideals is religion." Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.204.

5. Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.175.

6. "Social reform cannot be enduring unless it is backed up by religious reform." Jembhekar, Bal Shastri, op.cit., Vol. III, p.328. "The question of religious reform is at the bottom of all questions. Social reform can come but through religious reform." Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.40. "The secret of Indian development and prosperity lies in the reformation of Hindu religion." Deshmukh, G.H., op.cit., No.64, p.192.

society or nation could not be ensured if it was not based on and supported by a pure and enlightened religious faith.<sup>1</sup> He held that material life and religious life were the two interrelated aspects of the same coin - society, and a healthy social growth was not possible if it was not counter-balanced by religion.<sup>2</sup> Religion was viewed as a very effective method of social engineering. Social superstitions and obscurantism were to be fought with religious weapon, by means of religion.<sup>3</sup>

The stress on religious reform to be the precondition for social change does not, however, imply that social reform was subsumed by religious reform, nor does it mean that the social

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1. "No nation can live without faith in God - without that sense of responsibility which comes of belief in the Almighty. It may have excellent political and social institutions, but if these are not based on and supported by a pure and enlightened religious faith, they will fall down and the nation will live in chaos. Religion is the unifying rope which brings everyone together as the children of one God." Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.175.
  2. "The spread of education, the progress of science, literature and art, the rapid means of communication on civil and political liberty - all these are one half of civilisation, and their influence is only healthful if counter-balanced by Religion." Ibid., pp.176-177.
  3. "The best way to break down caste and priestcraft is to begin by slowly purifying the religious practices of the people." Jambhakar, Bal Shastri, op.cit., Vol. III p.328.

questions were secondary or epiphenomenal to the intellectuals' concern.<sup>1</sup> To say that social reform was simply a part of the religious reform is, in fact, to miss the dynamics of the nineteenth century intellectual movement in Maharashtra.

Religious involvement in the Maharashtrian intellectual thought was emphasised only to the extent that it reflected the reality of social and material existence. More significantly, religious involvement was deemed essential for introducing changes in the social sphere, as religion had its utilitarian value both for the individual and the society.<sup>2</sup> Parmanand pointed out:

"Religion is the source of comfort to the afflicted heart and of hope to the despondent spirit.... Religion is a spiritual connection between man and God, and it is only this form of religion which is capable of imparting moral strength during the periods of man's sufferings and trials. It is this religion which infuses among the people a high tone of morality and a love of righteousness."<sup>3</sup>

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1. This aspect of the intellectual consciousness in nineteenth century India in general and Maharashtra in particular has been generally misapprehended. The predominant emphasis on religion to be the medium of social transformation is generally confused with religious reform having been accorded primacy of position in the intellectuals' scheme of social change. It is this misconception that has led some historians to hold that it was essentially a religious movement. See, for example, Jagirdar, P.J., op.cit., 1963, p.26. T.L. Shastri Joshi has branded Ranade, Bhandarkar and others as essentially and predominantly religious reformers. See Joshi, T.L. Shastri, op.cit., in N.R. Phatak and others, op.cit., p.16.
  2. "It is only through the cultivation of the devotional element of religion that the Hindu society can be enlightened and elevated. Without prayer and devotion Man cannot prepare for the trials and temptations of life." Jambhakar, Bal Shastri, op.cit., Vol.III, p.328.
  3. Parmanand, N.M., op.cit., Letter No. II, p.23.



Emphasizing the utilitarian role and function of religion in the development of an individual Bhandarkar wrote:

"The function of religious belief in the development of man is higher than that of physical knowledge. The use of the last is to satisfy the wants of his bodily pleasure, to enable him to live comfortably. But purity of heart, the elevation of the feelings, the depth of the soul, a firm adherence to truth without regard to practical effects, equanimity in the midst of the severest troubles of life - these and such other virtues it is religion alone that can induce. Man can attain to the full measure of his capabilities only through the instrumentality of religious belief. Without it he will be a superior kind of beast with aims and aspirations low and stunted."<sup>1</sup>

Morality, truthfulness and purity of purpose so dear to the intellectuals' concern for the development of society could supposedly be ensured only through religious involvement and the cultivation of religious devotion. Parmanand attached greater importance to the necessity of adhering to religion because he held firmly that "all political reform must have for its roots and basis the moral strength and guidance which religion imparts."<sup>2</sup> Chandavarkar held that the significance of religion lay in its being a "unifying bond" between the people of different creeds and castes.<sup>3</sup>

1. Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.II, p.606.

2. Parmanand, N.M., op.cit., Letter No.II, p.23.

3. Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.175.

Moreover, the ultimate objective of the intellectuals did not lie in religions but social salvation. Religious reform was not the be-all and the end-all of the movement; in fact, the emphasis on change in the megastructures of the society was the characteristic feature of the intellectuals' attempt at social and national regeneration.<sup>1</sup> They believed in the organacity of social life and advocated the renovation in the entire matrix of the society. Ranade held:

"The reformer should accept the teachings of the evolutionary doctrine ... because they teach that growth is structural and organic, and must take slow effect in all parts of the organism... We should take due care to set our houses in order, as mere no whitewashing and no plastering would remove these hidden sources of our weaknesses. The whole existence has to be renovated."<sup>2</sup> "The liberation that has to be sought is not in one department of life or one sort of activity, or in one sphere of thought, but it is an all-round work in which you cannot dissociate one activity from another."<sup>3</sup>

He emphasised, therefore, that the aim of emancipation must be a general movement, incorporating every branch and side of nation's life - social, political, religious and economic.<sup>4</sup>

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1. "The part in the shape of caste and its sub-sections has grown out of the whole in the shape of Hindu society and the part will not move out of its allocated sphere in that society unless that general is also agitated and moved." Ibid., p.54.
  2. Ranade, M. G., op. cit., 1915, pp. 118-125.
  3. Ranade, M. G., The Wisdom of a Modern Rishi: Writings and Speeches (ed.) Jagadisan, T. N., Madras, Roshouse and Sons, (n.d.), p. 315.
  4. Parvate, T. V., op. cit., 1963, p. 276.

To Lokahitwadi, politics, religion and social life were only different aspects of the same existence "which ought to be always viewed as a whole."<sup>1</sup> Telang emphasised that social progress could not be permanent unless it was structural, "accompanied by more or less advance in the other directions."<sup>2</sup> Significantly enough, all of them laid emphasis on "social happiness or political advancement," "the well-being or material prosperity of the people"<sup>3</sup> to be the ultimate objective of the movement.<sup>4</sup> Religious reform per se was thus not the basic drive of the nineteenth century Maharashtrian intellectual thought.

Religion was looked upon in the context of society.<sup>5</sup> Ranade explicitly clarified this position. In his own words:

"You cannot have a good social system when you find yourself low in the scale of political rights, nor can you be fit to exercise political rights and privileges unless your social system is based on reason and justice

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1. Phatak, N.R., op.cit., in N.R. Phatak and others, op.cit., p. 9.
  2. Telang, K.T., op.cit., Vol. I, p. 260.
  3. Phatak, N.R., op.cit., in N.R. Phatak and others, op.cit., p. 7.
  4. This is deducible from a close observation of their reform ideas in which the concern for material prosperity remained constant, no matter whether the ideas were related to social, religious, political or economic reform.
  5. A glance at the attitude of Chandavarkar towards the religious question can give an idea about their approach to religion. He wrote: "The first and the most important of our social ideals is religion. But the question.... is, is the ideal of religion which our society has been practically holding before us one that is calculated to satisfy the growing needs and demands of the age in which we live?" Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., pp. 204, 205.

You cannot have a good economic system when your social arrangements are imperfect. If your religious ideals are low and grovelling, you cannot succeed in social, economic or political spheres. This inter-dependence is not an accident but is the law of our nature."<sup>1</sup>

Idolatry, ritualism and other superstitions were abominable not merely because they denoted religious degeneration but more importantly because they had negative social and political consequences.<sup>2</sup> Lokahitwadi attacked religious rituals and the priests for their failure to promote the well-being or material prosperity of the people.<sup>3</sup> The necessity for religious reform was thus felt not so much because religion was in jeopardy as much because religious degeneration, in their view, posed serious problems to the development of social, economic and political aspects of the society. If the intellectuals emphasised religious reform, it was not for the sake of religion per se, but for that of the society as a whole. In other words, the purpose of religious reform was not religious or spiritual salvation; it was emphasised mainly for the sake of the overall

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1. Ranade, M.G., op. cit., 1915, pp. 231-232.

2. "India would not have lost its freedom had not its social set-up been beset with idolatry and other superstitions. The dominance of priests in the religious matters of the people bear greater responsibility for our backwardness." Chiplunkar, Vishnu Shastri, op. cit., 1963, pp. 273-276.

3. Lokahitwadi wrote: "The rituals prescribed by religion are simply for the benefit of the priestly class. None of them has ever promoted the well-being or material prosperity of the people". Quoted in Phatak, N. R., op. cit., in N. R. Phatak and others, op. cit., p. 7.

socio-economic and political advancement of the people. Significantly enough, religion was viewed more as an instrument of social engineering than as a central issue in itself.

It would be erroneous, therefore, to call the intellectual consciousness in Maharashtra a religious movement. The intellectuals were not religious reformers per se. In fact, it was their concern for the material advancement of the society and country that distinguishes the nineteenth century movement from the Bhakti one. In the Bhakti movement religion weighed supreme; in the nineteenth century awakening society gained preeminence. The intellectual phenomenon of nineteenth century Maharashtra was, in other words, different from the Bhakti movement in essentially its shift from other-worldly orientation to this-worldliness. Even logically viewed, reaching a social problem through religion and using it for the purpose of social transformation does not denote the religious nature of the approach. In fact, the movement represented the beginning of an attempt towards the development of a secular set-up in the society. After all, secularisation does not mean the disappearance of religion from the social scene. It means only a weakening of the hold of religious considerations as the basic arbiter in the functioning of society; in secular set-up religion ceases to be the basic drive among the numbers of people.<sup>1</sup> To the Maharashtrian intellectuals, religion was an aid to the creation of the type of society they envisaged and not an aim in itself. The concern for the promotion of material advancement of the society on the foundations of religious morality and regeneration

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1. Berger, Peter L., op.cit., p.110.

constituted the crux of the intellectual movement. Such a movement cannot by any standard be judged as religious. Moreover, the line of intellectuals' arguments ran from ethics to God and not vice-versa.

Use of Scriptures: In the nineteenth century intellectual movement particularly during its later phase there was an attempt to seek the support of scriptural sanction for reforms.<sup>1</sup> Vishnu Shastri Pandit profusely quoted the scriptures to prove that widow-marriage was religiously sanctioned.<sup>2</sup> Ranade also stated that the "remarriage of widows has the positive authority of the Shastras."<sup>3</sup> In short, most of the intellectuals with a very few exceptions like Agarkar tried to justify the reform they advocated on scriptural grounds. They cited passage after passage from the pages of Hindu scriptures in support of their reform ideas. Jambhakar emphasised that "all reforms must grow slowly from within, on evolutionary lines, conforming where desirable to the best thought of Hindu Shastras and tradition."<sup>4</sup>

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1. The celebration of marriage after the attainment of puberty would be no violation of the spirit of the Shastras, for we find in Manu that a man of 30 years should marry a girl of twelve." Jambhakar, Bal Shastri, op.cit., Vol.I, p.134. Bhandarkar held: "Marriages after puberty are allowable and not opposed to the Hindu religious law.... The Hindu religious law allows the consummation of marriage being deferred for three years after a girl attains puberty." Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. II, pp.545-550. "The Writings of Menu and Vajnavalkya show and the Itihasas and Puranas confirm that monogamy is the natural condition of Aryan life, and that polygamy and polyandry are disreputable exercises." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.72.
  2. See Pandit, Vishnu Shastri, Stri-Punarviva, Bombay, Punarvivahottajak Mandali, 1870, p.1-93.
  3. Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1902, p.55.
  4. Jambhakar, Bal Shastri, op.cit., Vol.I, p.69.

This is, however, not to suggest that the intellectuals played according to the tune of religious scriptures. In fact, it was just the reverse. It was not the scriptures that influenced their opinions; it was they who moulded the scriptures to their ideas. They did go to them, but their bent towards the Vedas was not blind. They were highly discriminatory in their choice. They cited only those passages from the scriptures which were supportive of their reform ideas. They did not quote those scriptures or the scriptural portions which were supportive of the orthodox/conservative opinions. For example, idol-worship, pilgrimage, temples, rituals, etc. are the dominant features of the Bhagwat Dharma,<sup>1</sup> but they did not cite them. There is no reason to doubt about their awareness of the scriptures of this sort, as most of them were well-versed in Hindu philosophy and religion.

The intellectuals in their thought and action on social reforms were, in fact, not at all guided by the dictates of some religious dispensation. The search for scriptural sanction was simply an after-thought, and not the starting point of the intellectual endeavours in Maharashtra.<sup>2</sup> More importantly, they

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1. Joshi, T.L. Shastri, op.cit. in N.R. Phatak and other, op.cit., p.25.

2. "Some allege that the 'Reformers' have raised the Shastrical question in support of their view on the age of consent question. But it is not the 'Reformers' that are relying on the Shastras.... They are merely answering what the opponents of the Age of Consent Bill have been arguing on the basis of the Shastras. The supporters of the Bill base their support on the claims of humanity, not on the Shastras at all. The search for scriptural support is an after-thought" Telang, K.T., Selected Writings and Speeches, Vol. II, (ed.) V.N. Neik, Bombay, (n.d.), p.473.

even tried to reinterpret the Shastras in support of what they advocated,<sup>1</sup> not to speak of the the letter being discriminat-  
orily quoted. The scriptures were interpreted as promoters of  
change in the society. Chandavarkar wrote:

" The Hindu Shastras are wide and comprehensive enough to include any measure of reform.... They have given us a free hand in changing with the time by agreeing upon the point that custom or usage can supercede the injunctions of the Shastras. The whole history of the Hindu society has been a history of tumultuous departure, whenever the departure was rendered necessary or expedient, from the laws laid down in the Shastras. Every custom marks the beginning of such a departure; and if the Shastras themselves say that we can make new customs, I do not see why the social reformer should confine himself to the Shastras alone... The Shastras have been more liberal than we care to be, by giving us free hand to deviate from them when necessary. The Shastras are a valuable means of showing that our history has been a history of change."<sup>2</sup>

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1. "The Shastras have given us the liberty of making customs. So let us leave the old customs and make good ones."  
Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.66.

2. Ibid., p.65.



They emphasised that the society had evolved to its present form by surpassing the scriptural regulations, and hence deviation from the scriptural authority was not a new phenomenon in the history of Hindu society. Telang wrote:

"The Shastras have silently seen changes occurring in the society against their regulations. As to the caste system, we have departed from the rule of our own old scriptures. They (scriptures) recognised only four castes at first. In our present circumstances, the number of castes into which the Hindu community is divided is four thousand more than four."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, we find that on the one hand the intellectuals took the support of the scriptures, where desirable, for the reforms they advocated and, on the other, reinterpreted the very scriptures to justify deviation from them. In fact, the scriptures were interpreted according to the dictates of their reform ideas, and they were made geared to strengthening and substantiating their points and, above all, the cause. The intellectuals assigned a very limited role to the scriptures in their thought and deeds. They relied on them only to the extent as their need and desirability was felt for the cause of reforms. Hence, the search for scriptural sanction should not be taken as a point to suggest the dominance of scriptural authority on

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1. Telang, K. T., op. cit., Vol. II, p. 305.

the intellectual thought, nor should it be employed as a point to emphasise its alleged religious character.

The nineteenth century intellectual consciousness in Maharashtra was, in fact, a rationalist movement, although many other intellectual strands such as humanism were submerged in it. A critical examination of thought and action with the help of Reason and knowledge gained from it, acceptance of only what appears to be proper and rational on such an examination and the strength and determination to hold on what is thus accepted without regard for tradition, religion or popular opinion and prejudice are some of the significant features of rationalism.<sup>1</sup> It was essentially these features that characterised Rationalism that emerged in Europe as a system of thought, and it thus came to be designated 'scientific rationalism'. Rationalism in the Maharashtrian intellectual thought, was, however, not used in the manner as it emerged in Europe. It essentially began from a rational interpretation of religion which, as we have viewed earlier, was explained in the light of its utilitarian value. The brand of rationalism that was employed in Maharashtra can better be termed 'theological rationalism', which tended in due course to turn into 'scientific rationalism'.

The perception of reality in the light of rationality was the first step in the growth of rationalism in Maharashtra. The intellectuals' cognition, inquiry and arguments had a distinct tone of reason in their purport.<sup>2</sup> They attempted to assess the

1. Wilson, Bryan R., Religion in Secular Society, C.A. Watts and Co., 1966, pp. 15-16.

2. 'If a custom enslaves us, it should outright be given a good-bye. Is a custom good or bad? That is and ought to be the question?' Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p. 90.

existence and prevalence of customs and practices on the ground of their usefulness to the needs of the time.<sup>1</sup> Even their attitude towards religion had a distinct rational element. Religion was viewed not simply as a system of belief but more importantly as a means of social engineering oriented towards achieving the material advancement of the country and society. To repeat, religion was explained in terms of its utilitarian value to the progress of society. They emphasised that social change must be effected under the guidance of reason and moral sense.<sup>2</sup> To Chandavarkar submission to bad customs against the convictions of one's conscience was "un-Hindu".<sup>3</sup>

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1. "A custom arises at its inception out of some necessity and it becomes stereotyped for ages. The principle underlying the custom is forgotten; the form remains. If a society wishes to advance, these customs are to be continuously corrected to meet new requirements." *Ibid.*, p.199. "Even if our old books prohibit sea-voyages, we must now advance with the times and cast aside all such prohibitions. The reasons for these prohibitions, which probably existed in old days when the conveyance for sea-voyages were of the most primitive character, have now ceased. And with the reasons ceasing, the prohibitory law must also cease." Telang, K.T., *op.cit.*, Vol.I, pp.304-305.
  2. "Social changes must not be left to work themselves out, but should always be under the guidance of our reason and moral sense. What our conscience thinks just (moral) and what appeals to our reason we must follow." Bhandarkar, R.G., *op.cit.*, Vol.II, p.530.
  3. Chandavarkar, N.G., *op.cit.*, p.141.

The emphasis on reason as the touchstone of assessment and its importance for the development of the society was the characteristic feature in the nineteenth century Maharashtrian intellectual thought.<sup>1</sup> Even in their advocacy for change on scriptural grounds reason had its primary share.<sup>2</sup> Reason was never given a good-bye; it remained the propelling force throughout. Agarkar was a staunch rationalist who rejected the formulae of scriptures, custom or the so-called voice of the common people in assessing any phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> He listened only to his reason and conscience.<sup>4</sup> The supreme authority according to Ranade was the 'Voice of God within us',<sup>5</sup> which seems to claim kinship with Mahatma Gandhi's 'inner voice'. He was

1. "What time brings about is very often not under the guidance of reason, and consequently very often, degradation is the result and not elevation." Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. II, p.496. "We are bound to accept the teachings of all our faculties alike, that is, of scientists as well as religious thinkers, saints and devotees, as far as they conform to reason and the moral sense." Parmenand, N.M., op.cit., Letter No. II, p.16.
2. "There is no doubt about the reasonableness and necessity of Widow Marriage on rational grounds and about the legality of it on Shastric grounds also." Pandit, Vishnu Shastri, op.cit., 1868, p. IV.
3. Naik, V. S., op.cit., p. 7.
4. Agarkar wrote : "Reason is our sole guide, and we need not seek scriptural sanction. After all, it is very easy to find authority and precedents for contradictory propositions, and any debate that relies on authority is bound to be sterile." Quoted in Pradhan, G.P., "Gopal Ganesh Agarkar : Social Revolutionary" in N.R. Phatak and others, op.cit., p.40.
5. Ranade said: "Rever all human authority. Pay your respects to all prophets and revelations but never let this reverence and respect come in the way of the dictates of conscience, the Divine Command in us." Quoted in Parvate, T.V., op.cit., 1963, p.150.

against the notion of being enmeshed in reconciling scriptures to the nationalist standpoint, as it was detrimental to the faculty of judgement and reasoning.<sup>1</sup>

Although rationalism was the dominant stand in the nineteenth century Maharashtrian thought, the intellectuals did seek scriptural sanction for reform. This, however, does not imply 'degeneration' of their rationalist position, as they went from reason to religion and not vice-versa. It was not the reconciliation of reason to scriptural authority but the subjection of the latter to their rationalist standpoint. The search for scriptural sanction should, therefore, not be taken to mean the dissolution of rationality in the nineteenth century Maharashtrian intellectual thought; it was, in fact, the evolution of rationalism from theological to scientific in the then system of thought. Moreover, their attempt at establishing 'harmonisation' between reason and religious tradition was dictated by social utilitarianism. The harmonisation was, therefore, not a loss but a gain for the cause they all stood for. The reform ideas were thus provided added strength and impetus from both reason and scriptural sanction — the desirability of and necessity for change on the basis of the former, and its religious legalisation on that of the latter. It should be, however, emphasised that rationalism in Maharashtrian thought did not

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1. "There is not a custom however absurd which cannot be defended by some strong text of law. The usual practice of reconciling texts, and the loss of the spirit of true criticism have benumbed the power of judgement." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p. 82.

evolve in a straightforward fashion from theological to scientific, although it did begin in the form of the former. In course of the movement they often tended to run on parallel lines, depending upon the individual intellectuals, and at certain stages one became more prominent than the other. However, it did tend to shift from theological to scientific as exemplified in the ideas of Agarkar in particular.

A pertinent question arises here if nationalism was the dominant strand in the nineteenth century thought, what led them to seek the support of the scriptural authority for reform? The reasons can be sought in primarily the pragmatism of the nineteenth century intellectual consciousness. The intellectuals concerned with the problems of society and the people realized the intellectual futility of setting up the authority of reason as final and absolute. They realized that Reason alone was too weak a weapon for advancing the cause of reform especially in a society which was impregnated with religious values and beliefs.<sup>1</sup> This realization was acutely felt in the later phase of the movement, as the intellectuals viewed its progress since its inception. The movement had, in fact, made little progress, and the attempt of the Paramhansa Sabha to eradicate social evils and obscurantism on the basis of non-religious gland and works had miserably failed. It was

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1. "There must be persuasion and reasoning but it is not by logic alone that men's hearts are roused to a consciousness of social evils." Chansarkar, N.G., op.cit., p. 87.

thus the assessment of the actual social reality impregnated religious values and beliefs that led them to seek the scriptural support in order to make their reform ideas conducive to social acceptance. Moreover, the task of obtaining necessary social support involved an intellectual challenge to combat and defeat the priests on the very ground of their strength, and the alleged basis of their opposition to the idea of change.<sup>1</sup>

Link with the Past : A noteworthy tendency in the nineteenth century Maharashtra intellectual thought was to view the existing social evils and practices as later excrescences.<sup>2</sup> They were seen as distortions of the past.<sup>3</sup> The Vedic period

1. "On the strength of the very texts in the old books we should convince the orthodox leaders of our society of the reforms we seek being sanctioned by the Shastras". Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. II, p.514.
2. "The seclusion of women and their ignorance, early marriage etc., were invented and introduced in later times." Ibid., pp.505-507. "The early celebration of child marriages, forcible widowhood, polyandry and polygamy are all admittedly corruptions of recent growth, unknown to the best days of our country's history." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.72; op.cit., 1902, p.94.
3. "The local usages which obtain at present are not congruous with our best traditions of the past." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.72.

of Indian history was viewed as the ideal type of society free from the social-cultural anomalies of the present times.<sup>1</sup> In Vedic period Hindu society was more healthy, rational and vigorous, with equitable social arrangements.<sup>2</sup> The practices of late, optional, and widow-marriages, monogamy, etc., were the ways of the Vedic social life.<sup>3</sup> In short, in the ideas of the nineteenth century there was a very strong appeal for the reimposition of the Vedic patterns of life and culture on the debris of the existing social structure.

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1. "In vedic times there was admittedly no idol or image worship." Ibid., Rise of the Maratha Power, Delhi, Publications Division, 1961, p.73. "Commensality, an important feature of castes, was not a rigid social rule in olden times. We see from the Mahabharata and other works that Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas could eat the food cooked by each other... they could dine with Shudras also." Bhandarkar, R.G. op.cit., Vol. II, pp.452-473.
  2. "The social ideal was much higher and more rational in ancient times than it is now... Women were not debarred from the highest education." Ibid., pp.504-505. "In Vedic period society was more healthy and vigorous." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.82. "The women in ancient past took equal part with the husbands in solemn religious rites. They were permitted at their choice to remain single and unmarried... They were poets, philosophers, and Rishis, and composed hymns and wrote books, and argued with men on equal terms." Ibid., p.74.
  3. "There was a period (Vedic age) when our women were not only educated but learned, when infant marriages did not prevail, widow-marriages were not unusual, and caste distinctions did not exist in the aggravated and absurd form in which they exist now." Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.65. "The practice of widow marriage and remarriage of women prevailed in golden times. The wife of the dead Agnihotrin was raised from the funeral pile by a promise of remarriage... In Aryan times, marriages were performed after the girl was grown up. Monogamy, women's freedom were found in the ancient Indian past. Monogamy was the natural condition of Aryan life, and there was no polygamy and polyandry. Marriage of widows was not looked down upon as disreputable... Marriage was optional with men as well as with women." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, pp.30-74. "In ancient times widow-marriage was allowed; the restriction imposed on it is the recent Brahmanical invention." Deshmukh, G.H., op.cit., No.7, p.127.



Telang, for example, wrote :

" For improvement let us revert to the condition of things prevalent in the earlier period. It is the comparatively modern period and the degenerations belonging to it which we have to repudiate. The older conditions of things will now be much more favourable to real progress. " <sup>1</sup>

The notion of an ideal Indian past weighed so heavily in the nineteenth century intellectual thought that even the growth of individualism, so important an ingredient in their model of future society, was attributed to as the characteristic feature of the ancient Indian tradition. <sup>2</sup>

The intellectuals' link with the past was, however, not revivalist in nature. The past as a whole was never an obsession with them, nor was it their central concern. They never stood for a carbon-copy type of reproduction of the total past; in fact, they were very selective in their approach. For example, they did not advocate the bringing back of the Vedic economy and polity. Ranade clearly stated :

"In politics no one would now advocate a return to the autocracies and personal despotisms of former days; nor again in the industrial sphere would it do to stick to the old primitive methods in our attempts to improve the old or start new industries. So, too, neither in the social sphere would mere revival meet our requirements. " <sup>3</sup>

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1. Telang K.T., op.cit., Vol.I, p.306.
  2. "Our ancient law books begin not with the duties of the king or subjects, or the rules of State or Society, but the first place is given to the development of the individual. The implication of this was to attain progress through Man, the individual ... The perfection of the individual was the first problem to which the Rishis applied themselves. The Gayatri prayer is an appeal to God that this Light may be shed on the mind of the individual to illuminate it." Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., pp.134-135.
  3. Quoted in Parvate, T.V., op.cit., 1963, p.274.

It was, on the contrary, modern Western economic and political systems with technology and science, and secular and liberal values that were emphasised. Moreover, they did not stand for the retention of even the selected Vedic ways and practices as they were, but the adaptation of what was vital and relevant in the past to the present needs and requirements in order to transform the present into a better future. Chandavarkar wrote :

" I too venerate the past; for without it we would not have had the present. But it is the vital past that we must care for, and not break away from. Nothing that is of the past has a right to live if it stunts our growth and kills our manhood, numbs our physical, mental and moral calibre .... Because a custom suited the past age, can it suit the present? To say that it can is to say that a coat which fitted you when you were twenty years old, ought to fit you when you grow to be thirty years old. Let us not ignore the past, but the past has to be adapted to the present so as to rise into a good and glorious future. We cannot break from the past if it is vital. But what is wanted is not a word for the past. Rather, we have to put in a word for the present. " 1

The past was thus viewed in its relation to the present, and its relevance to the creation of a better future. In other words, they went to the past after having a vision of the future, and not in a revivalistic fashion. In the past what they looked for was simply an ideal, and not a model. The call for a return to the past was, as a matter of fact, a march towards modernity; it was by no means revivalism.

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1. Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., pp. 90-93.

Their reverence for the past was intellectual in inspiration; and not psychological born out of inferiority complex as some would hold it. They were aware of the significance of historical continuity in the process of social evolution.<sup>1</sup> That "the new comes from the womb of the old" was the general understanding. Ranade held:

"The creed of the old is good, because it contains the germs out of which alone the reform of the future can come, but that creed has to adjust itself to the larger and ampler requirements of the modern times, and then alone can it expand."<sup>2</sup>

Chandavarkar wrote:

"The ideal of antiquity is not altogether a meaningless ideal. But for the past we would neither have lived in or seen the present... It is necessary at the same time to bear in mind that the past is useful as a guide for our present, and for our future growth... Blind belief in antiquity is a monstrous fallacy... This ideal of antiquity is one of our social ideals that need to be

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1. Ranade held: "To say that it is possible to build up a new fabric on new lines without any help from the past is to say that I am self-born, and my father and grandfather need not have troubled for me." Quoted in Parvate, T.V., op.cit., 1963, p.148. Ranade further wrote: "In human affairs it is not true that our past is always dead and buried. Nothing that we have done is really dead. Nothing that our fathers have done is dead for us. It is a living force which drags us upward or downward, and one has to choose between the two. Your present is all yours. It must accumulate and outweigh the old past record of your and your forefathers' actions. One should neither hold by the past nor forget it altogether; it is essential for the building up of the future." Quoted in Natarajan, S., A Century of Social Reform in India, London, 1959, p.4.

2. Quoted in Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.42.

revised, not revived. The past should neither be neglected nor treated with contempt. It has its utility. We have, however, to confine our reverence for the past within reasonable limits determined by the wants, the needs, the spirit of the times in which we live. By doing so we are by no means extinguishing the past. We are making it live in the present."<sup>1</sup>

As the intellectuals had a deep rooted faith in evolution rather than in revolt or revolution,<sup>2</sup> their emphasis on historical continuity was a sound intellectual proposition. The view that "no development ever comes out of nothingness and the experience of the past serves as the basis of further development" is historically valid. It was primarily this understanding of the social evolution that led them to return to the past. It should, however, be reiterated that their return to the past never meant an outright replication of the past, but its revision in accordance with the needs of the present.<sup>3</sup> And it was in this sense that the past was taken as a guide for the renovation of the present order. They went to their own past for inspiration and ideal because they were concerned with the problems of their own society and country, and they were certainly inspired by national or patriotic

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1. Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.203.

2. "The motive force of reform must be tempered in a manner not to lead us to cut ourselves from a vital connection with the past. We must not adopt the procedure of the French Revolution but initiate the mode of action of the English people" Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.II, p.496.

3. "For advance, rectification and revision of the ideals cherished by a society because they have been sanctioned by the past, become always necessary or else there is no advance." Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.201.

considerations. Moreover, they believed that "reform must come from our own 'essential' past; nothing is good for the people unless it springs from its own kernel."<sup>1</sup> The search for the 'cultural roots' could, therefore, culminate in their own history.

In short, talking of revivalism in the intellectual consciousness of nineteenth century Maharashtra would be superficial and factually incorrect. It was simply an intellectual link with the past,<sup>2</sup> which was greatly dictated by the intellectuals' break with the present.

Vision of the Future: The ultimate objective of the intellectual movement in Maharashtra was the attainment of social happiness and national progress.<sup>3</sup> They, therefore, emphasised the cultivation of a sense of duty, love of truth, justice and equity as the fundamental requirements for social salvation,<sup>4</sup> for "social arrangements, manners and customs then only conduce to the happiness and prosperity of a nation, when they are based upon truth, equity and justice."<sup>5</sup> "If social systems are not

1. Ibid., p.40.

2. "We cannot break with the past altogether; with our past we should not break altogether, for it is a rich inheritance... While respecting the past we must ever seek to correct the parasitical growths that have encrusted it, and suck the life out of it. We seek our inspiration in the best traditions of our own past, and adjust the relations of the past with the present in a spirit of mutual forbearance." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.118.

3. "The future happiness of mankind is what we seek for. Social arrangements, manners, and customs must conduce to the happiness and prosperity of our nation." Bhandaskar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. I, p.451.

4. Ibid., p.450.

5. Ibid., p.451.

based on truth and justice,\* they emphasised, "social happiness would be a far outcry."<sup>1</sup> To Ranade, holding fast to the principles of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man were absolutely necessary for purposes of regeneration and salvation.<sup>2</sup> Agarkar emphasised liberty, equality and fraternity to be the basis of the new social order.<sup>3</sup> The upliftment of the lower and depressed classes was its most obvious implication.<sup>4</sup>

The Maharashtraian intellectuals had always been very strong on morality. They did not dream of a society based on some sort of value-neutral rationality but insisted that social order must have a moral foundation to be viable. To quote Parmanand, for example:

"Men and women cannot do without morality, which is ultimately allied to religion, and derives its highest sanction from it... Moral progress is essential to all progress. There can be no advance in the provinces of politics, social organisation and even commerce and industry, unless conscience has become keen and directs the actions of man in all these matters... For human and social advancement

1. Ibid.

2. Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1902, p.251.

3. Pradhan, G.P., op.cit., in N.R. Phatak and others, op.cit., p.36.

4. For elaboration see Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. II, p.50; Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., pp.145-148.

what is of prime importance is the necessity of maintaining a high standard of public morality and ensuring sound moral progress among the people....

Morality is the touchstone of life; moral institutions are a guide to human action... If a State (Nation) is to be elevated among nations, its first ambition ought to be to aim its own moral elevation. Without the moral strength and guidance which religion imparts, government would be a curse, society would be on the road to ruin.<sup>1</sup>

Morality to them was the corner-stone of all progress. To Bhandarkar, Morality was essential for the purification of private life as well as the elevation of social set-up.<sup>2</sup> According to him, society could not progress unless it was based on certain ethical and moral conditions.<sup>3</sup> Moral elevation weighed very high in Ranade's notion of progress. His concept of progress did not merely incorporate intellectual development and material advancement of society but more importantly, moral

1. Parmenand, N.M., op.cit., Letter No. II, pp.14-23.

2. Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. II, p.499.

3. "The political well-being of a nation is possible through the Moral Law alone. The moral law is the unchanging law of progress in human society. Permanent success appears to be invariably associated with certain ethical and moral conditions favourable to the maintenance of a high standard of social efficiency... Moral rectitude is essential condition of progress all along the line." Ibid., pp.499 - 516. "There can be no political advancement, I firmly assert, without social and moral advancement." Ibid., op.cit., Vol. I, p.451<sup>5</sup>

upliftment of the people as well.<sup>1</sup> In fact, to him, the essence of progress lay in the sphere of morality; the level of social development could be gauged by people's moral level. Increase or decrease in moral vitality of a society or community could decide the changes for the better or for the worse.<sup>2</sup> The intellectuals, therefore, laid great emphasis on moral elevation as a necessary precondition for a healthy social regeneration.<sup>3</sup> Morality was so important for them that "no reforms ought to be promoted unless... it is... consistent with the principles of morality."<sup>4</sup>

The new social order they visualised was, therefore, to be "moral, rational and just."<sup>5</sup> It had to shift "from constraint to freedom, from credulity to faith, from status to contract, from authority to reason, from unorganised to organised life, from bigotry to toleration and from blind fatalism to a source of human dignity."<sup>6</sup>

Their vision of the future social set-up thus moved in a particular direction. Although they were not very clear as to the model of future society, on the basis of an examination of their ideas one can say that the values whose introduction and acceptance they advocated were characteristic of a bourgeois order. For progress the intellectuals attached

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1. Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1902, pp.26-27.

2. Ibid.

3. "I attach greater importance to...the cultivation of the moral resources of man, because it is the unfolding of these capacities which forms man's own crown on earth, which constitutes the real greatness of a people, and which is ultimately connected even with material progress" Parmahand, N.M., op.cit., Letter No.XI, p.109.

4. Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.74.

5. Phadke, H.A., op.cit., p.73.

6. Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.117.



greater importance to the growth of individualism in the society.<sup>1</sup> They emphasised that the independent growth of individuals free from the shackles of family, society and community was the basis of all progress.<sup>2</sup> To Agarkar, individual freedom was the sheet-anchor of all social reforms.<sup>3</sup> He laid greater emphasis on individuality, and the development of individual potentialities free from caste and communal constraints.<sup>4</sup>

According to Chandavarkar:

"It is the individual, his doing of something in the individual capacity, and his reaction to his own idea that constitutes the mainspring of all social progress. The individual is the only instrument which society has for giving effect to an idea. If the individual is paralysed, and prevented from responding to his highest impulses, it is society which suffers most in the long run."<sup>5</sup>

1. "The end of progress lies in the elevation and happiness of man, the individual." Ibid., p.246. "The main objective of social reform must be to broaden the sphere of free thought of an individual human being, so as to help him think and act for himself consistently with loyalty to his conscience." Ibid., Quoted in Parvate, T.V., op.cit., p.148. "All reform must begin with the reform of the individual and the reform of the individual begins where he lives a life of openness and virtue, and makes that the basis of all progress, both individual and social..." Chandavaskar, N.G., op.cit., p.76. Telang held: "Progress has been generally achieved through the insistence of the prophet of individualism." Quoted in Ibid., p.27.
2. "All progress in social liberation tends to be a change from the law of status to the law of contract, from the restraints of family, caste and customs to the self-imposed restraints of free will of the individual." Ranade, op.cit., p.1915, p.82.
3. Kamble, J. R., op.cit., p.46.
4. Pradhan, G. P., op.cit., in N. R. Phatak and others, op.cit., p.36.
5. Chandavaskar, N. G., op.cit., pp. iv-v.

Bhandarkar held that unless the individual was renovated and raised there could be no real economic or political progress.<sup>1</sup> The intellectuals, therefore, advocated the sacredness of the individual as the basis of future Indian society. Ranade well formulated the intellectuals' vision of the future social set-up. To quote him:

"We aim for a free growth of individual, and a fuller and larger expansion and development for the nation. A social system, which tends to dwarf the individual citizen and hinder his development in various ways, weakens the vigour of the national conscience and checks the free play and access of light and movement must end in disaster."<sup>2</sup>

Individuals were viewed as propellers and initiators of great changes in the society; they constituted its dynamic spirit. Chandavarkar, for example, wrote:

"It is by the commanding force of individuals in the society... that all reformations of opinion and practice are wrought out.. The function of the individual mind is to, for instance, advance and initiate rectification and revision of the ideals cherished by a society; the social mind cannot in its very nature initiate this process."<sup>3</sup>

1. Bhandarkar, R.G., op. cit., Vol. II, p. 492.

2. Quoted in Parvate, T.V., op. cit., 1963, p. 275.

3. Chandavarkar, N.G., op. cit., pp. 299-301.

Without individual initiative and "the creation of individual faith", they emphasised, social progress could not proceed, and society would remain stationary. To quote Chandavarkar again, for instance :

"Life is put into society where you have put that life *into* individuals first. All reform can proceed from one soul to another ... The greatest of social changes begin in the creation of individual faith ... The great changes of the world — all its great reforms — were effected by small minorities, men of moral courage ... Social reform needs individual reform before it can succeed, only then we may be sure to find a society coming to our side, which is the side of Truth and Progress... The social mind cannot perform the corrective and discerning function of society, ... that can be done only by men endowed with the power of insight, courage and wisdom. It is here that the individual ideal becomes of service to society ... We speak of the social mind, but the social mind is the component of its individual units. The masses will not move unless responsible leaders, men of light and learning walk themselves ... and set an example for others to follow."<sup>1</sup>

Chandavarkar was the greatest exponent of the view that individuals were the moving springs of society. It was they who represented what he called "the centrifugal force which is necessary to make society move beyond its customs and traditions." In his own words :

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1. Ibid., pp. 37-200.

" There is, no doubt, such a thing as the social mind... Customs and institutions are enforced by the social mind, which is the consciousness of the whole society and may more appropriately be termed its vox populi which is looked upon as its vox-Dei. But there is also something like individual mind which is generally supposed to be nothing before the social mind. In a society consciousness remains centred in the discreet individual elements. When men's thought comes to move in the same channel and a group learns its own unity, we speak of a 'social consciousness', but the phrase never means that a society has a brain, 'a consciousness' apart from the consciousness of the men who compose it. The social mind, which enforces obedience to established customs represents what may be called the static power of society. But the society cannot develop by means of the static power alone. It is an organism, and organism is by nature dynamic rather than static... the social mind represents the centripetal force in society; it is its conservative power; but the centrifugal force which is necessary to make society move beyond its customs and traditions can only come from what is called 'the idealizing reason' or 'conscious intelligence' of its individual members. It is the individual mind as distinguished from the social mind, that alone can be properly signs of the time, discern the growing needs, focus contemporary wants and interpret them, and make the experience of the past the basis of further development." <sup>1</sup>

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. Ibid., pp.197-198.

He, therefore, greatly emphasised the infusion of vigour and vitality in the individual members of the society. To him society was a 'dead' whole if it was not based on the vitality of its individual units. To quote him again :

" What is meant by the phrase that the society is an organism? Society has no life except that imparted to it by each and every unit or individual member of it. The voice of the individual contributes to the social voice. Each individual has life, and it is that life which nourishes society. It is on that individual life that social organism itself depends. Society is moral organism but whence does the moral power come? Not from itself, until it comes from individual units, and its health, its progress, its stability, and freedom from decay can only come from the living personality of its individual members generally, but practically those who form its thinking units. Each of us has a head which must think; each of us has a moral force which must act before the society of which we are parts can think and act... Social machine has to be repaired and reformed; but it cannot be repaired without the aid and initiative of the personal equation. The vitality and progressive capacity of a society are dependent on the vitality of each individual, and each individual has to keep it up and nourish it. Not masses but men first. When men tell you to wait till the whole of the society moves, you may wait till doomsday... Power is not in numbers, so much as in personality." <sup>1</sup>

In short, the intellectuals pinned their faith in

individualism as the foundations of future development. Individuals were viewed as the carriers and custodians of modernising ideologies and developmental perspectives. The nineteenth century intellectuals were conspicuous by their lack of faith in masses as the makers of history. But it is to be emphasised that although the intellectuals advocated individualism and the development of individuality in the society, they never suggested its individuation. Their 'individual' was at the same time a 'collective man'. In other words, the stress on individual growth was not counter-posed to social growth; in fact, the development of society as a whole undelay the appeal for the growth of individuality. Moreover, the intellectuals were not in favour of giving free and unrestrained hand to individualism but emphasised the counter-balancing position of both the individual and the society in order to achieve a healthy and balance social growth.<sup>1</sup>

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1. "These two forces which exist in society are complementary to one another. The social force which resides in the social mind or its vox populi... is left to itself, promotes despotism and leads to immobility. Wherever that force prevails, societies become stationary; on the other hand, where social force is weak, and the individual mind alone prevails, societies sink into anarchy and confusion. But where the two forces exist and are active, there is that order rules and well-graduated progress is the result." Ibid., pp.198-199.

Nature of the Consciousness : The nineteenth century intellectuals did not attack the social system as a whole; their attack centred on what they considered to be "the inequities and falsehoods of our social institutions and customs"<sup>1</sup>. In the Maharashtrian intellectual thought, on the whole, there was a lack of total rethinking as manifested by Derozians of Bengal.<sup>2</sup> The intellectuals did not stand for sharp rupture in the existing socio-cultural matrix of the society. They advocated modernisation but not at the cost of social disruption.<sup>3</sup> Their advocacy for social transformation did not imply the change of the structure but that within the structure itself. Root and branch transformation was not on the agenda; the intellectuals did not stand for total annihilation of the social institutions. Ranade clearly pointed out :

"The true reformer is not to write upon a clean slate; his work is more often to complete the half sentence. He has to produce the ideal out of the actual, and by the help of the actual... We seek to turn the stream with a gentle bend here, and a gentle bend there, to fructify the land; we cannot afford to dam it up altogether or force it into a new channel."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.I, p.450.
  2. Mukherji, K., op.cit., p.339.
  3. Kumar, Ravinder, op.cit., 1968, p.296.
  4. Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.118.

In other words, they were advocates of reform and not exponents of revolution. They started with a basic premise that "our social organisation is not without good features and they are not few; some of our social institutions are congenial to the healthy growth of society and they need to be strengthened, and new ones substituted in place of those which do not suit changed circumstances of our country."<sup>1</sup>

However, the identification of the social evils and the attempt at their individual rectification did not constitute the drive of the intellectual consciousness in Maharashtra. They emphatically reiterated that the victory for social reform would come not by mere modifications of social institutions in a formal way but by changing the hearts of the individuals.<sup>2</sup> They were aware that particular customs and practices were simply symptoms, merely the manifestations of the general social and cultural decay.<sup>3</sup>

1. Quoted in Parvate, T.V., op.cit., 1963, p.157.
2. Ranade said in 1898 : "The reforms in the matter of infant marriage and widowhood, intermarriage between castes, the elevation of the low castes, the readmission of converts are reforms only so far as they check the influence of the old ideas and promote the growth of new tendencies... The issue is not this or that particular reform but the general spirit of purity, justice, equality, temperance and mercy which should be infused onto our minds and which should illuminate our hearts." Quoted in Ibid., pp.151-165.
3. " If the social reform goes behind the particular custom, it takes hold of the symptoms for the diagnosis of the root disease. You need to look at its customs in a wide, comprehensive spirit... You cannot determine conventions and customs without pursuing them at all points and elevating the idea of our men and women about life in general and society as a whole. To work at a particular reform is good, but to work at them with the consciousness and conviction that they are parts of a whole is better because necessary." Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.131.



They emphasised, therefore, the change of ideas and attitude, "the reform of the heart and the head" as the starting-point of all healthy progress.<sup>1</sup> Unless the attitude, the thought or idea was changed, the notion of social regeneration would remain a dream unrealised despite the elimination of the evil customs and practices.<sup>2</sup> The emphasis on change in the pattern of people's thought as a necessary condition for a lasting solution to the social problems was one of the marvellous pieces in the nineteenth century Maharashtra thought.

The intellectuals, however, did not advocate any revolutionary change in the society. There was nothing very radical about their programmes for social regeneration, although their ideas did have some revolutionary implications. The upliftment of the position of women, marriage after attainment of puberty, monogamy, widow-marriage, elimination of caste distinctions, monotheism etc., did not signify any revolutionary change in the society. Even the intellectuals themselves were not

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1. "What a society needs as the starting point of all healthy progress is an intelligent and earnest capacity of outlook as regards both individual and social life. Before any particular reform there must be the reform of the heart and the head of individuals of society. This is social reform." Ibid., p.130.
  2. "It is not the outward form, but the inward form, the thought and the idea which determines the outward form, that has to be changed, if real reformation is desired." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.192.

unaware of the reformist nature of their ideas.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the course they delineated for transformation was to be evolutionary and not revolutionary. Nearly all the intellectuals believed in gradual transformation of the country and society.<sup>2</sup> Ranade well formulated the evolutionary nature of the endeavour :

"Nor again could we go in for revolutionary or radical changes, otherwise the continuity of the old life would be broken. By assimilation and expansion we were able to adapt ourselves to our changed circumstances. Our nation has shown wonderful elasticity in the past, and there is no reason to fear for the future in this regard ... Change for the better by slow absorption — assimilation and not by sudden conversion or revolution — this has been the characteristic feature of our past history; changes have occurred without any violent struggle and without breaking up continuity of the old life."<sup>3</sup>

1. Chandavarkar, for example, wrote : "Our programme of reform is not a revolution but moderation. For example, female education is the first item of reform on our list. There is nothing radical or revolutionary in this idea about the necessity and importance of female education." See Chandavarkar, op.cit., p. 70.
2. "Reform must advance by stages." Ibid., p. 71. "Reform should be brought about gradually in order to be effective and lasting. The motives of Freedom should be powerful in our hearts, but they must be tempered in manner not to lead us to cut ourselves off from a living connection with the past." Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. II, p. 515. Also see Jambhakar, Bal Shastri, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 69.
3. Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, pp. 117-126.

Thus, change and continuity constituted the basic elements in the intellectuals' scheme of social transformation.

Another characteristic feature of the nineteenth century Maharashtrian intellectual thought was that the problems the intellectuals took up for reform were mainly related to upper castes and middle classes. For example, widow-marriage was never a problem for the women of lower classes and castes. Polygamy, again, was a problem more of the upper castes and middle classes; the poor and the deprived sections could not afford such an extravagance. This is, however, not to say that their consciousness was class-based. In fact, the ideas in 19th century Maharashtra cannot be characterised as representing a class. The problems they selected for reform were subjectively social problems, engulfing the entire society, although certain customs and practices did objectively prevail on a large scale among particular groups and classes. The problems like infant-marriage, caste distinctions, etc., embraced the entire society, and were not confined to particular castes and classes. Moreover, the reform they advocated engulfed the entire society and country as a whole and it did not relate to particular classes or groups. They emphasised social advancement, the amelioration of the people, the masses, and not classes.<sup>1</sup> In other words, their objective of social and

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1. "Progress lies in rejuvenating the vast mass, and not a small group or class." Ibid., p.136.

national regeneration was people-oriented and not class-oriented. It is true that they were not above class or group interests, and did objectively represent class or group interests.<sup>1</sup> But when they reflected the interests of a class or a group, they did so through the prism of ideology, and not directly as members or obedient servants of that class or group<sup>2</sup>. In other words, their thinking was guided, at the level of consciousness, by thought and not interests. It is wrong to look at the class or group origins of intellectuals and then brand them as being this class or that. The fact that most of the nineteenth century intellectuals came from the emerging middle class does not, therefore, mean that they represented the interests and aspirations of that class only. For understanding the basic nature of their ideas one has to see what they actually wanted and whom they were intellectually representing.

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1. Chandra, Bipan, The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India, New Delhi, PPH, 1969, p. 732.

2. Ibid.

## V METHOD OF REFORM

The nineteenth century Maharashtrian intellectuals were greatly concerned with the means by which the social transformation they sought could be effected. The debate, particularly during the second half of the nineteenth century, centred around mainly the question of whether the method of reforms should be only educational or both educational and legislative. On the one hand there were those who strictly advocated what is called " reforms from within ", and on the other there was a group of intellectuals who approved of the " reform from without " in certain circumstances, although they pinned their basic faith in non-legislative methods.

Mandlik and Tilak were the great exponents of the " reform from within " tactic; they vehemently opposed the idea of legislation as a means of social transformation.<sup>1</sup> Ranade and Chandavarkar, on the other hand, represented

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1. " I am opposed to the enactment of the governmental laws on social matters unless the people want them ... The Government would do well to refrain from interfering in social matters which are quite outside the pale of Government interference, and which the Hindu community consider as peculiarly the province of their own religious constitution the violation of which by the state would be regarded as an evil of vast magnitude." Mandlik, V.N., op.cit., pp.156-179. "We agree with public opinion that government should not interfere with our customs," Tilak held. Quoted in Wolpert, S.A., Tilak and Gokhale : Revolution and Reform in the Making of Modern India, Univ. of California Press, 1962.

those who saw no reason why the support and the aid of the State should be withheld from reform endeavours.<sup>1</sup> It should, however, be emphasised that they, too, did not pin their faith in legislation as the sole method of bringing about social change. In fact, their first preference did not go for legislation; legislative help was sought only in cases in which the individual efforts were not likely to be effective.<sup>2</sup> Their selection of the method of reform was determined by the merit and urgency of social issues. The practices which were most heinous and regressive were to be abolished with one stroke — single and final, and it was precisely in such cases that the method of legislation was advocated.<sup>3</sup> Ranade clearly pointed

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1. "The initiation is to be our own ... dictated by our responsible sense, and all that is sought at the hands of foreigners is to give to this responsible sense the force and sanction of law. In the matters of social reform legislations, the distinction of foreign and domestic rulers is a distinction without difference." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.80. Also see Chandavarkar, G.L., op.cit., p.42f
  2. "Legislation steps in only when the other methods fail." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.113. "The State has a function to regulate and minimise the evil, if the evil can be minimised better than the individual effort. On this principle alone can State action be justified." Ibid. p. 78.
  3. "Wherever there is undeserved misery, there is a ground for state interference always supposing that the interference will lead to the redress of the wrong better than any individual effort." Ibid., p. 79.

out :

" The history of the suppression of Infanticide and Sati shows that these institutions ... were checked, and could be checked, only by the strong arms of Law, and once they were denounced as crimes, they disappeared from the face of the country... The diseased corruptions of the body cannot, and should not be dealt within the same way as its normal and healthy developments. The sharp surgical operation, and not the homeopathic infinitesimally small pill, is the proper remedy for the first class of disorders, and the analogy holds good ... also in dealing with the parasitical growth of social degeneration. <sup>1</sup>

Thus, it seems that the intellectuals of Maharashtra were not very sharply divided on the question of the means of bringing about social change. It was just that the advocates of " reform from within " pinned their faith exclusively in education, while others did not rule out legislation as a means of social transformation. Nearly all the intellectuals held education to be the most effective agent of social change. <sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid., p. 82.

2. Ibid., p. 237; Mandlik, V.N., op.cit., pp. 141-143; Telang, K.T., op.cit., p. 260; Jambhekar, Bal Shastri, The Bombay Durpan, Sept. 14, 1832; Chipplunker, Vishnushastri, op.cit., 1963, p. 234; Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. I, p. 475. Agarkar, G.G., op.cit., 1956, p. 76. Tilek also held this position. See Pradhan, G.P., op.cit., in N.R. Phatak and others, op.cit., p. 330.

It was only through the spread of knowledge that reformation could be effected in the society and social salvation could be realised as a reality.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the conviction in the instrumentality of knowledge as the great agent of social transformation and regeneration was a common conclusion. Even Bhaskar who was primarily concerned with exposing the political and economic reality under the British rule laid emphasis on

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1. "My faith in the education of public opinion as a great social force in the reformatory endeavour is almost unlimited. And I believe in the long run the results of that education are not only most enduring but most rapid also... The best results are expected from educating and refining public opinion... To all this development, there is in my view one necessary condition precedent, that is the development of education." Telang, K.T., op.cit., Vol. I, pp.251-260. "It is not the vigilance of the magistrate that can put an end to the evil social practices we have been noticing. It is so deeply rooted that it seems vain to expect it can be eradicated otherwise than through the influence of education." Jambhekar, Bal Shastri, The Bombay Durpan, Sept.14, 1832. "It is only by the education that we can command the elevation and freedom which alone will help us to be taller, wiser and better, individually as well as collectively." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.237. "The salvation of a people or nation lies in the spread of knowledge. Chiplunkar, Vishnushastri, op.cit., 1963, p.234. "The key solution to our problem lies in education, general education." Jambhekar, Bal Shastri, The Bombay Durpan, Aug.24, 1832. Also see Agerkar, G.G., op.cit., 1956, p.76; op.cit., 1951, p.235.



the dissemination of knowledge through education as the *great* agent of social transformation.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, education was viewed not only as a solution to the social problems, but also as a key to the historic 'catching-up process' for the country. To quote Bhandarkar :

" It is only education that can improve moral, social, economic and political conditions... In this way alone we will be able to raise our fallen country and enable it to take its place in the community of nations." <sup>2</sup>

On this basic understanding there was no difference between the advocates of "reform from within" and those of the "reform from without". It is, therefore, imperative to examine here in detail the educational programme of the nineteenth century pioneers in order to have an idea about their method of reform.

To begin with, the intellectuals of Maharashtra placed a very high premium on knowledge, and its necessity

1. " We would have borne all the enormous calamities you (the British) have heaped upon our heads with courage and fortitude becoming our present situation, had you but undertaken the education of the Natives on your hands and made them wiser and wiser, so that they might be freed from the religious prejudices and superstitious fears". See The Bombay Gazette, Aug. 20, 1841, (Letter No. IV), Vol. LIII, New Series, No. 46.

2. Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol. I, p. 475.

for both man and society.<sup>1</sup> Ignorance was viewed as a curse and enlightenment as a blessing " in every rank and condition of life and of society."<sup>2</sup> The general ignorance of the people was attributed to as the root cause of the prevalence and doggedness of superstitions and obscurantism in Indian society.<sup>3</sup> Illiteracy in general and among women in particular was held responsible for national degeneration and backwardness.<sup>4</sup> The spread of knowledge, therefore, was accorded a primary position in the scheme of social transformation in nineteenth century Maharashtra.

The intellectuals emphasised a particular type of education for the attainment of their goal. They did not approve of the existing educational system. They perceived that the indigenous traditional learning had lost "its value in connection with the present day necessities and wants of human life."<sup>5</sup>

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1. "Great is wisdom, infinite is the value of wisdom; it is the highest achievement of man. If that is a failure, all is a failure." Ibid., p.449. "Knowledge is the only asset which makes a man man; without knowledge man is hardly different from an animal." Chiplunkar, Vishnushastri, op.cit., 1963, p.234. Jambhokar wrote : " It is the power of knowledge that overpowers nature and makes man magnificent." See The Bombay Durpun, Aug.24, 1832.
  2. Parmanand, N.M., op.cit., Letter No.XI, p.99.
  3. " The practice of imposed widowhood and other social malpractices thrive on people's ignorance." Deshmukh, G.H., op.cit., No.16, p.221.
  4. Jambhokar, Bal Shastri, op.cit., Vol.I, p.69.
  5. See Ibid., The Bombay Durpun, Sept.14,1832.

The traditional education was denounced because it was devoid of any practical utility for the material prosperity of the people, besides its being incapable of "dispelling darkness surrounding us."<sup>1</sup> Historically speaking, the intellectuals' understanding of the nature of traditional learning came very close to its actual state.<sup>2</sup> It should, however, be pointed out that their opposition to the traditional knowledge was basically directed against the limitations of that knowledge, and it did not imply the rejection of indigenous education as such. In fact, emphasis on the imparting of knowledge through vernaculars was one of the major concerns of the nineteenth century intellectuals.<sup>3</sup>

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1. "The utility of learning is zero if it does not lead to the material prosperity of the people. It is precisely here that the traditional education shows its inadequacy." Ibid. Dadoba wrote: "The traditional system of indigenous education with its emphasis on the Puranic description is unable to dispel darkness surrounding us." See Priolkar, A.K., Autobiography, op.cit., p.208. Deshmukh held: "The knowledge of the Shastras has now lost its significance. The study of Nyaya, Vyakarna, Vedanta or Mimansa is now a sheer waste of energy, as it cannot promote the well-being or material prosperity of the people." Quoted in Phatak, N.R., op.cit., in N.R. Phatak and others, op.cit., p.7. "The redundancy of the Brahmanical knowledge is because of the fact that it is devoid of economics and economic issues." See Ibid., op.cit., No.33, p.80.
  2. For elucidation see Chapter III.
  3. Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.70; Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.I, p.450.

Nor did they pin their faith in the system of colonial education as a means of social regeneration. As would be clear from the subsequent discussion, the intellectuals of Maharashtra were marked by their lack of faith in the colonial education, although their attack was not as direct as it was in relation to the traditional education. A critical examination of the British educational policy and the educational scheme of the intellectuals will help us locate the differences between the two.

The principle underlying the British educational policy was mainly guided by the needs of British colonialism, administrative, ideological, economic and political.<sup>1</sup> The precondition for the perpetuation of colonial domination and extended exploitation was smooth administration and ideological subjugation of the people, and it was essentially this that lay at the heart of the British educational policy.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p.8. Sir J. Malcolm, Governor of Bombay, explicitly stated in 1828; "One of the chief objects of diffusing education among the natives of India is our increased power of associating them in every part of our administration. This I deem essential on the grounds of economy, of improvement, and of security." See Sharp, H.(ed.), Selections from Educational Records, Part I, 1781-1839, Calcutta, Bureau of Education, 1920, 144.
  2. Sir Charles Wood's famous educational despatch of 19th July 1854 confirmed the early trend in the British educational policy. The Despatch dictated: "The advancement of European knowledge will rouse them(natives) to emulate us in the development of the vast resources of their country ... and at the same time, secure to us a large and more certain supply of many articles necessary for our manufactures, and extensively consumed by all classes of our population, as well as well as almost inexhaustible demand for the produce of British labour." Quoted in Misra, B.B., op.cit., pp.154-155.

No wonder, the educational institutions that developed during the nineteenth century emphasised a classical and arts curriculum, designed indeed not to teach science or technology but to preach English morals.<sup>1</sup> The whole curriculum was British-oriented, projecting the greatness of Britain and idealising British institutions, values and culture.<sup>2</sup> The objective was to establish their cultural-ideological hegemony by reorienting the minds of the people especially the educated sections to everything British so as to create the social base for colonial rule. The educational policy of the British government was thus not geared to the needs of material advancement of the country and people, rather it was oriented towards meeting the colonial needs of the Raj. Consequently, science education was given a very low profile in the British educational policy. The educational programme of the intellectuals, on the contrary was diametrically different from the British educational policy, as would be clear from the subsequent discussion.

Undoubtedly, in the educational programme of the intellectuals great significance, not only social but also political,

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1. Omvedt, Gail, op.cit., p.76; McDonald, Ellen E., op.cit., pp.453-470.
  2. Panikkar, K.N., "Intellectual Implications of Colonialism in India" (an unpublished paper), (n.d.), p.4.

was attached to English education.<sup>1</sup> The panacea for the existing problems was, however, sought not in the English literature but in Western Scientific knowledge.<sup>2</sup> The intellectuals attached great significance to the practical uses of knowledge,<sup>3</sup> and the introduction of the Western

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1. "Had there been Indian scholars educated in English before the British rule, we would not have lost our political independence." Dashmukh, G.H., op.cit., No.31, p.78.
2. "The panacea for all our problems is Western scientific education." Ibid, Quoted in Phatak, N.R., op.cit., in N.R. Phatak and others, op.cit., p.9. The emphasis on science education was common to nearly all. The intellectuals, and G.V. Joshi and Dadoba were very emphatic about it. See Joshi, G.V., op.cit., p.1062; Priolkar, A.K., Autobiography, op.cit., p.208.
3. "The knowledge and skill acquired should be practical and oriented towards material development. It must be applicable and applied to the development of the resources of the State, whether agricultural, mineral, manufacturing, or artistic, and they be directed towards the production of articles of good quality and at low cost so as to enable them to hold their own against outside competition. In these and similar ways must technical education and industrial enterprise be made fruitful and a source of prosperity to the people and to the State." Parmanand, N.M., op.cit., Letter No.XI, pp.108-109.

system of education based on "useful arts and sciences" was emphasised in that light.<sup>1</sup> The underlying concern was the material prosperity of the people and the country's economic development. The new education to be imparted, therefore, was to be oriented towards the exploitation of the country's resources for the attainment of that goal. Jambhekar was very emphatic in that progress and prosperity could be secured only through the cultivation of practical arts and sciences.<sup>2</sup> In 1840 he founded the Dig-Darshan, a monthly Marathi magazine, dealing with the scientific problems and issues. He held that the progress of England and the West was entirely due to the development of progress-oriented science education and practical branches of arts.<sup>3</sup> By that logic he came to the conclusion that Indian backwardness was greatly the result of the lack of

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1. What is needed is the useful arts and sciences of the West... Without practical branches of mechanics and the arts of making different manufactures, the knowledge of science can hardly raise the mass of the people in the scale of social happiness or political advancement." Jambhekar, Bal Shastri, op.cit., Vol.II, p.139. "The practical uses of any science or branch of knowledge are undoubtedly of the highest importance. It is this kind of knowledge that we want to impart to the natives in general." Ibid., The Bombay Durpun, Aug.24,1832. "Literary education served good for the groundwork, but the scientific knowledge is necessary for the utilisation of the vast and varied mines of product available in the country." Mandlik, V.N., op.cit., p.690.
  2. "Prosperity in this age appears a term synonymous with civilisation and the cultivation of arts and sciences." Jambhekar, Bal Shastri, The Bombay Durpun, Aug.24,1832.
  3. "Let us only consider the pre-eminence to which England has arrived by the diffusion of knowledge among her inhabitants. Her astonishing machineries which have multiplied her means of acquiring wealth to an unconceivable degree, owe their origin to the cultivation of arts and sciences." Ibid.

cultivation of useful arts and sciences in the indigenous intellectual tradition. In his own words:

"One of the reasons for the Western advancement and Indian backwardness is that the advantages of knowledge have not been appreciated in India in their proper light. Had the Asiatic philosophers bestowed the same attention on useful arts and sciences, as they have done on more abtuse and subtle branches of knowledge such as Metaphysics and Logic, much more good might have been expected from their labours. Our Eastern intellectual advancement is in no way connected with the common purposes of life. Hence very little progress of the Hindoos, and Mohametans in Mechanics, Geography, History, etc..."<sup>1</sup>

In short, for the transformation of the Indian society and economy what was emphasised in the educational programme of the intellectuals was the transplantation of Western education with an exclusive stress on science and technology, and useful branches of arts. Jambhekar stated very clearly:

"The changed situation of the country makes it daily more and more imperative upon the Natives to bestow their attention on the useful arts and sciences, their practical application to the common purposes of life, and in short, to gain every acquisition, which has rendered European Natives superior to Asiatics, and from the want of which their country has so much suffered."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.



The intellectuals stood for the extinction of the privileges of the higher castes in the existing educational arrangement. They were opposed to the monopoly of learning by certain upper castes and classes, and proposed the spread of knowledge to all the segments of the society. In short, they emphasised mass education as opposed to class education.<sup>1</sup> To Bhandarkar and Parmanand the necessity for bringing the backward classes and the Muslims into the vortex of education was the task demanding special attention.<sup>2</sup> Ranade accorded priority to the agricultural masses in his scheme of mass education.<sup>3</sup> He was against the system of the certain privileged few being the main beneficiaries of the existing educational opportunities. All the intellectuals were constantly concerned with how to make popular education a social reality. For realisation of the objective of mass education

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1. "Progress lies in rejuvenating the vast mass, not a small group improving its position with the aid of modern education and wealth." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.156.
  2. "Our foremost duty is to bring the backward classes and the Mohamedans into the vortex of education." Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.I, p.442. "The backward classes should be paid special attention to, as it is by helping them emerge out of their condition of darkness and ignorance that their wretched condition be ameliorated; it is only education that can liberate them from the man-made slavery imposed on them." Parmanand, N.M., op.cit., Letter No.XI, p.104.
  3. "Nearly 85 per cent of the Brahmins and other high caste boys receive the rudiments of education in the existing schools. The class that has now to be reached is the agricultural community forming the backbone of the population. Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.266.

Parmanand advocated free and compulsory education upto the primary level.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly all intellectuals laid stress on the growth of Indian vernaculars.<sup>2</sup> It was deemed essential for the realisation of the goal of popular education. They held that English as a medium of instruction could not be an instrument of any meaningful social and political progress.<sup>3</sup> The role of English education should, therefore, be confined to aiding and enriching the indigenous languages; it should, in other words, be an aid and never an instrument of social change. To Joshi, the exclusion of the modern Indian languages from the programme of higher studies was an evil of monstrous magnitude.<sup>4</sup> Ranade was very emphatic on the establishment and growth of indigenous education. He ardently advocated the expansion and increasing use of the Indian languages such as Marathi, Gujarati, etc.<sup>5</sup> He took the colonial policy to task for its neglect of the Indian vernaculars that were given little encouragement by the British government.<sup>6</sup> To repeat,

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1. "The idea of popular education can be realised if it is based on a compulsory system of primary education among the masses. Compulsory education is a must for the general welfare of the people... It should and must be offered free of cost; let free schools for primary education, therefore, be established in every town and village, and let them be thrown open to all, and attendance made compulsory." Parmanand, M.M., op.cit., Letter No.XI, p.101.
  2. Ibid., p.102; Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.70; Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.I, p.450; Joshi, G.V., op.cit., p.1014.
  3. Parvate, T.V., op.cit., 1963; p.22.
  4. "We countend that the exclusion of the modern Indian languages (vernaculars) from the programme of higher studies is not only an anomaly but an evil of considerable magnitude." Joshi, G.V., op.cit., pp.1014-1018.
  5. Parvate, T.V., op.cit., 1963, p.22.
  6. Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.261.

the stress on the growth of indigenous education through the expansion and increasing use of vernaculars was given mainly in order to educate the lower sections of the society and peasant mass.<sup>1</sup>

Ranade was aware of the futility of the clamour for mass education if it was not preceded by mass prosperity. He, therefore, emphasised the raising of the material condition of the people as the first step towards the realisation of this goal.<sup>2</sup> It is, however, to be emphasised that in an age when English education was eagerly sought for by the emerging indigenous intelligentsia and the middle class, for proficiency in it formed a passport to positions of power and social prestige, the intellectuals' concern for mass education and the expansion and increasing use of vernaculars was really a remarkable development. It was basically a people-oriented programme, and was markedly distinct from what the general intelligentsia and the middle class thought and desired.

The intellectuals stood not only for general education but

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1. Ibid., p.266.

2. "The clamour for mass education would be a hollow cry if it is not preceded by mass prosperity. Mass education, in order to be meaningful and effective, preconceives mass prosperity. What the poor masses want is not education but work and employment. It looks like mockery on the part of the Government to offer to the labouring classes education, when they sadly want food. Until the material condition of the people is increased there will be no great demand for education." Ibid., pp.292-293.

also the corresponding growth of higher education.<sup>1</sup> Ranade emphasised that the coordination between mass education and higher education was highly essential for national progress; a lop-sided emphasis on the former smacked of its non-progressive orientation.<sup>2</sup> In fact, most of them with particular reference to Ranade and Bhandarkar were not in favour of the primary education at the cost of higher learnings; they emphasised a coordination between the two.<sup>3</sup> Ranade was very critical of the British Government for its low expenditure on general education in India, and was sad at its neglect of the higher learning. He wrote in 1882:

"The British Indian Government raises from the people and yearly revenue of close upon 68½ million sterlings of 3½ rupees per head, and spends on their education about  $\frac{3}{4}$  million or less than 8 pies per head per annum. This miserably small expenditure from the public revenues on national education is not very creditable to a civilized government... The total sum disbursed for educational purposes exceeds a crore

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1. See Mandlik, V.N., op.cit., p.155; Telang, K.T., op.cit., Vol.II, p.537. "Mass education is no doubt essential to the progress of the nation as a whole; but the education of the masses should go hand in hand with the education of the higher classes. In fact, no nation can be said to be civilized where the mass of the people are sunk in deep ignorance and superstition. We only wish to assert that Government would be committing a serious error in serving its connection with high education, and looking only after the education of the masses." Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.288. "On the basis of the primary education of the masses must be raised the edifice of higher education in all the branches of knowledge, theoretical and practical, through the vernacular and English languages." Parmanand, N.M., op.cit., Letter No.XI, p.102.
  2. Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.288.
  3. "Both high and primary education should be allowed to grow with their natural growth, in accordance with the needs and demands of the people." Ibid., p.292. Also see Phadke, H.A., op.cit., 1968 p.22.

and a half of rupees. Of this sum, about 11 lacks are spent on university education, i.e. the Arts Colleges, European and Oriental; 40 lacks are spent on high and middle class schools; and 73 lacks are spent on Primary education. The rest are spent on direction, inspection and other miscellaneous items."<sup>1</sup>

He found that the Government was not paying a corresponding attention to the growth of higher education, and calculated in 1882 that the Government's "expenditure in India on Primary Education is more than 150 per cent greater than on collegiate, high and middle class institutions together."<sup>2</sup> He came to the conclusion that there was a lack of what he called "correspondence between primary education and higher education," and found the neglect of the latter to be in sharp focus in the Bombay Presidency.<sup>3</sup> On the basis of an analysis of the educational arrangements in the Presidency from 1840 to 1880 he concluded that there was near stagnation in the numerical growth of institutions of higher learning, whereas primary educational institutions increased tenfold.<sup>4</sup> For elucidation let us have a look at the table below<sup>5</sup>

Years	Government Primary		Middle and High Class		Arts Colleges	
	Schools	Scholars	Schools	Scholars	Colleges	Scholar
1840	90	5,000	3	206	2	650
1855-56	322	23,000	15	1,446	2	1,400
1870-71	2,223	119,803	146	18,033	3	303
1880-81	4,225	253,842	159	11,149	3	332

1. Ranade, M.G., *op.cit.*, 1915, pp.252-276.

2. *Ibid.*, p.256.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, p.258.

5. *Ibid.*

From the above table it is clear that there was a lop-sided growth in the number of primary schools during most of the nineteenth century, and there was a conspicuous lack of "Correspondance" between the primary and higher education. The number of primary schools rose up from 90 in 1840 to 4,225 in 1880-81 in the Presidency, while that of the colleges remained nearly constant, and there was just one more addition to the number. Thus, the intellectuals who emphasised a corresponding growth of both primary and higher education had reasons to disapprove of such educational arrangements.

The Maharashtrian intellectuals paid special attention to women-problems. The solution they sought for their amelioration and also for the development of the society and country as a whole was female education. Nearly every intellectual advocated the education for women.<sup>1</sup> Female education was emphasised to be "the root of all reform" and social progress.<sup>2</sup> Illiteracy among women was viewed as one of the major causes of their pitiable plight

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1. See Mandlik, V.N., op.cit., p.11; Agarkar, G.G., op.cit., 1956, pp.86-87; Deshmukh, G.H., op.cit., p.23; Jambhekar, Bal Shastri, op.cit., 1946, p.81. "I look forward more particularly to female education as our greatest help in the solution of all these problems. It is to the spread of education among girls that I am inclined to look for the remedies of the existing evils. This indicates my view as regards social reform generally...." Telang, K.T., op.cit., Vol.I, pp.251-297. "Female education is essential not only for the elevation of the sex... but also the enlightenment and progress of society itself." Parmanand, N.M., op.cit., Letter No.XI, p.104.
  2. "The cause of Parsi progressiveness and enlightenedness is not their spirit of commercial enterpriseness—we have the Bhatias and the Baniyas as a living proof of the fact that people may be highly gifted with mercantile instincts and show the highest spirit of commercial activity, yet remain as bigoted and ignorant as ever. I do not think the Parsis would have been what they are — socially progressive — if their earlier leaders had not clearly perceived that female education is the root of all reform." Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.155.

and the general backwardness of the society.<sup>1</sup> To Bhandarkar, keeping women under the condition of ignorance was the waste of "One half of the intellectual, moral and spiritual resources of the country."<sup>2</sup> Parmanand pointed out that without female education even the knowledge received by men<sup>3</sup> will remain stationary, or barren or incapable of creating an intellectual atmosphere.<sup>3</sup> He advocated not only primary education to women but also higher education. It was, however, Agarkar from among the nineteenth century Maharashtrian intellectuals who first conceived of educating women for employment and professions, and emphasised the expanding of women's role outside the home.<sup>4</sup>

As mentioned earlier, from 1823 to 1850 female education in Bombay remained in the hands of the missionaries of various bodies. But from 1850s onwards it was mainly the intellectuals who gave a lasting boost to the spread of education among women.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Jambhekar, Bal Shastri, op.cit., Vol.I, p.69.

2. "One half of the intellectual, moral and spiritual resources of our country is thus being wasted. If our women were educated as they ought to be, they would be a powerful instrument for advancing the general condition of our country." Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.II, p.488.

3. "Females should be given not only primary education but higher education as well. National life must remain incomplete and at low and unprogressive level where the female suffer from the want of education. Even the knowledge and education which obtain among men will remain stationary or barren or incapable of creating an intellectual atmosphere. To educate a boy it is only to bring up an individual, but to educate a girl is to train the whole family. Hence the added importance of their education." Parmanand, N.M., op.cit., Letter No.XI, pp.102-103.

4. Majumdar, Vina, 'Social reform movement in India- from Ranade to Nehru' in B.R.Nanda (ed.), Indian Women: From Purdah to Modernity, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1976.

5. Report of the Indian Education Commission, op.cit., p.523.

In 1854 the responsibility for the education of women was formally accepted by the Government, largely owing to the pressure exerted on it by native intellectuals.<sup>1</sup> By the end of the century the labour of the intellectuals in this direction had borne perceptible fruit. By 1881-82 the number of girls at schools rose to 27,000 in the Presidency.<sup>2</sup> Though this number was yet very small, it was higher than in any other Province of India.<sup>3</sup> It is to be noted, however, that higher education to women was yet a dream, to be realised in due course of time in the history of modern Maharashtra.

The intellectuals of Maharashtra were not merely thinking men but also acting personalities; scholarship was simply their most powerful weapon and useful instrument. They were aware that "human mind is roused more by deeds than by dialectics".<sup>4</sup> In the area of the spread of education in particular, their endeavour was remarkable. As they viewed journalism to be an effective agent of social education, they established a number of journals and periodicals during the period. As mentioned earlier, Jambhakar founded the Bombay Durpan in 1832 and the Dig-Darshan in 1840, and helped promote the birth of a Marathi weekly, Prabhakar, in 1841.<sup>5</sup> Deshmukh started the Dnyan Prakash in Poona in 1849, and founded the Induprakash, an Anglo-Marathi weekly, in Bombay in 1862.<sup>6</sup> An English weekly, the Native opinion was started by Mandlik in 1864.<sup>7</sup> Chiplunkar started the Nibandhmala, a monthly

1. Ibid., p.35, 523.

2. Ibid., p.35.

3. Ibid.

4. Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.88.

5. Masselos, J.C., Towards Nationalism, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1974, p.31.

6. Chandavarkar, G.L., op.cit., p.33.

7. Mandlik, V.N., op.cit., p.22.



Marathi magazine, in 1874.<sup>1</sup> The Din Bandhu (Brother of the Poor), the Satyashodhak newspaper, was started by Phule in 1875.<sup>2</sup> Tilak and Agarkar started the Kesari, a Marathi weekly, and the Mahratta, an English weekly, in 1881.<sup>3</sup> Due to the differences with Tilak on the Age of the Consent Bill Agarkar was, however, compelled to relinquish the editorship of the Kesari, and he started his own journal in 1888, the Sudharak, an Anglo-Marathi weekly.<sup>4</sup> The intellectuals also started many schools to help promote the growth of education in Maharashtra. Phule founded a girls' school in 1848 and a school for untouchables in 1854.<sup>5</sup> In 1870 the Prarthana Samaj started an evening school for the backward classes.<sup>6</sup> Chiplunkar, Agarkar and Tilak founded the New English School at Poona in 1879.<sup>7</sup> The intellectuals, however, relied on the British Government for the implementation of their educational programme.<sup>8</sup>

In retrospect, the educational programme of the intellectuals was diametrically different from the British educational policy. Whereas the needs of colonialism dictated the policy of the British towards education in India, the educational programme of the intellectuals was oriented to the regeneration of the society and the material advancement of the country. Objectively, it was an antithesis of the colonial educational scheme at least in terms of their desires and objectives, although they relied on the very colonial Government for the implementation of their educational programme.

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1. Bhate, G.C., op.cit., p.265.
  2. Omvedt, Gail, op.cit., p.98.
  3. Bhate, G.C., op.cit., p.269.
  4. Pradhan, G.P., op.cit., in N.R.Phatak and others, op.cit., p.35.
  5. Jagirdar, P.J., op.cit., 1968, p.25.
  6. Phadke, H.A., op.cit., p.22.
  7. Pradhan, G.P., op.cit., in N.R.Phatak and others, op.cit., p.34.
  8. See Deshmukh, G.H., op.cit., Letter No.50, p.82; Ranade, M.G., op.cit., 1915, p.286; Phadke, H.A., op.cit., p.22.

The educational scheme of the intellectuals based on science, female and the corresponding growth of mass and higher education through the medium of vernacular languages had, however, no real social relevance, given the nature of the colonial and social framework in the nineteenth century. It was "not within the logic of colonialism to promote a scheme of education which would eventually destroy its own foundations."<sup>1</sup> The introduction and spread of scientific education in the colony was thus consciously avoided by the logic of colonial domination, its economics and political science. Instead, the emphasis was laid on classical languages and literature, classical history and mathematics.<sup>2</sup> The fact of increasing poverty among the masses, mainly the work of "colonial economics", ruled out the possibility of realising the idea of mass education into a social reality. The scheme of mass education was to be further discouraged by the rising middle class in Maharashtra. The new Maharashtrian middle class offered little support and initiative for mass education.<sup>3</sup> Their monopoly over English learning was an asset to them; it was the only means of living and social respectability available to them.<sup>4</sup> It is quite understandable that they would discourage or at least not encourage mass education as it would eventually work against their own interests. Moreover, the dependence of the intellectuals on the colonial government for the implementation of their programme made it a self-defeating exercise.<sup>5</sup> They failed to perceive the true nature of the British rule and nurtured illusions about its

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1. Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1975, p.13.

2. McDonald, Ellen E., op.cit., p.455.

3. Sen, Asok, op.cit., 1975, p.22.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.; Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1975, p.13.

regenerative role. Such, in short, were the limits of the nineteenth century colonial reality which deferred the execution of the intellectuals' programme of science and the corresponding growth of mass and higher education. Thus, the educational programme of the intellectuals was under the conditions of the nineteenth century destined to end in certain failure.

## AN ASSESSMENT

Maharashtra under the British rule underwent fundamental transformation in the nineteenth century. Changes introduced in the realms of economy, education, polity, law and judiciary led to the evolution of a new social structure with the rising middle class as its dominant feature. The emerging new middle class in the nineteenth century tried to relate themselves to the values and culture of the colonial rulers,<sup>1</sup> as they were steadily hegemonized by the colonial values, ideology and culture<sup>2</sup> propagated by the colonial rulers and ideologues in order to win for the Raj the support of the people in general and the educated section in particular. The susceptibility of the middle class to the influences of colonial values, ideology and culture can be greatly explained if we look at its historical evolution in the context of colonial Maharashtra in the nineteenth century. The new middle class that emerged during the period was basically the creation of colonialism<sup>3</sup>. As the very existence of this class depended on its British connection, and as the members of this class came to be in close touch with the British by their position in the administration, they were constantly exposed to colonial ideological-cultural influences.

Their susceptibility to colonial influences was, however,

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1. Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1981, p.17.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Mukerji, K., op.cit., p.334.

mainly dictated by their class position. The new middle class was, true to its class nature, highly status-conscious. Excessive status-consciousness constitutes the characteristic feature of a class or group that happens to be placed in the middle of the social hierarchy. They tried to emulate colonial values and culture not because the latter were inherently superior to the indigenous ones and thus worthy of emulation, but because they gave them a distinct status in the society coupled with social respectability. In short, it was a combination of both economic security and social respectability which flew to them from the British connection that made this class highly susceptible to colonial influences. Thus it was no accident or aberration that the emerging middle class was being rather easily hegemonised by the British colonial values and culture. One of the significant dimensions of the social evolution of this sort in Maharashtra was "the development of an intellectual and cultural provinciality."<sup>1</sup>

Another significant dimension of the changes introduced by the British in the realm of economy, education and administration in Maharashtra was that it led to a realisation among the educated of the futility or irrelevance of the traditional order to the new needs, requirements and priorities. The changes brought to focus, objectively or subjectively at the level of comprehension, the elements of incompatibility between the traditional socio-cultural set-up and the new needs and requirements of the changing

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1. Panikkar, K.N., op.cit., 1975, p.1

time in the nineteenth century. The intellectual revolt in Maharashtra represented on the one hand a consciousness/realisation among the educated of the contradiction between the newly evolving social structure and the traditional fetters.<sup>1</sup>

The targets of the severest intellectual attack were the existing socio-cultural evils and malpractices such as obscurantism, superstitions and irrationality imbedded in the society. The traditional order was viewed as being decadent, exploitative and unprogressive. The existing socio-cultural practices were, according to them, not merely irrelevant to the needs and requirements of the changing epoch but were an impediment to progress. In other words, the intellectuals attacked them not because they were traditional but because they were irrational, retarding progress. Their demolition was deemed essential for development, as they denoted social stagnation and national degeneration. The intellectuals did not, however, advocate a sharp rupture in the existing social structure of the country. They did not stand for structural transformation;

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1. The realisation among the intellectuals of the irrelevance of the traditional order to the changed circumstances was common. Jambhekar wrote: "The present changed and changing time occasions a necessity for relinquishing the established modes and adopting new ones." See Jambhekar, Bal-Shastri, The Bombay Durpan, Aug. 24, 1832. Also see Parvate, T.V., op.cit., p.157.

changes were sought within the framework of the very structure. Root and branch transformation was not emphasised in the nineteenth century intellectual thinking.

Change in the existing socio-cultural matrix, faith in progress, growth of individualism and an intense moral idealism — these beliefs constituted the banners of intellectual revolt in Maharashtra. The intellectuals pinned their faith in science and rationalism as the foundations of progress. The ideology of the intellectuals was thus the ideology of social transformation on modern lines; their perspective was that of bourgeois development. They were, in other words, the carriers and custodians of modernising ideologies and developmental perspectives. Viewed thus, the whole history of the intellectual endeavours in Maharashtra appears to be the history of men who moved ahead of their times and milieu, and tried to help the people and society move ahead and create a new future.

In terms of impact, extent and achievements the intellectual endeavours could not, however, achieve any spectacular success. Caste distinctions including the relegation of Untouchables to separate living areas, remained strong in the villages, and religious and cultural practices did not die away.<sup>1</sup> Child-marriage and enforced widowhood remained as pressing problems as ever.<sup>2</sup> Reform in practice in any case

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1. Omvedt, Gail, op.cit., p.2.

2. The Times of India (Bombay), Thursday, Dec.8, 1887, p.4.

affected a small minority. The masses remained nearly untouched by the ideas of the intellectuals, not to speak of their being affected by them. There was certainly a kind of mass approach in their writings in the vernaculars, but despite their best endeavours to appeal to the masses their appeal, for all practical purposes, remained confined to the urban middle classes, particularly the educated sections. Given the situation of widespread illiteracy in the rural areas, they were doomed to have a very limited audience, mainly urban-based. Thus the intellectual endeavour remained urban even in terms of its practical appeal, not to speak of its other limitations; it was, in short, not destined to become a mass movement in Maharashtra in the nineteenth century. This is, however, not to say that the problems of the rural society were out of the ambit of intellectual concern. In fact, the intellectuals did take up the problems of rural India such as, among others, the misery and poverty of the Indian peasantry.<sup>1</sup> But there was hardly any movement for their cause. 'Go to the people' movement did not occur in Maharashtra as it did in Russia in the 1870s.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ranade, M.G., Essays on Indian Economics : A collection of Essays and Speeches, Madras, G.A. Natesan and Co., 1920, pp.172-173. Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.II, p.493; Telang, K.T., op.cit., Vol.I, p.223.

2. Wortman, Richard, op.cit., p.18.



The limitations of the intellectual endeavours were, however, the result of the times. The fate of their attempt to change the society was, in fact, greatly determined by the totality of the context which it operated. Moreover, the criterion of judging the intellectual endeavours in terms of achievements is not the correct approach, as it overlooks the role and function of historical constraints which go a long way in deciding the fate of individuals' endeavours. As a matter of fact, if the progressive individuals are to be assessed in terms of their achievements, then the contribution of colonial administrators and the missionaries would perhaps be greater than that of the intellectuals. For the immediate contribution of Elphinstone and others was far greater than Bal Shastri, Dadoba, Ranade, Joshi, Deshmukh and others.

This is, however, not to totally ignore the weaknesses in the endeavours of individual intellectuals. Ranade, for example, underwent prayaschita or penance for having taken tea with the European missionaries, thus bowing his head to orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup> Although he professed anti-idolatory, he would often visit temples, thus proving himself a latitudinarian.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, at the age of 32 he married a girl of 11, after the death of his first wife, to please his father.<sup>3</sup> This was

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1. A Centenary of the Birthday of M.G. Ranade, 18 Jan., 1942; Address by V.S.S. Sastri, Madras, 1942.

2. Ibid.

3. Jagirdar, P.J. op.cit., p.55.

contrary to the ideas he advocated. Similarly, Lokahitwadi, though a great social reformer, remained in his personal life an adherent of all orthodox ways.<sup>1</sup> Such regressions earned them considerable criticism during and after their life-time.

Their personal failings should not, however, be used as a device to debunk their otherwise remarkable endeavours. In fact, the context of their endeavours imposed heavy constraints on their fruition. On the one hand, the intellectuals were faced with the conservative/orthodox sections who were in a very strong and nearly unshakable position, and on the other, they were discouraged by the passivity of the people. Moreover, they had undertaken perhaps the most difficult task of the contemporary public life, that is, the problem of socio-cultural reform. In cultural issues feeling and tradition are involved to a very large extent. Traditions die very hard. The experiential realities of caste and customs are hard to eradicate from human consciousness. In political and economic matters logic is and can be an "instrument of power", but where feeling and tradition are the authorities, logic is almost impotent. It is not an easy task to bring about a change in the long established customs and traditions and deeply rooted prejudices.

Above all, the growth of consciousness in a colonial

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1. Parvate, I.V., op.cit., p.42.

situation had certain inherent constraints. Nineteenth century Maharashtra under the colonial rule did not witness the revolutionising of the entire social, political and economic matrix of society. The British rule did not create even a wider social audience capable of appreciating the basic modernity of their ideas. The fact of widespread illiteracy remained a great obstacle to their endeavours. The intellectual activity, therefore, could not become "an element of a general practical activity", which constitutes the precondition for the success of the attempt at social regeneration. This further explains as to why the awakening could not become a popular movement.

The real forces of modernisation could not spring from the exigencies of imperial statecraft, and the most severely detrimental to the cause of modernisation was the political economy of British colonialism.<sup>1</sup> The lack of development of capitalism in Maharashtra and India as a whole ruled out the possibilities of the entrenching of bourgeois values in the social system; consequently, the mental make-up of the people remained greatly traditional, feudal and conservative. As the transformation of Maharashtra in the nineteenth century was colonial and not capitalist, bourgeois modernity could not be a social reality and thus it could not dominate the cultural ethos. What ensued instead, was a mixture of bourgeois and feudal values, placing the whole set-up in a state of crisis. The growth of socio-cultural consciousness in Maharashtra

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1. Sen, Asok, op.cit., in V.C. Joshi(ed.), op.cit., pp.110-111.

comprehended the challenges posed by this situation, and the limited role of the intellectuals should be understood precisely in this context. Though they talked about many things they could not implement them. It might be said of them, as it can be of many other intellectuals and radicals in the words of a poet :

" Between the idea and the reality, ...  
Between the conception and the creation ...  
Falls the shadow."

The greatness of the nineteenth century Maharashtrian intellectuals, however, lies in the fact that despite serious constraints imposed on them by the conditions of their times, they rejected avenues of escape from the realities of their own society and chose to actively devote themselves to the task of leading the people forward in the march of progress. Bhandarkar wrote in 1894, " The lamp has been lighted, but the light is flickering."<sup>1</sup> The contribution of the nineteenth century pioneers lies mainly in "lighting the lamp"; they are not to blame for its "flickering" which, in fact, depended on a variety of factors. Assessing their own role in the task of social regeneration Chandavarkar in an address in 1886 said :

"It is enough for us, it should be enough for us,  
if we are able to say that we have not remained

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1. Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.II, p.516.

idle or inactive, but have done something, even if that something be very little, to carry the work of social reform a little further than we found it and helped our successors to carry it further."<sup>1</sup>

The intellectual endeavour, however, did have certain concrete gains to its credit, besides its making the urban middle class sensitive to social problems. At Bombay under the influence of the intellectuals Mathavdas Rughnathdas married a widow and provided shelter and support to widows wishing to re-marry.<sup>2</sup> The intellectuals' attempt did set afoot the process of the undermining of the hold of superstitions and bigotry in the society, however slow the process might have been. The educated sections were greatly influenced by the ideas of the intellectuals and their rational approach. At least, there was no retrogression and certainly there was some progress. There was a slow but sure undermining of the hitherto unquestioned Brahmanical hold on the people and society.<sup>3</sup>

Another significant contribution of the intellectuals lay in the realm of female education. The pace with which

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1. Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.77.

2. Gidumal, D., op.cit., p.200.

3. Chandavarkar, N.G., op.cit., p.9.

the number of girls was increasing in the schools indicates the trend of women emerging out of the cloud of social seclusion imposed on them. In 1886 there were nearly 52,941 girls in the schools of the Bombay Presidency, including the Native States.<sup>1</sup> Female education was no longer deemed by the orthodox to be dangerous. The significance of such development can be gauged by the fact that during the subsequent period females started taking part actively in public and national life. In fact, Mahatma Gandhi could bring them into the vortex of the national movement in the twentieth century mainly because the groundwork was already prepared by the nineteenth century intellectuals. It was they who effectively demolished the theory of female seclusion and created an atmosphere of favourable or at least tolerant social psychology.

Historically speaking, however, the significance of the nineteenth century intellectual endeavours in Maharashtra does not lie so much in its achievements at the level of socio-cultural reforms as much in its being the harbinger of the subsequent nationalist political consciousness in India. This aspect has not been properly highlighted in the existing historiography. Social reform was not an isolated phenomenon, but was an integral part of the later nationalist awakening in India. Although the intellectuals in their own subjective understanding accepted the colonial framework for the type of

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1. The Times of India, (Bombay), 22 Dec., 1886.

social transformation they envisaged, their contribution from a long-term perspective was definitely one which led to the articulation of a nationalist ideology. Although they did not denounce the British rule in clear terms, their scheme of socio-cultural transformation ran counter to the basic logic of colonial rule. Their educational programme primarily based on science and mass education is one concrete example, the other being their rejection of colonial culture. Moreover, the development of future Indian society on bourgeois lines which they all emphasised was not congruous with the basic logic of colonialism. Thus, the elements of opposition to the British rule were inherent in the ideas of the nineteenth century, although the opposition was not very direct and explicit.

The whole gamut of the nineteenth century Maharashtrian intellectual concern riveted on the incorporation of the progressive elements of Western material civilisation into the reformed structure of indigenous socio-cultural traditions. The intellectuals, in other words, advocated the transplantation of only Western civilisation, and not culture. For the revitalisation of the latter they went into the roots of their own indigenous traditions and tried to preserve and restore ancient Indian culture. 'Culture' was sought in the indigenous history, and their struggle at the cultural front was, in fact, a search for and preservation of the indigenous cultural identity or what Amílcar Cabral would call 'indigenous cultural personality'. At the cultural level they attempted

to distinguish the essential from the secondary, the positive from the negative, the progressive from the reactionary in order to locate and define what may be called a 'national culture'. The Vedic culture constituted the model of 'indigenous cultural personality' in their thinking; it was identified as the 'national culture'. Their going to the Vedic period of Indian history for locating a national culture was not dictated by inferiority complex or by the idea of revival. Instead, it was essentially a national act, aimed at nation-building and national reconstruction. It was the elevation of the entire country that was what they were actually seeking for.<sup>1</sup> Their identification of the 'national culture' with the Vedic one, however, led them to relegate other Indian cultural traditions — non-Aryan, Muslim, low-caste, etc., — to a secondary and implicitly inferior position. Needless to say, their concept of 'national culture' as fundamentally a creation of the Aryan people had certainly a Hindu tinge about it, and it was devoid of a theory of specifically Indian culture.

Theoretically speaking, nationalism in a colonial situation does not emerge all of a sudden in its mature

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1. "We have been thinking of the evils from which our nation is suffering, and endeavouring to remove them by the introduction of reforms, political, social, moral and religious. These constitute a national question, and the elevation of the nation is what we have been seeking." Bhandarkar, R.G., op.cit., Vol.II, p.479.



form opposing imperialism in all its forms and implications. It is a long-drawn process undergoing various stages of perception and realisation among the people before acquiring an anti-imperialist nationalist ideology and converting it into a political agitation aimed at the overthrow of colonial domination. It is generally within culture that we find the first seed of opposition which leads ultimately to the structuring and development of the liberation movement.<sup>1</sup> And this is particularly so in the case of a hegemonic colonial rule. On the cultural front language and religion are the two main areas of fighting against alien domination.<sup>2</sup>

To conclude, the socio-cultural consciousness in nineteenth century Maharashtra was not merely a social reform movement. The ultimate objective of the endeavour was not just to reform the social institutions but to renovate the entire matrix of the society. The social reform ideas were loaded with wider national political and economic dimensions. In fact, it was for political freedom and advancement, and economic development of the country

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1. Cabral, Amilear, Return to the Source : Selected Speeches, (ed.) African Information Service, London, 1973, p.43.
  2. For elucidation see Panikkar, K.M., "Intellectual History of Colonial India : Some Historiographical and Conceptual Questions", (an unpublished article), (n.d.).

that socio-cultural reform was deemed essential and preconditional. The arguments the intellectuals gave in favour of social reform to precede the political were mainly that "slavery at home is incompatible with political liberty and that a nation socially low cannot be politically great."<sup>1</sup>

It is to be noted, however, that although there was no dearth of admiration for the British rule in India, they never expounded the permanency of the colonial domination even at the political level. Lokहितwadi was the first among the intellectuals to look forward for Swaraj. He pointed out as early as the late 1840s :

"The English rule in India is not eternal; we shall also become wise by learning Western Science and technology, and we should endeavour to excel and beat them on their own ground. It is only then that we shall begin gradually to demand power. In order to remove our discontent, the British might part with some power. The more power they give the more will it whet our appetite for it and the British may begin to oppose our demands. If they do so, we may perhaps have to do what the Americans did when they drove away the English from their land."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Telang, K.T., op.cit., Vol.I, p.274.
  2. Quoted in Phatak, N.R., op.cit., in N.R. Phatak and others, op.cit., p.9. Also see Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India, op.cit., Vol.I, p.viii.

The history of the evolution of nationalism in India at least till its conversion into an anti-imperialist national mass movement is a story of gradual disillusionment of the intelligentsia, at least its intellectual stratum, at the social, cultural, political and above all, economic levels. Initially they were hopeful of the transformation of India by a belligerent, technologically superior British civilisation on its own pattern. By degrees they realised that it was impossible for the British to transform India along the lines they envisaged -- in fact, they were actually obstructing the development they hoped for. At the political plane too, they soon realised that their hopes had been illusory. They were continued to be excluded from the higher offices of the State and from positions to shape their own political destiny.

But it was their disillusionment at the economic plane which really lifted the halo of beneficence and paternalism from the Raj. It now stood naked and bare: culturally obstructive, racially biased, politically dictatorial and economically exploitative. Overt nationalism thus began taking offensive political posture and the intelligentsia became more and more 'seditious'. Henceforth, it was now the anti-imperialist nationalist agitation that dominated the history of British India till the winning of Independence.

It is to be emphasised in the last that more detailed research needs to be done on the social, political, economic and intellectual history of Maharashtra during the nineteenth century before the questions raised here can be answered with *any degree of certainty.*

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