

**THE GENESIS OF BAHUJAN MOVEMENT
AND ITS EVOLUTION**

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

This dissertation entitled **THE GENESIS OF BAHUJAN MOVEMENT AND ITS EVOLUTION** is submitted in partial fulfillment of 10 credits for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M.Phil)** of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for award of any other degree of this University or any other University and is my original work.

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Dedicated to the Greatest Humanitarian,

Dadasaheb Kanchi Ram

The Pioneer of the Bahujan Samaj

Jai Bheem

Jai Bharat

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Lakshman.V (Ashok Chakravarthi)

Abbreviations

AISCF	All India Scheduled Caste Federation
BAMCEF	All India Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation
BSO	Brahminical Social Order
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
DS-4	Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti
ERDL	Explosive Research and Development Laboratory
GSI	Geological Survey of India
ILP	Independent Labour Party
OBC	Other Backward Classes
RPI	Republican Party of India
SC	Scheduled Caste
SSS	Sathya Shodhak Samaj
ST	Scheduled Tribe
T3	Time, Talent, Treasure

INTRODUCTION

*India is a strange place, which collects all sorts of social groups, guided by different religions, thoughts, practices, and understandings. But broadly speaking, this can be categorized into two- the masses (bahujan samaj) that have been devoid of humanity for centuries, and a handful who take their pleasure, call themselves superior, and live at the cost of the masses. One's welfare is another's misery – that is their connection!*¹

*Who can say that the Satyashodhak movement, which gave the power of thought and the drive of progress to the majority classes of society was not a movement of the Bahujan Samaj? What are our rights, whoever and whatever is doing injustice to us and treading us underfoot, we must tread these injustices underfoot- it was the Satyashodhak Samaj, which set ablaze the flame of this conviction in the numerous lower class majority!*²

According to Paul Wilkinson, Social Movement is a deliberate, collective endeavor to promote social change, having atleast a minimal degree of organization and founded upon the normative commitment and active participation of followers or members.³ And Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper take a position that Relative deprivation is a genesis of social movements and mention that the poor people are not always the most rebellious people in the society, nor do people always protest during the worst of times. Rather, people typically become angry and feel that their situation is unjust when there is significant difference between the condition of their lives and their expectation. In other words, people judge the fairness of their social situation and of the society in which they live, not against some absolute standard, but relative to the expectations that they have come to hold about themselves or their society.⁴

With that of Gail Omvedt's view on Bahujan Samaj, coupled by those of Christophe Jaffrelot and Vivek Kumar one can enrich one's understanding and their writings on Bahujan Movement since 1922 to the present times would guide us further to

¹ G. Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in Colonial Society: the Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India*, Poona: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976. p-1.

² Ibid.p-1.

³ D. Gupta, *Nativism in a Metropolis: The Shiva Sena in Bombay*, Manohar Publications, 1982, p-4.

⁴ J. Goodwin and J.M. Jasper, (ed.) *The social movements reader cases and concepts*, Blackwell publishing, 2003, p-18.

track its development and evolution. If we analyse soci-political movement in the context of Bahujan Samaj from Mahatma Phule to Dadasaheb Kanshi Ram in the form of participation of different communities in the movement, we would find that this soci-political movement is nothing but Bahujan Movement.

Politically the Maharashtra state is divided into four regions: the Konkan, along the western seacoast (comprising the districts of Thana, Ratnagiri, Kolaba and the city of Bombay); the Deccan on the inland plateau (including Poona, Kolhapur, Satara, Sangli, Sholapur, Ahmadnagar, Nasik, Dhulia and Jalgaon); Marathwada (Aurangabad, Bhir, Osmanabad, Parbhani and Nanded); Vidharba-Nagpur (including Akola, Amraoti, Yeotmal, Buldana, Nagpur, Wardha, Chanda and Bhandara).⁵ In spite of all these political divisions, the unity of the Maratha area as a whole is suggested by the fact that the Bahujan Movement touched all of its regions. Out of Phule's movement the bahujan samaj tradition was born,⁶ in Maharashtra.

The meaning and significance of the bahujan movement

The history of Bahujan has remained unrecorded, but found in the memory of the people, which would take the forms of folk songs, folk tales, Ballads and festivals of the people. Babasaheb Ambedkar says, "The ancient history has been made mythology to amuse women and children. This seems to have been done deliberately by the Brahminical writers.... Fortunately with the help of Buddhist literature, ancient Indian History can be dug out of the refuse, which the Brahmin writers have heaped upon in a fit of madness. With this exhumation of refuse, we can see ancient Indian history in a new light."⁷

In the beginning of nineteenth century, against a background of the increasing poverty of the lower classes under British rule, and the domination of the largely Brahmin elite, a movement of cultural revolt rose in Maharashtra. The general perspective of most scholars is that modern Indian society has to be understood in terms

⁵ G. Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in Colonial Society: the Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India*, Poona: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976. Pp-49-50.

⁶ Ibid., p-97.

⁷ Gopinath.M, *Nagaloka*: Bahujan Samaj Publication, 1998, p-I

of the impact of the west on a traditional; that is both internal and external social structures have to be taken into account. Gail Omvedt, opines that: “Colonialism involved not simply the imposition of new forms of social organization upon the traditional one, but the transformations of the very basis of Indian society, creating new forms out of traditional materials. *Bahujan Samaj* is more clearly Marathi term, and has no precise English equivalent. Literally it means “*the majority community*” or “*the majority of society*”.

In the late twentieth and in the beginning of twenty-first century the term *bahujan samaj* has broad concept, that, it comprises the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled tribes, Other Backward Classes and Religious Minorities, like Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, and Buddhists. On the basis of population, these communities constitute about 85% of the total population of the country.⁸ In Caste terms it often substitutes for “non-Brahmins” but more accurately it applies much the term *Shudra* did in the nineteenth century. The “meaning” of the term is also expressed by its “opposite” or the enemies of the *bahujan samaj*, characterized as *shetji-bhatji*. Here too there is an important departure from the “non-Brahmin” conceptualization. In the earliest period of the movement the enemy elite was seen primarily as Brahman and referred to with the term demeaning term “*bhat*”, especially connoting a village priest. [...] “*Shet*” is a Marathi word for merchant, and while it is applied primarily to merchant castes, it was also used as an occupational title and is applied regardless of caste. *Shetji-bhatji* thus meant “merchants and Brahmins”.⁹

What is important to stress here is that while neither the opposition of “Brahman / non-Brahmin” *shetji-bhatji* / *bahujan samaj* was “Traditional” to Maharashtra society (both were outgrowths of the colonial period) they divided up social reality in significantly different ways.¹⁰

⁸ G. Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in Colonial Society: the Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India*, Poona: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976. p-4

⁹ Kumari Mayawati, *Bahujan Samaj Aur Uski Rajnit*: Author’s Publication, 2001, p-48.

¹⁰ G. Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in Colonial Society: the Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India*, Poona: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976. p-4

¹¹ *Ibid.* p-4

The bahujan samaj category also expressed a degree of unity among non-Brahmins that was to a degree mass based and capable of overcoming caste differences although these continued to exist among them. [...] There was a wide degree of participation by the different bahujan samaj castes at all levels of the movement. It should also be stressed that while “non-Brahmin” awakens in part negative connotations (it tends to be associated, for the Indian elite as well as for Western scholars, with the viewpoint that the movement simply represented the “caste” interests of a rural-based elite opposing an already dominant elite), bahujan samaj retains widespread positive and powerful connotations in Maharashtrian social and political life today.¹² Therefore, to take the Bahujan Movement concept as one of the major foci of this dissertation implies that in Maharashtra. It implies that Bahujan samaj also have an involvement and an identification with vary large number of castes over a wide geographical area, and that this linkage has been historically actualized by social relationships, events, organizations and means of communication that are characteristically part of “mass culture” and express forms of opposition to caste orthodoxy and its dominant groups.¹³

Before the setting of the British rule in India, education was not one of the responsibilities of the state. After the victory of Koregaon battle in 1818 by the Britishers over Peshwe Dynasty with the help of Mahar battalion, British Government introduced universal education to all in 1835. Lord Mac Caulay was the architect of this education policy. Due to this policy, doors of education were open to the bahujan samaj who were subjugated educationally for centuries. Mahatma Jotiba Phule was one among them who got an opportunity to get education at that time.

The encouragement of British Government and the introduction of western education influenced Mahatma Jotiba Phule. During his studies in childhood he was invited for marriage of his Brahmin friend. In that marriage procession, Phule was walking along with the processionists, there some orthodox Brahmins insulted him. Jotiba Phule was deeply hurt. He left the marriage procession and went to the nearby

¹² Ibid., p-5

¹³ Ibid., p-7

river *Moolamooata*, and sat by that riverside, started weeping and brooding. “Why such a thing has happened to me? Why I was abused and thrown out of the marriage procession? Same time, Mahars were passing through that side and saw when Phule was weeping. They enquired reason for it, when he narrated the incident they started laughing at him. Then Phule stopped weeping and started thinking about the existing social system. Because of the education he acquired, he could understand this brahminical mischief and that was why he was weeping. But the Mahars were not educated and hence they were not able to realize the mischief. That was why they were laughing.¹⁴ This incident changed his entire life. Therefore, Mahatma Jotiba Phule had to decide to educate these ignorant people and create unity among them. He started thinking and reading the system and the people and started analyzing the causes, then he realized the genesis of Brahminical ascendancy and domination in every sphere of life, also he had got into the details to understand the real meaning of caste system, therefore he could understand Brahmanism in the real sense. Finally he reached to the conclusion that they were the degraded people in the system and these degraded people were denied education with a purpose that they should not realize that they were degraded.

He felt the full force of mental slavery and poverty, which the Shudras and Ati-shudras had been suffering for centuries, then he decided to revolt against the existing Brahminical social order or the caste system. Jotiba Phule, realized the root cause of all these difficulties of the bahunjan samaj, was lack of education, and he decided to establish a school for girls in 1848 with many difficulties. When the school was opened, the practical difficulties he faced were the non-availability of female teachers, then he began to teach his wife Savitribai to read and write, and appointed Savitribai as a teacher to that school, who became the first women teacher in India.

Mahatma Jotiba Phule took a revolutionary stand in 1873, through forming of an organization, “Sathya Shodhak Samaj” (Truth Seeking Society) along with his followers, which would carry on agitation for social and religious reform at a mass level and by the end of the nineteenth century it became a symbol of dedication to the cause of the lower

¹⁴Gopinath.M, *How to revive the Phule-Ambedkar-Periyar movement in south India?*,2001, p-5

castes that was unrivalled by any other group within the broader movement Mahatma Phule played major role in the field of education. He gave detailed account to Sir. William Hunter in 1882, of the schools established by him and his work in the field of education, and he also demanded primary education should be made compulsory .

Mahatma Phule died in 1890. Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj, the Prince of Kolhapur continued Phule's movement with the same spirit and strength. Because he was greatly influenced by Jotiba Phule, recognizing education as the greatest benefit of the British rule in India. Though a prince of a small kingdom, he dreamt of an educated, free India and a casteless society. When, Shahu Maharaj went along with his brother, to Panchaganga River for his holy bath to perform his daily pooja, as regularly he used to do. On that occasion the priest himself unbathed began to chant religious mantras. When the young Maharaja came to know this, then he asked the priest about it, the pries replied that it was not necessary for him either to take a bath before hand or recite Vedic mantras as the persons to be blessed were Shudras. Such an insulting reply was never expected from his priest servant by Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj. This rude shocking incident brought transformation in the Shahuji Maharaj and his companions. Vedokta controversy had opened the eyes of Shahuji Maharaj also against the Brahmincal social order. And this incident became a turning point for Shahuji's social and political life. It is clear that Shahu had a deep insight into the past and that he could foresee the future. It is because of this great quality that he played a significance role as a social reformer. By 1920 separate hostels had been started in the maharaja's small capitals for no fewer than eleven different section of the community including the Indian Christian and the so –called untouchables. All his reform work and his mission extended itself beyond Kolhapur. This helps us in getting the clear picture of “Bahujan movement” influencing the economic, social, political and religiously activities under Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaja's leadership.

He was deadly against the principle of the survival of the fittest in the social field. And he also made primary education free and compulsory in 1917 in Kolhapur. One more significant step in the administration field was Shahuji Maharaja's

“government order”, that the policy was well conceived and politically irreversible, could be seen in the fact that the main principle of quota for community wise selection had to be written back into the constitution of India after the first amendment and forms one of the operative principals of the programs of the union and state government for the promotion of the social justice

When Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj took the administration in his hand in 1894, Brahmins dominated majority of the state officers. Other backwards classes were kept away from education and consequently from state service. By understanding this injustice, he issued the order from England to this effect; that 50% post of the state service should be reserved for the backward class candidates. When Shahu introduced 50% reservation for all backwards classes, Brahmin community opposed all over under the leadership of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. It is to be pointed out here that the two movements, i.e., Sathya Shodhak Samaj (SSS) under Jotiba Phule, Shahuji Maharaj of Kolhapur fall under different periods. After Jotiba Phule’s death in 1891, Shahuji took up this cause with full strength and worked under different circumstances, also considered Jotiba Phule as his source of inspiration and followed the path laid by him. When Shahuji, met Dr. Ambedkar first time in 1917, he saw a budding leader in Dr. Ambedkar. And he introduced Ambedkar to the World, speaking as a chief guest in a Mahar Conference held in Mangaon on 21st and 22nd March 1920.

Many eminent scholars and historians in India have attempted to write the political history of India. But surprisingly none of them has been able to give either a true and full picture of the Round Table Conference or the real version of the ‘Poona Pact’ at length, though they were the most remarkable events in the political history of India. It is, therefore, an attempt at focusing the main attention on this issue in the Chapter II, to enable the modern readers as well as the persons who are academically interested to form their own opinion about this important event.

There is no doubt that, the role played by Babasaheb Ambedkar has left its imprint on the social tapestry of the country after Independence, and shaped the political

and civic counters of India. It would have been a different India without him and, in all probability, a much more inequitable and unjust one.¹⁵ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was born on 14th April 1891 in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh in an untouchable family, but he and his brothers had never experienced untouchability in their earlier military homes, but in Satara they got their first experience of caste discrimination. Ambedkar and one more other untouchable student were forced to sit separately; no barber could be found to cut their hair, his elder sister shaved his head. Babasaheb Ambedkar was faced with all these problems during his childhood, after facing so many problems and difficulties some how he managed to get education abroad with the help of scholarship, later on to become an admirer of Jotiba Phule, who is a pioneer of Indian social revolution.

It is also intended in his work to undertake to the extent possible, study of the important Constitutional Reforms introduced after the Government of India Act, 1919 came into force with which Ambedkar constantly and very closely associated himself not only as a leader of the downtrodden section of India, but also as a Constitutional expert of extraordinary calibre. And this in addition to what has actually transpired in the Round Table Conference, where most of the Indian national leaders had assembled to discuss and decide the destiny of the people of India in general, and the rights of the millions of Untouchables and other backward classes in particular. Babasaheb Ambedkar conducted a life long crusade for the emancipation of the Untouchables of India amongst whom he happened to be born. During this process of emancipation, around 1935 he gave a clarion call to the Untouchables and other victims of Brahmanism to uproot the Brahmanism, the spirit of inequality. Ambedkar's struggle got characterized in a dynamic movement. He started his publication with "Mooknayak" in 1920, changed to "Bahishkrit Bharat" in 1927 to "Janata" in 1930 and to "Prabhuddha Bharat" in 1955. He founded the Indian Labour Party in 1936, the All India Scheduled Castes Federation in 1942 and contemplated the R.P.I. in 1955-56. Thereafter, he started entertaining the dream of 'Prabhuddha Bharat'. This would indicate the Changes to suit the times, but always without losing the spirit of the movement.

¹⁵V. Rodrigues, 'Introduction' in V. Rodrigues (ed) *The essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p-10.

After the death of Babasaheb Ambedkar on 6th December 1956, it is only the Bahujan Samaj Party, which emerged in 1984, the first and only national party of exploited, neglected and persecuted majority people in India, which is founded on the philosophy and struggle of Mahatma Jotiba Phule, Shahuji Maharaj, Narayana Guru, Periyar and Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Many “isms” have emerged to eradicate the caste system in India, they are mainly known as Socialism, Marxism, and Gandhism etc. Of these “isms” Ambedkarism played a major role in bringing social transformation in India. Ambedkarism is different from all other isms vis-à-vis the annihilation of Caste system. It saw advancement for the oppressed through politics, to achieve social and economical emancipation in the modern society. This differing position helped to shape the Bahujan identity during 1980 onwards, with the formation of Bahujan Samaj Party, among the Scheduled castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Castes and Religious minorities all over India.

After the incident of Deena Baana case, Kanshi Ram sacrificed his job and started uniting the bahujan samaj. During this time, he involved in reading of Dalit literature to discover the root cause of Brahminical social order. Dr.Ambedkar’s “Annihilation of caste” influenced Kanshi Ram much. And in this process, the journey of Kanshi Ram and his movement of socio-cultural revolution and economic emancipation of Bahujan Samaj started from 1964 onwards.

After the death of Babasaheb Ambedkar in 1956, the employees of Bahujan samaj, enjoying the privilege of reservation all over the country, and they forgot their responsibility of developing their communities by taking ahead the CARAVAN of Ambedkar, and the message which he has given to the bahujan samaj, the message was that, “Whatever I have done, I have done so after passing through crushing miseries and endless troubles all over my life and fighting with my opponents. With great difficulty I have brought this caravan where it is seen today. Let the caravan march on despite the hurdles that may come its way. If my lieutenants are not able to take the caravan ahead, they should leave it there but under no circumstances should they allow the caravan to go

back. This is the message to my people". This message of Babasaheb Ambedkar, Kanshi Ram took into his heart and started educating the miss educated employees of Bahujan samaj through BAMCEF.

It is today's fact that Bahujan Samaj Party with a deep ideological foundation of Mahatma Phule, Shahuji Maharaj, Periyar, Narayana Guru and Babasaheb Ambedkar, is a socio-political force at national level and has occupied the central place in Indian politics. The party has in only 15 years, emerged as one of the most prominent parties in the state, with 23 per cent of the votes and 98 out of the 402 assembly seats and in the 2002 assembly elections, and 24.12 per cent of the votes and 19 out of 80 parliamentary seats. The success of the independent bahujan politics stands out particularly remarkable. A cultural revolt was started in Maharashtra in 1848, which continued till 1956 i.e. for 108 years. From 1848 to 1891 under the leadership of Mahatma Phule, from 1892 to 1922 under the guidance of Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaja and from 1922 to 1956 under the guidance and leadership of Babasaheb Ambedkar. And the journey of Dadasaheb Kanshi Ram and his movement of socio-cultural revolution and economic emancipation of Bahujan Samaj started from 1964 onwards, which is leading towards the creation of "Prabhuddha Bharat" under the dynamic leadership of Dadasaheb Kanshi Ram and Mayawati, who is popularly known as 'Behenji' or 'Iron lady Mayawati'.

CHAPTER I

THE INFLUENCE OF MAHATMA JOTIBA PHULE AND SHAHUJI MAHARAJ IN MAHARASTRA

*For want of education intellect deteriorated,
For want of intellect morality decayed,
For want of morality progress stopped,
For want of progress wealth vanished,
For want of wealth the Shudras perished,
All these sorrows sprang from illiteracy.**

-Mahatma Jotiba Phule

The first half of the nineteenth century saw the beginning of social reform, which produced more mass based movements of social revolt in Maharashtra and also in the other parts of country. The founder of the “Bahujan Movement”, Mahatma Jotiba Phule (1827-1890) spanned the middle of the nineteenth century; its leading patron, Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaja of Kolhapur (1874-1922) had risen to prominence by its end. This chapter and following will discuss the life and influence of these two great personalities and the process by which the movement they initiated became polarized in opposition to the Brahminical Social Order (BSO).

The British defeated the Bajirao II, of the Peshwe Dynasty on 1st January 1818,¹ in the Koregaon battle. This great victory was mainly due to the bravery of Mahars who fought on the side of the British. This action of “Heroic valour and enduring fortitude” displaying “disciplined intrepidity” and “devoted courage and admirable constancy” won imperishable renown for the Mahar soldier. It has been recorded that “ it is hard to say who has the greater glory, the Indian soldiers themselves, or the British Officers, who had

* D. Keer, *Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley: Father of Indian Social Revolution*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 2002, p-182.

¹ O' Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p-4.

been able to ensure and command such faith and such staunch and amazing loyalty”² Before the establishment of the British rule in India, education was not meant for all. While describing the social status of Mahar community under the rule of the Peshwas prior to 1818, Dr.Ambedkar said, “Under the rule of Peshwas in the Maratha country the Untouchable was not allowed to use the public streets if a Hindu was coming along lest he should pollute the Hindu by his shadow. The Untouchable was required to have a black thread either on his wrist or in his neck as a sign or a mark to prevent the mistake. In Poona, the capital of the Peshwa, the Untouchable was required to carry, strung from his waist, a broom to sweep away from behind the dust he treaded on, lest a Hindu walking on the same should be polluted. In Poona, the Untouchable was required to carry an earthen pot, hung in his neck wherever he went, for holding his spit lest his spit falling on earth should pollute a Hindu who might un-knowingly happen to tread on it”.³

The Britisher’s had by then acquired ample knowledge, that Hindu philosophy was against teaching of any education to the Bahujan Samaj, and that education was the exclusive privilege of the Brahmins in India. Bajirao II, for example, himself a Chitpavan Brahmin, distributed very generous sums of money to the large community of Brahmin scholars in the city of Pune to enable them to devote their time to religious scholarship.⁴ After the victory of Koregaon, British Government introduced universal education to all in 1835. Lord Mac Caulay was the architect of this education policy. During this evolution period the doors of education were open to the bahujan samaj who were subjugated educationally for centuries. Mahatma Jotiba Phule was one among them first few who availed the opportunity of universal education to get educated. Due to this, a new dynamism created in the Indian society, which had been for ages governed by the precept of Manusmruti!.

² Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and speeches, Vol-17, Part- 3, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and his egalitarian Revolution, (ed), Hari Narake, Dr.M.L.Kasare, N.G.Kamble, Ashok Godghate, Publisher-Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Source Material Publication Committee, Higher education Department of Maharashtra, 2003, p-5.

³ Ibid., p-7

⁴ O’ Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*, Cambridge University Press, 1985., p-5.

The Brahmins have always showed lack of interest or opposition for mass education. But the British had put on work many Christian missionaries, who worked for the spread of Christianity. The Missionaries preached essence of brotherhood of man as enshrined in the holy Bible, which had a profound impression on the minds of the masses. This is another fact, which influenced the rise of the Bahujan Movement during the colonial period. The encouragement of British Government and the introduction of western education influenced the social conditions of Indian society. With the spread of this secular education, the Brahmins had been exposed to the society, and the oppressed class of society understood the traditional bars that they had set and the supremacy of Brahmins, was challenged by the non-Brahmins (bahujan samaj). Later on the non-Brahmins of the Madras followed by those of Bombay and the Central provinces, have in recent years organized themselves on the basis of Mulnivasi (Indigenous people) identity that are into anti-Brahmanism. Then the beginning of political consciousness on 'Caste-lines' came to be formed first time in Maharashtra.⁵

Before going to the details of Shahuji Maharaja's concern about the bahujan movement, it is necessary to assess first the contribution Mahatma Jotiba Phule in order to make the study, accurate and scientific. The Bahujan Movement is a century old movement, and this movement cannot be assessed scientifically without an assessment of the role played by Jotiba Phule and his highness Shahuji Maharaja of Kolhapur. The study of bahujan movement without reference to them would not help in understanding the movement completely. Perhaps a comparative study of the roles played by them would also provide a better perspective.

⁵ K. Kavlekar, *Non-Brahmin Movement in Southern India 1873-1949*. Shivaji University Publication, 1979. p-30

Jotiba Phule is called the father of Indian social revolution. There is a lot of literature available in Marathi and also in English on Jotiba Phule and Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj. In this direction Ms. Gail Omvedt's name deserves to be mentioned and her thesis "Cultural Revolt in Colonial Society- Non-Brahmin movement in western India, 1873-1930, parts of which have been published as some articles in "economic and political weekly". (September 11, 1971, Pp-1969-1979)

Mahatma Jotiba Phule (1827-1890)

Jotiba Phule was born on 20th February 1827.⁶ After giving birth to Phule, his mother died. Since his childhood he marks himself with certain talents, which were notable. As he belonged to a 'Mali Caste' (Gardener) his father could not think of giving education to him, because, in those days, education was not allowed for the children of the backward classes and many times some Brahmins had threatened them saying, "The god does not want your people to get educated and if some of you get educated against the wish of god, your entire community will be penalized by him. Now we are not in a position to penalize you under the present British rule. During our rule till 1818, had any Shudra committed any such heinous crime, we could have punished him by cutting his tongue or blocking his ears with molten lead. That was the penalty for the Shudras and Atishudras for the crime of acquiring education. But because of the British raj we are not in a position to do that and therefore we leave it to the god to penalize you. God will penalize you"⁷. But somehow, he was given initial education in a mission school, then temporarily withdrawn in 1833, partly it seems at the instigation of a Brahmin clerk of Jotiba's father who argued that education was useless for a non-Brahmin. Because of his two neighbors, one a Muslim teacher and another a Christian gentleman, who acknowledged Jotiba Phule's intelligence and love of knowledge, persuaded his father Govindrao to allow him to study in secondary school. However, he returned to school in 1841⁸.

⁶ P.G.Patil, *Selections: Collected Works of Mahatma Jotirao Phule*, Vol.II, Education department Government of Maharashtra, 1991, p- (xv)

⁷ Gopinath.M, *How to revive the Phule-Ambedkar-Periyar movement in south India?*, 2001, p-2

⁸ G. Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in Colonial Society: the Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India*, Poona: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976. p-106.

What made Jotiba Phule to revolt against the Brahminical Social Order?

During his studies in childhood, an important incident took place, which changed his life completely. Phule was invited to attend the marriage ceremony of his Brahmin friend *Sakaram Yashawantrao Paranjape*. Since he loved his Brahmin friend sincerely, he attended that marriage ceremony. The bridegroom was going in a procession to the house of the bride and the procession was consisted of Brahmin men and women and children where there were hardly any other people from other communities. At that time, Phule was also walking along with the processionists. Immediately some orthodox Brahmin recognized him when he was walking in the marriage procession and shouted on Phule, *“How dare you walk along with Brahmins! You Shudra, you have violated all caste rules and inflicted an insult on us. You are not our equal. You should have thought a thousand times before behaving like this. Get behind; otherwise go away. People have nowadays lost all shame. They violate all caste rules: they are growing arrogant under this British Raj!”*⁹ Jotiba Phule being deeply insulted, hurt and puzzled left the marriage procession and went to the nearby river *Moolamoota*. He sat by that riverside, started weeping and brooding. “Why such a thing has happened to me ? Why I was abused and thrown out of the marriage procession ? Simply because I got myself educated. It is a great injustice to me”, when he was weeping there, the Mahars were preparing themselves to go to the town; the preparations and the dresses of the Mahars to go to town were different. They were supposed to tie a matka, an earthen pot, around their neck and a big broom behind them. If they want to spit, they were not supposed to spit on the ground. They were required to spit in that matka. While they were walking, their footsteps should be removed side by side by that big broom tied behind them. And they should go to the town and come back at a time when shadow was minimum and it should not fall on any other person. These Mahars knew Phule very well, because quite often he used to go to them. They enquired Phule as to what had happened and why he was weeping. After hearing from him what had happened, they started laughing at him. Then Phule stopped weeping and started thinking. He realized that nothing had happened to him. He was simply abused and thrown out of the marriage procession. But the real harm

⁹ D. Keer, *Mahatma Jotirao Phooley: Father of Indian Social Revolution*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 2002, p-17.

and something wrong was done to these Mahars who were kept outside the society itself. He was weeping, whereas they were laughing ! They were enjoying their fate! Whatever was happening to them they were enjoying it, they were not unhappy. But he was unhappy ! Why ? Because Mahatma Phule started thinking, reading and pondering over the human rights, the system and the people. Finally he reached to the conclusion that they were the degraded people in the system. Who were the degraded people ? Shudras and the Atishudras were the degraded people. There is gradation in their degradation. The degraded, more degraded and the most degraded. These degraded people were denied education with a purpose. What was the purpose? The Purpose was that they should not understand their degradation. They should not realize that they were degraded ¹⁰. Having analyzed the causes, he soon realized the genesis of Brahminical ascendancy and domination in every sphere of life, and he felt the full force of mental slavery and poverty, which the Shudras had been suffering for centuries, ¹¹ then decided to revolt against the existing Brahminical social order the caste system, which is the soul of Brahminism.

The Caste System had proved a great obstruction to individual progress. However Brahminical intellectuals and so-called nationalists may defend that the Varna System or Caste System is a division of labor, etc. but Jotiba Phule was extremely irritated with the Brahmanism and the structure of the caste system propounded by the Hindus; that is the reason to revolt against the age –old tradition, which enslaved the Bahujan Masses. The fact that he did not possess and on the other hand higher education of occurring knowledge, through his self study and reading he was very much interested in understanding true meaning of liberty, equality and fraternity. He had gone into the details to understand the real meaning of caste system, and there by he could understand Brahmanism in the real sense. The position of the Shudras-atishudras under Peshwe rule was much worse when it is compared to their position under British. In India “ Caste” and “ Caste System” have become more and more vigorous both in the theory and

¹⁰ Gopinath.M, *How to revive the Phule-Ambedkar-Periyar movement in south India?*,2001,Pp-3-4.

¹¹ D. Keer, *Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley: Father of Indian Social Revolution*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 2002, p-17.

practice, it starts from the Vedas; the Rig-Veda itself introduces idea of immutability of caste by laying stress upon the fact of birth. Purusha attributes the origin of each caste to a particular organ. The institution of caste has been the main object of their existence among them, originally.... The highest rights, the highest privileges and gifts, everything that could make the life of Brahmin easy... were inculcated and enjoined, where as Shudras and the atishudras were regarded with supreme contempt, and the meanest right of humanity were denied to them. ¹².

Jotiba Phule, realizing that the root cause of all these difficulties of the bahunjan samaj was lack of education, and from then on he started various types of educational institutions. First school for every child, he thought of educating the ignorant mother, who is the first women teacher, when he decided in 1848 to establish a school for girls. Orthodox pressure on his father resulted in his being forced to leave home and support himself, ¹³ a period in which he evidently also began to teach his aunt and young wife Savitribai to read ¹⁴ and write. When school was opened, the practical difficulties he faced were the non-availability of female teachers; and as a solution to this, he appointed Savitribai as a teacher to that school, who became the first women teacher in India. These brave acts bring a reward for him, when president of education board Sir Erskine Peery was much impressed by Jotiba Phule's attempts. At his instance the Dakshina Price Committee sanctioned a monthly grant of Rupees Fifty for maintaining the school. Jotiba Phule was the pioneer of the female education in India, who established a school for girls for the first time in the Indian history, and to conduct it with much personal hardship, ¹⁵ later on he established another school in 1851 and a school for untouchables was started in 1852. ¹⁶

¹² K. Kavlekar, *Non-Brahmin Movement in Southern India 1873-1949*. Shivaji University Publication, 1979. p-46.

¹³ G. Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in Colonial Society: the Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India*, Poona: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976. p-106.

¹⁴ Ibid. 106

¹⁵ K. Kavlekar, *Non-Brahmin Movement in Southern India 1873-1949*. Shivaji University Publication, 1979. p-44.

¹⁶ G. Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in Colonial Society: the Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India*, Poona: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976. p-107.

There were some girls' schools run by the missionaries, who were more interested in religious conversions, but Jotiba Phule felt that the only effective way to fight the dominance of Brahmins, and break their monopoly was to educate the bahunjan masses by employing non-Brahmin teachers,¹⁷ who were sensitive and more humane towards the non-brahmins.

1873 was the crucial year for Jotiba Phule, both ideologically and organizationally. It saw the publication of Phule's major book, *Gulamgiri* ("Slavery") and the founding of the "Satyashodhak Samaj". The challenge to Caste and Brahminism was now in the open and increasing bitter, and it was to this cause that Phule devoted his efforts until his death. From 1873 he worked to organize the Bahujan Samaj, initially in Poona and in Bombay, where it received important support from a group of Telugu Mali contractors. And in 1877 the first newspaper of the movement, "*Din Bhandu*", was founded under the editorship of his young Mali colleague Krishnarao Bhalekar (1850-1910), himself an important organizer.¹⁸ It is important to point out that western knowledge which played a major role as an eye opener to understand the existing evils of social conditions of India, Hence the impact of the Jotiba Phule's ideas and action was deep and continued on the society and the British Government policy. The Sathyashodhak Samaj had influenced social reform having its own economic, social and political implications and having an ideology of its own. All these thoughts have been given expression in the writings of Jotiba Phule.

¹⁷ K. Kavlekar, *Non-Brahmin Movement in Southern India 1873-1949*. Shivaji University Publication, 1979. p-44.

¹⁸ G. Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in Colonial Society: the Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India*, Poona: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976. p-107.

Sathya Shodhak Samaj (SSS)

Mahatma Jotiba Phule's greatest contribution was in his rigorous cultural revolutionary stand, his drive for equality and rationality, and in the creation of an organization, the *Sathya shodhak Samaj*, which would carry on agitation for social and religious reform at a mass level¹⁹. He convened a meeting on September 24th 1873, along with all of his admirers and disciples at Poona, about sixty men from many important centers of Maharashtra were assembled, and Phule made an impressive introductory speech and impressed upon his followers the necessity of a central institution for the guidance of the movement. After some discussion and several other speeches, it was agreed to form an institution. There was much enthusiasm among the chosen lieutenants of Jotiba Phule. They decided to organize the mission and to spread the message of the movement. Jotiba Phule named this institution "Sathya Shodhak Samaj" (Truth Seeking Society).²⁰ Parallel to this institution the Arya Samaj was founded by Dayananda Saraswati in Bombay,²¹ this was inaugurated on 10 April 1875, and it was totally dominated by Gujarati business magnates, whom Jotiba Phule called Shetjis. Followed by this, Indian National Congress was established in 1885 in the wake of the demands for swaraj²². Phule and his lieutenants apprehended more repression of the backward classes at the hands of the Hindus as per their past experiences, and therefore they were against the change of power to the hands of inhuman and tyrannical savarnas by the British. He stressed for getting the destiny of the depressed classes to be decided first. It necessitated the Indian National Congress to consider containing the rousing discontentment among the depressed classes for enrolling their wholehearted support to the movement of Indian Independence.

¹⁹ Ibid., p-121.

²⁰ D. Keer, *Mahatma Jotirao Phooley: Father of Indian Social Revolution*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 2002, p-127.

²¹ O' Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p-222.

²² M. Chand, *The Bahujan and their Movement*: Bahujan Publication Trust, New Delhi, 1992, p-19.

The Congress created another organ for the purpose in the name of Indian National Social Conference in 1887. The conference proclaimed that its objective was to push ahead the process of social awakening as launched by Phule and to jointly fight for the cause of the depressed classes. But in Pune the followers of Balgangadhar Tilak set fire to the joint pandal when the Indian National Social Conference wanted to discuss the agenda of the depressed classes. The sinister designs of deceit and conspiracy against the interest of the depressed classes became soon exposed ²³. During that time, however, the Sathya Shodhak Samaj had come to stand, by the end of the nineteenth century, as a symbol of dedication to the cause of the lower castes that was unrivalled by any other group within the broader movement ²⁴.

The main objectives of Sathya Shodhak Samaj was, denouncing the supremacy of Vedas and Chaturvarna System, which was age-old tradition of Brahminism or Hinduism. It was also opposed caste based professions and child marriages. In regard to the issue of women's liberation, Phule is one of the very few male social reformers in history who deserve women's respect ²⁵, because he encouraged widow remarriages, and he addressed many mass meetings in 1884 and advised Salis, Malis, Telis and other castes to give up Brahmin priest ²⁶. This rationalism was expressed in the Sathya Shodhak Samaj with its primary emphasis on "truth seeking". It is significant here that the truth seeking was seen as a quest guided by the individuals own reason and not by the dictates of any religious guru or authoritative text. Individual propagandizing efforts spread this; it was taken up in spontaneous ways and attained a real village basis in almost all sections of Maharashtra. ²⁷

²³ Ibid., Pp-19-20.

²⁴ O' Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p-221.

²² M. Chand, *The Bahujan and their Movement*: Bahujan Publication Trust, New Delhi, 1992

²⁵ G. Omvedt, 'Jotirao Phule and the Ideology of Social Revolution in India' EPW, 11 Sept. 1971, p-1971.

²⁶ G. Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in Colonial Society: the Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India*, Poona: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976. p-107.

²⁷ Ibid., p-109

Mahatma Jotiba Phule was not only a social reformer but also a revolutionary, which is why he is known as the father of Indian social revolution. He influenced the society through his various publications, his publications threw open the reality and various aspects of Brahmanism. Through his writing, his activities become stronger and he was giving position of importance as a leader of the non- Brahmins (Bahujan Samaj). He argues in his writing that Brahmins were not the original inhabitants of India. They were the people of Aryan stock who have been attracted to the country by its wealth and its fertility in a period of remote antipathy, who had subjugated its originals in habitants.

What was lacking for Jotiba Phule's movement was financial support in its earlier stages. But even this was solved because he had unique type of followers who removed this difficulty. Men of wealth and influence actually gathered Jotiba banner. P. Rajanna Lingu was one such influential person who hailed from Telugu Mali community. In Bombay, they were called Kamathis. Jotiba Phule backs the entire kamathi communities. Another important leader was Ramaiah Venkaiah Aiyvaru a rich man and devoted worker; he followed Jotiba Phule through his thick and thin. This Telugu Mali leader financed Jotiba's every project and supported his movement ²⁸.

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Representation to Hunter's commission

In order to examine the question of education in India, the Government appointed a Commission under the chairmanship of Sir. William Hunter in 1882. The Commission interviewed experts to unravel problems regarding education in the provinces. Jotiba Phule also informed by the commission to express his views in writing. Several learned and well-known personalities testified before the committee, but almost all of them were concerned only with the education of the upper castes of the society, Jotiba Phule was the only exception. In his representation of 19 October 1882, he gave detailed account of the schools established by him and his work in the field of education, in his representation he did not hesitate to criticize the British policy of education and said:



²⁸ D. Keer, *Mahatma Jotirao Phule: Father of Indian Social Revolution*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 2002, p-134.

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The Government is under the illusion that people from the upper castes will spread education among the lower castes ²⁹. Educational institutions educate the children of the rich and help them achieve material success. But those who came out of these institutions have not done anything to assist in the upliftment of their underprivileged countrymen. The young men, armed with degrees from universities, what have they done for the common mass? What changes have they brought about in society, at home and elsewhere to educate their unfortunate and ignorant brethren? Then how can it be claimed that it is essential to educate the upper castes to raise the moral and intellectual level of the people? [...] Further he said primary education has been neglected in Bombay district. Primary schools are not provided with the appropriate infrastructure. The government takes tax from the farmers for the purpose of the education but the money raised is not use for the intended purpose. There is no provision for primary education in nearly ten villages of this district, that is, nearly ten lakh children. [...] Farmers and the people from the lower castes are enabling to avail themselves of the education; very few children are to be found in primary and secondary schools. In any case they do not continue for very long in school due to their parents' poverty, and the pressing need to work. The government has not provided scholarships to induce these children to continue their education that is why Mahatma Phule demanded primary education should be made compulsory ³⁰.

Mahatma Jotiba Phule's economic thoughts are laid down in a pamphlet entitled, "*Isara*" (warning) published in 1885, in which he discusses the economic condition of the Indian masses at length. He advocated that the government should help the people by developing education facilities when they are in power. His economic thoughts are few, but they are meaningful which are attained to the concept of modern development. He appealed to the British government to construct small bunds for water to collect, which would be helpful for people in needy times. What is worth considering here is his bent of mind towards the concept of the welfare state? In his book "*Shetakaryancha Asuda*" (Whip-cord of the cultivator) he elaborates the social life under the Maratha rule and

²⁹ D. Agarwal, Jotiba Phule, Published by National Book Trust, New Delhi, p-35.

³⁰ Ibid. p-35.

shows how the Brahmin influences kept the majority people uneducated, and how later under the British rule the people were over burdened with the revenue policy, which again was completely controlled by the Brahmin “ Jotiba entreated queen Victoria in his ballads to take pity in the poverty stricken peasant, rescue them from the Brahminical tyranny and save her rule from corruption and from malpractices. He suggested that the teachers, magistrates and clerks should be appointed from other castes also, so that the chain of these exploitative tyrants is broken”³¹. His thoughts were less doctrinaires but more of reflections of the evil effects of the Caste system and the existing social conditions.

Mahatma Jotiba Phule aimed at establishing social equality and securing social Justice for the dignity of human personality and human rights as he considered all Indian are equal. His revolt was not against any individual but against the Caste System, which is the root of the Hinduism, which denied human rights to bahun samaj of Indian society. Jotiba Phule in year before his death in 1889, called upon the non-Brahmins to criticize Congress as the engine of Brahminical despotism, therefore he warned the Shudras that they would loose on all fronts if they joined the Congress³². In 1890, Jotiba died, then this movement further carried by his highness Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaja of Kolhapur with full strength³³.

³¹ B.P. Salunkhe & Dr. M.G.Mali, (ed) *Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj the Pillar of the Social Democracy*: Government of Maharashtra Publication, 1994-95, p-116.

³² D. Keer, *Mahatma Jotirao Phule: Father of Indian Social Revolution*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 2002, p-224.

³³ B.P. Salunkhe & Dr. M.G.Mali, (ed) *Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj the Pillar of the Social Democracy*: Government of Maharashtra Publication, 1994-95, p-144.

Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj (1874-1922)

After the death of Mahatma Phule, the first and foremost social reformer and the champion of the mass education in Maharashtra of the 19th century, the social, cultural and educational reforms fell on the shoulders of this great humanitarian Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj, the Prince of Kolhapur. Kolhapur has been well known through the ages as one of the important towns in southern India, both in cultural and in the religious history. Later, from the first decade of eighteenth century, Kolhapur became a distinct and independent principality. Since then it has been connected with crucial political and social changes in Maharashtra. ³⁴.

What led to the development of the bahujan movement in Kolhapur ? How far did Shahu's own ideas and programs develop in the sphere of social reform? How did Shahuji compare himself with Mahatma Phule? And finally, what was the significance of Shahuji's role for the development of the broader movement of the bahujan samaj? It is important to analyze these questions in the process of understanding bahujan movement in Maharashtra. The most benevolent and progressive rule of only 28 years from 1894 to 1922 of Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj of Kolhapur was a distinct epoch and an important landmark in the history of Maharashtra. He was born on 26 July 1874, ³⁵ in Kunbi Maratha family at Kagalwadi village of Kolhapur District, his first name was Yashavantrao Ghatge, Queen Anandibai of Kolhapur state adopted him on 11, March and renamed him as 'Shahu Maharaj', his father Jayasimharao Ghatge and Mother Radhabai Saheb. Shahuji Maharaj came to hold the full powers of the governance of Kolhapur State in 1894, 2nd April ³⁶ and was almost immediately recognized throughout western Maharashtra as being of great symbolic importance ³⁷.

³⁴ D. Keer, *Shahu Chhatrapati, A Royal Revolutionary*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1976. p-1

³⁵ B.P. Salunkhe & Dr. M.G.Mali, (ed) *Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj the Pillar of the Social Democracy*: Government of Maharashtra Publication, 1994-95, p-2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p-(xv).

³⁷ G. Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in Colonial Society: the Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India*, Poona: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976. p-124.

Under the British rule Shahuji Maharaja of Kolhapur actively contributed to the propagating of the cause of the non-Brahmins, that added much to the constitution making process from 1900 onwards, which was a period of serious efforts for constitution making. The British authorities had promised further steps towards a more responsible participatory government. Under these circumstances Shahuji united various non-Brahmins during colonial period that faced many problems created by the Brahmins and their Caste based social system. Shahu Maharaja was greatly influenced by Jotiba Phule, and his rule contributed tremendously to the cause of the bahujan movement in particular and social upliftment in general. He firmly believed that unless all people in India, men and women, were educated, the nation would never be free, united and strong.

He recognized education as the greatest boon of the British rule in India. Though a prince of a small kingdom, he dreamt of an educated, free India and a casteless society. Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaja had a set of determined aims and ideals, which he cherished till his death. The activities or the services rendered by him in furtherance of the bahujan cause and the uplift of the downtrodden sections of the society cannot be simply brought forward but they have to be assessed in the light of the critical situation and the environment in which he fought against the social evils of the Hindu society. Chhatrapati Shahuji has ideals not just as a philosophy but he practiced them and put them in the daily lives on the masses. There is no doubt that the impact of the education gave rise to the development of the social thought in India.

What influenced Shahuji to go against Brahminical Social Order ?

Vedokta Controversy (1900-1905)

Controversies over the utterance of the *Vedic Mantra* between Shahuji and Brahmin priest, Shahu's subsequent act of abolishing Brahmin priesthood in his Court by creating Kshatriya Priest have all occupied a significant position in the history of social reform movement in Maharashtra. Every Muslim, no matter whether rich or poor of any sect has equal right to study his religious book Khuran. Even a Christian whether Protestant or Catholic has equal right to study Bible. But it is only among the Hindus that the stiff restrictions were imposed on non-Brahmins and untouchables to deprive them from studying Vedas, though teaching Vedas was the sole right of the Brahmins. In the post-Gupta period Brahmin developed Puranic rituals and kept them open for all non-Brahmins who came to be regarded as Shudras by Brahmins³⁸. The controversy raised at the time of Shahu was one that was preparedly raised in the past. For instance at the time of his coronation in 1674 Chhatrapati Shivaji had also to face the challenge of this issue raised by his contemporary Brahmins. When Shivaji thought of coronating himself as an independent Chhatrapati he encountered difficulties initially as the orthodox Brahmins opinion was not favorable to Shivaji's claim to be recognized as a Kshatriya by blood, although he had proved this claim by action. Though he succeeded in the end in inviting Gaga Bhatta, a learned Vedic Brahmin, from Benares and getting himself coronated in 1674 at Raigad³⁹, the matter that controversy was raised by the Brahmins of his time remains important. After Shivaji, it seems that his successors continued the performance of Vedic rituals at the hands of Brahmins. This Vedokta dispute was never provoked at Baroda because the Brahmins quietly accepted and recognized Maharaja's point of view. But it was quite contrary when Shahu resented against Puranic rites being performed in court at Kolhapur.

³⁸ B.P. Salunkhe & Dr. M.G.Mali, (ed) *Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj the Pillar of the Social Democracy*: Government of Maharashtra Publication, 1994-95, p-113.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Pp-113-114.

Shahuji Maharaj and Vedokta Controversy (1900-1905)

Like any religious person Shahu Maharaja performed his daily pooja regularly as he has faith in ancestor worship, perhaps the most natural form of religious belief was deep and strong. It was his habit of visiting the usual holy places in Kolhapur on stated days for the prescribed bath in the sacred waters of the rivers. An incident took place in October 1900; Maharaja went to Panchaganga River for his morning holy bath with his brother Bapusaheb Ghatge, Mamasahab Khanvilkar, Rajaramshastri Bhagwat and others. The practice was that while Maharaja took bath Brahmin uttered the mantras. On this occasion the priest himself unbathed began to chant religious mantras. Rajaramshastri Bhagwat who was Pandit, historian and linguist, asked the Maharaja why his priest was reciting Puranic Mantras instead of Vedic mantras at the performance of the rites ⁴⁰. When the young Maharaja asked the priest about it, the priest replied that it was not necessary for him either to take a bath before hand or recite Vedic mantras as the persons to be blessed were Shudras ⁴¹. Such an insulting reply was never expected from his priest servant. Then Shahu and his brother told the priest that they were Kshatriyas of noble blood, the priest replied to his ruler and master that so long as the powerful Brahmin community did not accept his Kshatriya status, and he would not consider him better than a Shudra ⁴². This rude shock incident brought transformation in the Shahuji Maharaj and his companions. Then Shahuji Maharaja appointed a Vedokta Committee to examine historical documents and submitted report on April 16, 1902. Rajopadhye, the royal priest, sat on the committee, but did not submit his statement or sign the report. The committee fully investigated the history of Vedokta customs in the royal family. The Brahmins were hopeful that the decision would go in their favor, as all the members of the committee were Brahmins ⁴³. In their joint report, the committee observed that the ancestors of the Maharaja were entitled to the socio-religious rights and privileges of the Kshatriya class ⁴⁴. Rajopadhye's assertion was that though Chhatrapati Shivaji was a Kshatriya, Shahuji Maharaja was not, as he was born in the Ghatge family which

⁴⁰ D. Keer, *Shahu Chhatrapati, A Royal Revolutionary*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1976, p-78.

⁴¹ B.P. Salunkhe & Dr. M.G.Mali, (ed) *Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj the Pillar of the Social Democracy*: Government of Maharashtra Publication, 1994-95, p-116.

⁴² Ibid. p-106.

⁴³ Ibid., p-120.

⁴⁴ D. Keer, *Shahu Chhatrapati, A Royal Revolutionary*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1976, p-121.

according to him, was not a Kshatriya family. Therefore Maharaja dismissed the disobedient servant priest on May 6, 1902.⁴⁵ Rajopadhye's appeal to the Government of India, against the Durbar's decision and of Government of Bombay, But Lord Curzon rejected Rajopadhye's appeal who was the Viceroy and Governor-General of India.⁴⁶

This Vedokta affair assumed such a serious proportion that even Bal Gangadhar Tilak got himself involved in this local issue by supporting orthodox Brahmins⁴⁷. Prabhakar Vaidya points out that, Tilak, instead of playing the role of a national leader, behaved himself in a manner thereby showing that he was a leader only of the Brahmins and this narrow attitude of Tilak in this issue resulted into failure in social as well as political structure of Maharashtra⁴⁸. In the Vedokta matter, the justice was on the side of Shahuji Maharaj and he won it. It established his right to Vedokta. At last the Kolhapur Brahmins too saw reason and surrendered to the historic decision on December 20, 1905 and signed a resolution to that effect with seriousness and more so with inevitability. The Chhatrapati Shahuji had scored an impressive victory,⁴⁹ and this Vedokta controversy had opened the eyes of Shahuji Maharaj against the Brahminical social order, and this incident became a turning point for Shahuji's social and political life.

Many such incidents forced Shahuji to build bahun movement, also he observed that, Sathya Shodhak Samaj movement was suffering from certain limitation after the death of Jotiba Phule, Shahuji was also continuously facing the problems created by the Brahminical influences in his administration during the period 1894-1913, But the event such as the Vedokta ceremony and the hurdles laid in way of social reforms by Tilak and the extremist involved, helped deeply in strengthening bahun movement and these entire factor compelled Shahu to brand "Extremist politics is nothing but Brahmin politics".⁵⁰

⁴⁵ B.P. Salunkhe & Dr. M.G.Mali, (ed) *Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj the Pillar of the Social Democracy*: Government of Maharashtra Publication, 1994-95, p-122.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p-136.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p-137.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p-137.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p-137.

⁵⁰ K. Kavlekar, *Non-Brahmin Movement in Southern India 1873-1949*. Shivaji University Publication, 1979. p-59.

It is clear that Shahu had a deep insight into the past and that he could foresee the future. It is because of this great quality that he played a significance role as a social reformer.

The Britishers were equally influenced by the Sathya Shodhak Samaj movement and they changed their outlook towards Indian politics, In his letter dated 19th Jan 1918, Shahu made very clear as to how the Brahmin bureaucracy interfered in his administration. He has been subjected to various problem and humiliation even to the extent of being called a Shudra ⁵¹. No prince could have tolerated, and thus it had a great impact on Shahu's life. The influence of Shahu Maharaja grew to such an extent that Kolhapur become the ideological epicenter of the bahujan movement which enabled the seeds of ideology to spread to the whole of South India. Till the end of his life, his highnesses Shahuji Maharaj continued founding and endowing new schools and most important of all, hostels in order to extend the benefits of higher education to those who hitherto had possessed little desire or power to seek them. All authorities in India now recognize these special values of such hostels.

Contributions of Shahu to the education of Bahujan Samaj

His progressive ideas, polices and educational-upliftment of depressed classes and scholarships for non –Brahmin students had a nation wide impact. An editorial published On 26th july1926 observed Shahuji's educational role as follows: “ the state of Kolhapur recognized the important of education early enough and year after year, has opened more schools to cope up with the needs. Very recently Shahuji Maharaja of Kolhapur accorded sanction to the opening of the fifty more primary schools in his state. [...] This educational policy laid down by Shahu had its impact on various social reformers after Shahu. His highness Raja Ram Maharaj, the heir apparent to Shahu followed the same policy. It was on these lines of Karmaveer Bhaurao P. Patil started working for educational efforts in Satara, which also contributed to the non-Brahmin cause. These efforts of Shahu had profound influences on various social reformers. The leaders of

⁵¹ Ibid., p-61.

Sathya Shodhak movement such as Jotiba Phule, Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj gave a prominent place to education in their program of activities”⁵².

By 1920 separate hostels had been started in the maharaja small capitals for no fewer than eleven different section of the community including the Indian Christian and the so –called untouchables. All his reform work and his mission extended itself beyond Kolhapur. Even this hostel movement had its influence in Madras city on the same lines of Shahuji, organized the non-Brahmin movement: “C. Natesa Mudaliar, A Vallala medical student was the secretary of the Madras Dravidian Association, began gathering funds for the establishment of the hostel in madras Dravidian association, began gathering funds for the establishment of the hostel in June 1916, was the first practical step of small but important group of non-Brahmins in Madras to organize themselves⁵³. There can be no doubt that it was his dynamic personality and the given determination to eradicate the caste system that made him enjoy a high position among all the native princes. This can be conclusively ascertained from his vast correspondence with other states in India. This helps us in getting a clear picture of “Bahujan movement” influencing the economic, social, political and religious activities under his leadership.

The way he was regarded by the other native states shows as to how faithful he was to the cause of India. As far as his policy in educational matters is concerned “His Highness Yuvaraja of Mysore had sent Mr.C.R.Reddy, Inspector General of education from Mysore to Kolhapur to study his highness’ progressive state. His highness Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodiyar of Mysore made rapid strides in promoting higher education of women and Ameliorating the condition of the depressed classes.⁵⁴

Shahuji Maharaja was deadly against the principle of the survival of the fittest in the social field⁵⁵. In 1917, primary education was made free and compulsory in Kolhapur

⁵² Ibid., p-65.

⁵³ Ibid., p-63.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p-69.

⁵⁵ Jadhav, B.B *Rajshree Shree Shahu Maharajanchi Bhashane*. Published by Lokwangmay Gruha, Mumbai. , 2001, p-148

and consequently the number of primary and secondary schools increased. Governor of Bombay, George Lloyd, was so impressed by Shahuji's novel experiment of free and compulsory 'Universal Primary Education' that he later on introduced it in the whole of the Bombay Presidency⁵⁶. The Governor of Bombay, His Excellency Sir George Lioyd, when he visited Kolhapur about the end of 1919, said that, "My principle has been, to take care the weak among my subjects more than the strong. Their condition has from the first appealed to me personally and it has been the one aim of my administration to do my level best to cure the evil. With this end in view I have been labouring hard for the last twenty-five years. I assumed my powers; I found that they had no leader. That was a great want. The evil of India is that each caste looks after its own people and they are indifferent to others. Further he said that, he encouraged the different castes such as Marathas, Lingayats, Jains, Tailors, Goldsmiths, Mohomedans and the Depressed Classes or 'Untouchables', as they are called, to have their own hostels. In that hostel, superintendents of their own castes look after boys. They can study there free from the unhealthy influence of their homes⁵⁷. As a result of the new education scheme the number of non-Brahmin student rose from 8,088 in 1895 to 21,027 in 1921-22 that of the 'untouchables' from 234 to 2361 while the percentage of literacy among the non-Brahmins increased between 1911 and 1921 by 27 per cent⁵⁸. Shahuji Maharaja also established the Devasthanam (charitable) Inamas department and placed it under the control of the revenue officers. Shahuji Maharaja also directed that surplus income of religious institution to be used for educational purposes. These attempts to control Devasthanam funds and secularize their administration⁵⁹, was appreciated by the people at large.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p-148.

⁵⁷ Ibid., Pp-148-149.

⁵⁸ B.P. Salunkhe & Dr. M.G.Mali, (ed) *Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj the Pillar of the Social Democracy*: Government of Maharashtra Publication, 1994-95, p-88.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p-89.

Sir S.M.Fraser was Shahuji Maharaja's teacher and Governor in his teens. So in a way Sir Fraser was greatly responsible in moulding the person and the thinking of Maharaja. Maharaja, too, regards him as his friend, Philosopher and guide, ⁶⁰ and he did not lose his contact with Shahu who become the ruler of Kolhapur. Lord S.M.Fraser had appreciated his pupil's interest in the bahujan movement in which he himself went on guiding him from where ever he went. His correspondence with Shahu from Mysore, Hyderabad, and Trivendrum and from a number of other places from southern India bear out these facts. Lord Fraser exhibits his interest in the bahujan movement, which were of an educative value to Shahuji ⁶¹. Also he writes the preface to A.B.Latthe's Memories of His Highness Shahu Chhatrapati Maharaja of Kolhapur. He writes in the preface: "His Highness did not confine his efforts to his own territory, always bearing in mind that the Native States and the British provinces are interwoven parts of one Indian Empire, he did not allow his rank as a Ruling Prince to deter him from presiding over numerous conference of the backward and depressed classes in and beyond the Bombay Presidency. The record of his life, however, it is safe to assert, contains materials, which no historian of the New India, growing up under our eyes, can afford to neglect ⁶².

The movement under Shahu's leadership contributed to the rise of various similar organizations e.g., the Somavanshi Aryar Kshatriya Dnyan Vardhak Samaj, Gujrati Untouchables Depressed Classes Mission Society, Kurmi Kshatriya Samaj, Maratha Samaj, Mohammedan Samaj, Lingayat Samaj in Mysore and no doubt the Madras Dravidian Association ⁶³ to take up the cause of downtrodden masses. Shahuji provided much needed Ballast and he united all of them in all in one single movement The Bahujan movement ⁶⁴.

⁶⁰ Jadhav, B.B *Rajshree Shree Shahu Maharajanchi Bhashane*, Published by Lokwangmay Gruha, Mumbai. , 2001, p-151.

⁶¹ K. Kavlekar, *Non-Brahmin Movement in Southern India 1873-1949*. Shivaji University Publication, 1979. p-70.

⁶² Ibid., p-71.

⁶³ Ibid., p-72.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p-72.

The Justice party established in 1916, as the part and parcel of this movement from 1913 to 1922, Shahuji played a prominent role in constituting and participating in various organizations for the betterment of the backwards and the downtrodden. The Justice Party of Madras got organized because of the impact of the huge awakening caused by Shahu in advocating communal representation. It was only on November 20th 1916 that some 30 non-Brahmin leaders including Dr.T.M.Nayer and Tyagaraja Chatti met at the Victoria public Hall in Madras city. This meeting was considered as the real beginning of a non-Brahmin party. It was on December 20th 1916 a public announcement was made in the form of “non-Brahmin manifesto” which was much influenced by the Sathya Shodhak Samaj under the leadership of Mahatma Jotiba Phule and Shahuji Maharaj.⁶⁵

The non-Brahmin manifesto was published in “The Hindu” in 1916, which mainly pointed out the over whelming majority of Brahmin in all spheres of political, social, economic and Religious life of the community. It proved with necessary statistics that the Brahmins with a negligible fraction of population in the Madras presidencies are far-ahead of other communities in the field of education, government services, Legislative Council and Municipal and other services; and enjoy highest position in the social strata.

It also suggested some important measures to be adopted to equalize all the communities at one level. It remarked that the Indian Constitution should be broadened and deepened so that the representatives of every Caste and community should be given freedom and legislative autonomy effecting domestic policy and economic position of India. At the end, this manifesto appeals to the leaders of non-Brahmin communities to create strong public opinion regarding their pathetic conditions and contribute in the “Nation Building” on the ground of self-respect and perfect equality. It was on these lines Shahuji worked for the non-Brahmin cause. Almost all of his ideas in connection with non-Brahmin upliftment agree with the non –Brahmin manifesto.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Ibid . p-72.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p-74.

The non-Brahmin legislation introduced during this period was mainly reformist in nature. The Hindu Inheritance law amendment act applied the Brahmin law of succession to non-Brahmins. The inter caste marriage act was supported by the non-Brahmin movement and was introduced in Kolhapur in 1918.⁶⁷

After 1917 Shahu Maharaja was vigorously advocating the principle of communal representation, and in 1920, he applied it to the Kolhapur municipality, which was established in 1854. In 1868, non-officials were introduced into the system for the first time from that year to 1904, when the municipality was suspended. The majority of councilors were Brahmins, whereas the number of non-Brahmins was less than one per cent and sometimes nil. That is why; representative assembly adopted a resolution to reestablish the municipal council and appointed B.V Jadhavrao who was a Maratha as administrator to take over the powers of the councils.⁶⁸ When, Shahuji Maharaja decided to apply his favorite schemes of communal representation to the municipality of Kolhapur in 1920, the number of election member was increased and equal rights were given to the women to compete in the election⁶⁹.

One more significant step in the administration field was Shahuji Maharaja's "government order", that the policy was well conceived and politically irreversible can be seen in the fact that the main principle of quota for community wise selection had to be written back into the constitution of India after the first amendment and is one among the operative principals of the programs of the union and state government for the promotion of the social justice⁷⁰

⁶⁷ B.P. Salunkhe & Dr. M.G.Mali, (ed) *Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj the Pillar of the Social Democracy*: Government of Maharashtra Publication, 1994-95, p-91.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p-91.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p-91

⁷⁰ Ibid., p-94

Notification of 26th July 1902

When Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj took the administration in his hand in 1894, majority of the state officers were Brahmins. Other backward classes were kept away from education and consequently from state service. Thus from the beginning Shahuji realized the necessity of setting on the right track the whole social machine which, for ages had stayed along the lines of Brahminism harming the national growth. To do this, he had to embark on a strenuous campaign against the evils of the traditional hierarchy of the caste. He started his work systematically through reserving of the 50% of the posts for backward classes.

In the year 1902 his highness Shahuji Maharaj was invited to England to attend the coronation of his majesty king Edwards VII. During temporary stay in England, he issued the order from England to this effect; that 50% post of the state service should be reserved for the backward class candidates. This was indeed a landmark in his career as a social reformer. The original order dated, 26th July 1902 stated ⁷¹. Shahuji's contemporary Krishnaraj Wodeyar IV, also introduced 75% reservation for all backward classes on the basis of millers report in 1921, barring Brahmins and Anglo- Indians in Mysore State. ⁷².

It is significant to mention that, when Shahu introduced 50% reservation for all backwards classes, Brahmin community opposed all over through Bal Gangadhar Tilak leadership. In the same way when Krishna raja Wodeyar introduced for all backward classes in Mysore state, M. Vishweshwariah gave resignation from his dewanship. For Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Vishweshwariah were both Brahmins and also great protectors of Brahminical Social Order (BSO).

It is to be pointed out here that the two movements that is Sathya Shodhak Samaj under Jotiba Phule, Shahuji Maharaj of Kolhapur fall under different periods. After Jotiba

⁷¹ Ibid., p-145.

⁷² Krishnamurthi, C. *Meesalati Chaluvali-Itihasa mattu Bhavishya*, Justice Publications, Mysore, 2003, p-28.

Phule's death in 1891, Shahuji took up this cause with full strength and worked under different circumstances, also considered Jotiba Phule as his source of inspiration and followed the path laid by him ⁷³.

⁷³ K. Kavelkar, *Non-Brahmin Movement in Southern India 1873-1949*. Shivaji University Publication, 1979. p-73.

CHAPTER II

THE ERA OF DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR AND GENESIS OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY

*“You must have firm belief in the sacredness of your goal. Noble is your aim and sublime; and glorious is your mission. Blessed are those who are awakened to their duty to those among whom they are born. Glory to those who devote their time, talents and their all to the amelioration of slavery. Glory to those who would keep on their struggle for the liberation of the enslaved in spite of heavy odds, carping humiliations, storms and dangers till the downtrodden secure their Human Rights” **

-Dr.B.R.Ambedkar

Mr. Dattoba Pawar, a Chamar social worker in 1917, introduced Dr. Ambedkar, a young leader, to Shahuji Maharaj. Shahuji saw a budding leader in Dr. Ambedkar. Speaking as a chief guest in a Mahar Conference held in Mangaon on 21st and 22nd March 1920, he said, “You can find your liberator in Dr.Ambedkar. I have full faith that he would free you from the shackles of slavery. I am also confident that he would take ahead the movement at all India level. He is sure to shine as the first rank leader of India”.

The Southborough Franchise Committee in 1919 adopted the criterion of Untouchability to classify the depressed classes. It was only after 1919, the question of depressed classes became much more politicized resulting in the vague definition of depressed classes.

* Gopinath.M, *How to revive the Phule-Ambedkar-Periyar movement in south India?*,2001, p-30.

During this time Britishers made the first attempt to classify castes on all India level during the census operations of 1911, and the census superintendents were instructed to enumerate castes and tribes classed as Hindus who did not fall within a certain standard or were subject to certain disabilities. It was in 1921 that the census authorities for the first time made use of the term-depressed classes in their census operation.¹ At this juncture everywhere in India, the Untouchables were up in arms against untouchability and the unjust social order, owing to their increased awareness; the desire to rebel against age-old slavery was becoming apparent. Everywhere in India, they were becoming more and more assertive. With the passage of time the antagonism between the depressed classes and the High Caste Hindus was rapidly increasing.²

Until the demise of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the Congress was by and large a Brahman preserve. During this very period, in 1919 Mr. Gandhi entered the Indian politics and almost immediately captured Congress. With the emergence of Gandhi Congress became a huge Brahman-Bania affair. With the Brahman Brain and Bania Finance, it becomes a formidable force. Gandhi was looking at the rebellious mood and posters of the Untouchables and also worried of caste community wise census, which took place at that time because, Brahman-Bania community were less in numbers. Therefore Gandhi started creating illusions and rendering all sorts of advice to the Untouchables. In his organ the "young India" dated 20th October 1920 he gave the following advice to the Untouchables whom he named as the Panchamas at that time: "Then, there remains, finally, self-help and self dependence. And herein comes the use of non-cooperation. Therefore by way of protest against Hinduism, the Panchamas can stop all contact and connection with the other Hindus so long as the special grievances are maintained. But this means organized intelligent effort. And so far as I can see, there is no leader among the Panchamas who can lead them to victory through non-cooperation".³ But Gandhi could not see a leader of this intelligence and caliber amongst the Untouchables.

¹ S.K.Gupta, *The Scheduled Castes in Modern Indian Politics: Their emergence as a political Power*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt.Ltd. 1985, p-10.

² Kanshi Ram, *The Chamcha Age: an era of the stooges*, Printed at Vedic Mudranalaya, 1982. p-14.

³ Ibid, p-14.

During that very period in 1920, addressing a conference of Untouchables, which was held in Mangaon, Shahuji Maharaj of Kolhapur introduced Dr. Ambedkar to them as their leader. Shahuji Maharaj opened that Dr. Ambedkar would lead them out of age-old bondage, put an end to their sufferings and build a mission and movement for them. Therefore he advised the Untouchables to give a helping hand to Dr. Ambedkar while looking to him for help and guidance as their leader and saviour.⁴

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar: (1891-1956)

Master of arts and doctorate in economics, Columbia University; Master of Science and doctor of science in economics, London School of Economics and Political Science, barrister-at-law, Grey's Inn, London. For anyone to attain so many degrees is impressive, but for an Untouchable, born in a small rural town in a colonial country at the end of the nineteenth century, it is even more so. This superior education helped propel Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar to the leadership of a growing movement of India's downtrodden⁵, the Shudras (presently known as Other Backward classes or OBCs) and Ati-shudras (untouchables), or Scheduled Castes or SCs and Scheduled Tribes STs.

Mahar's and Mangs are the other large untouchable castes of the region served as the martial races of India, being common soldiers and occasionally as squadron leaders. Sometimes they were made heads of forts or guard posts. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the British recruited such untouchable communities extensively for the Indian army, which gave them access to resources and association with new standards of life. Ambedkar's grandfather, Ramji was born in 1848, became a Subedar- major in charge of a military school in Mhow.⁶

⁴ Ibid, p-15

⁵ G. Omvedt, *Ambedkar: Towards an enlightened India*, Published by Penguin books India (P) Ltd, 2004, p-1

⁶ Ibid, p-2.

The Mahars also had religious cultural traditions that linked them to the wider traditions of rural communities and expressed their equalitarian and liberative aspirations. Ramji was a follower of Kabir and observed the prayers and rituals of the Kabirpanthi sect. Another uncle, a sannyasi of the Gosavi sect, had predicted in a surprise meeting with Ambedkar's parents in 1879, that their family would produce a great man who would relieve the oppression of their people.⁷

Ramji Sakpal and his wife, Bhimabai, had fourteen children. Among them seven died in infancy, when Ramji subedar was posted in the military camp at Mahu, in Madhya Pradesh, the fourteenth child was born on 14th April, 1891, and they named him Bhima, later on called by the neighbors Bhiva. He was the focus of the family's hope for greatness. Bhiva lost his mother when he was only six, and his physically challenged aunt, Mirabai looked after him, shortly after Bhiva's birth, the family moved to Dapoly in Ratnagiri district and then to Satara in 1894 when Ramji got a position as storekeeper in the public works department. There his youngest son first studied in a camp school in 1900, and he was registered as Bhiva Ramji Ambedkar,⁸ that time it was a common practice in Maharashtra, where all names ending in 'kar' indicate a place. The village was Ambavade, and so the boy's name should have been Ambedkar. His teacher at the camp school, however, was a Brahman named Ambedkar. It was his honor that the boy's name was registered as Ambedkar.⁹ However it was Bhiva's father Ramji rather than any teacher who was responsible for his education, because he dreamt of a different future for his son.¹⁰

⁷ Ibid, p-3.

⁸ Ibid, p-4.

⁹ Ibid, p-4.

¹⁰ V. Rodrigues, 'Introduction' in V. Rodrigues (ed) *The essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p-7.

Bhiva at first ignored his studies and was careless about exams, but once the family moved to Bombay in 1904, where he could access books of all kinds, he became interested in reading. Ramji prodded him to work, and used his pension to buy almost any book his precocious son demanded. When this small sum was finished, he would run to his sister to ask her jewellery and pawn it to buy more books to his son and when pension came he could redeem it.¹¹

Bhiva and his brothers had never experienced untouchability in their earlier military homes, but in Satara they got their first experience of caste discrimination. Bhiva and one more other untouchable student were forced to sit separately; no barber could be found to cut their hair;¹² his elder sister shaved his head. Once Bhiva along with his younger brother and two nephews went to Goregaon on train, no bullock cart would take them to the interior. One driver offered them the cart but he was not prepared to drive it, then Bhiva had to drive and the regular driver rested in the back seat. For a whole day and a half they had to go without water because the untouchables were not allowed to drink from the village wells. These kind of in human practices were existing at that time, and Babasaheb Ambedkar had faced all these problems during his childhood, and become an admirer of Jotiba Phule, who pioneered major reforms among the lower classes in Maharashtra from the latter part of the nineteenth century.¹³

¹¹ G. Omvedt, *Ambedkar: Towards an enlightened India*, Published by Penguin books India (P) Ltd, 2004, p-5.

¹² Ibid, p-5.

¹³ V. Rodrigues, 'Introduction' in V. Rodrigues (ed) *The essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p-7.

Bhiva got matriculation degree in 1907, which was considered as a great achievement for an untouchable boy. And in a congratulatory meeting which was presided over by the non-Brahman political leaders S.K. Bole and Keluskar, who arranged a scholarship from the state of Baroda, one of the largest princely states which was ruled over by a progressive Maratha, Sayajirao Gaikwad in India, which had facilitated Ambedkar to join Elphinstone College, where he had successfully pursued his B.A in English and Persian in 1913. During this time, his childhood nickname, Bhiva, was dropped and he was identified as 'Bhim' in the collage yearbook.¹⁴ In January 1913, Ambedkar decided to take up service in Baroda to show his indebtedness to the Maharaja. Ambedkar had presented his pitiful case before the Maharaja in Bombay, and expressed his desire to continue further higher studies abroad. Then, Maharaja of Baroda responded with an offer of a scholarship to study at Colombia University in New York City. Bhimrao set out for his first major experience with higher education in a world center in July 1913.¹⁵ However, he had come out of this first period with two completed publishable writings. One, an essay on 'Castes in India; their mechanism, genesis and development, was written in 1916 for a Colombian University seminar and published in *The Journal of Indian Antiquity*.¹⁶

He continued his long-standing pursuit of knowledge in America, Dr.Ambedkar always showed his interest in studying the Social, Political, Economical and Religious issues of India. He wrote a thesis on 'The Administration and Finance of East India Company' and submitted it for his M.A. degree in 1915. He was researching for his Ph.D., simultaneously on "National Dividend of India-A Historical and Analytical Study." This was the thesis he submitted for Ph.D. to Colombia University in June 1916. P.S.King published it in 1925 in London under the title, 'The evolution of Provincial Finance in British India' (He was awarded Ph.D., by Colombia University after the London Publication).¹⁷

¹⁴ G. Omvedt, *Ambedkar: Towards an enlightened India*, Published by Penguin books India (P) Ltd, 2004, p-6.

¹⁵ Ibid., p-7.

¹⁶ Ibid., p-9

¹⁷ V. Moon *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar*, translated by Asha Damle, Published by National book trust, India. 2002. p-11

New York also brought his first contact with Lala Lajpat Rai, who was touring the United States on behalf of the Indian Home Rule League of America to recruit support for anti-British struggles. Ambedkar argued with Lala Lajpat Rai that the Nationalist movement was neglecting issues such as Untouchability. But Rai's response that these issues could be taken up with vigor once freedom was won did not impress Ambedkar.¹⁸ And also Lala Lajpat Rai tried to involve Dr. Ambedkar in the freedom Movement¹⁹ just to divert his purpose of coming to the America. But Dr. Ambedkar refused politely under the pretext of studies.²⁰ Gail Omvedt opened that; "His period of education was not only in the scholarship of the world but also in social experiences of poverty and caste discrimination. And his awareness of the importance of education was not simply an individual discovery; it echoed one of the most famous saying of a man he later was to call one saw education as linked to development and prosperity almost as India's famous economist Amartya Sen was later to stress." With education in Bombay, New York and London, Ambedkar had gained entry to the world's treasury of social and economic thinking. Also he had undertaken his study as a Promethean fight to seize the gold of learning's, as a resource not simply for personal achievement but to use in the fight against the oppression of India's Bahujan Samaj.

When Ambedkar returned from London to take up a life of earning, he inevitably turned his attention to politics; the First World War was wearing out the British Government. In India the demand for Independence was gathering force. In British Parliament, on the 20th August 1917, it was announced that the British Empire intended to create a responsible Government in India and subsequently start the process of transfer of power. Mr. Montague came to India for the first time in the history of India; different organizations of the Untouchables submitted their demands.²¹ With the First World War coming to an end and the Montague Chelmsford reforms stimulating a new assertion of

¹⁸ G. Omvedt, *Ambedkar: Towards an enlightened India*, Published by Penguin books India (P) Ltd, 2004, p-8.

¹⁹ V. Moon *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar*, translated by Asha Damle, Published by National book trust, India, 2002. p-13.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p-13.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p-15.

non-Brahmans. Simultaneously everywhere non-Brahmans were began to mobilize themselves politically.

Dr.Ambedkar's first political act brought him with regard to giving testimony before the Southborough Commission which had been set up after the Montague Chelmsford reforms to tour India and survey the opinions of Indians on the franchise, with regard to Untouchables. The fierce attacks on Casteism and Brahman dominance of the movement may have appealed to Ambedkar, but the young Ambedkar, the relationship that, he formed with leaders like Shahuji Maharaj also had a social base. Shahuji gave a donation to support a bimonthly, '*Mooknayak*', in 1920, which Ambedkar supervised and managed by a young graduate, D.D.Gholap, and also he sponsored a two-day conference at Mangaon in Kolhapur State on 19 and 20 March 1920 to felicitate Ambedkar.²²

Struggle For Social And Political Rights:

On 9th March 1924 Dr. Ambedkar took the first step by forming the '*Bahishkrut Hitakarini Sabha*' and became the President of the managing committee. Through this organization Dr.Ambedkar emerged as a mass organizer.²³ Later on he was appointed along with Dr.P.G. Salanki, a Gujarati Untouchable leader, to the Bombay Legislative Council in 1927,for five years (the appointment was renewed in 1932 for a further five years) attempted to maintain the radical edge in his crusade while carrying out his duties in the Assembly.²⁴ The sun of self-respect had now arisen in the sky and the clouds of oppression had began to flit away through a momentous event in the life of Dr.Ambedkar.²⁵ Meanwhile, the first great mass struggle of untouchables was about to begin, focus on the issue of water rights, had been tabled in the important resolution of the Bombay Legislative Council and moved by S.K.Bole and adopted by the Bombay

² G. Omvedt, *Ambedkar: Towards an enlightened India*, Published by Penguin books India (P) Ltd, 2004, p-25.

³ *Ibid.*, p-28.

⁴ V. Rodrigues, 'Introduction' in V. Rodrigues (ed) *The essential Writings of B.R.Ambedkar*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p-10.

⁵ *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and speeches*, Vol-17, Part- 1, *Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and his egalitarian Revolution*, (ed), Hari Narake, Dr.M.L.Kasare, N.G.Kamble, Ashok Godghate, Publisher-Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Source Material Publication Committee, Higher education Department of Maharashtra, 2003, p-3

Government,²⁶ where the municipality had already passed a resolution proclaiming its tank open to Untouchables. Reporting on the Mahad Conference, 'The Bombay Chronicle' read "A Conference of the Depressed Classes of the Kolaba district was held at Mahad on 19th and 20th instants (i.e. of March 1927) under the Presidentship of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, Bar-at-Law. The attendance of the depressed classes was over 2,500 and great enthusiasms prevailed.²⁷ But Keer reports that 10,000 people arrived from almost all the districts of Bombay,²⁸ led for the first time in their history by a great leader of their own, the Untouchables were marching to vindicate their rights.

The march wended its way through the streets of Mahad and terminated at the Chowdar Tank. Dr. Ambedkar himself was standing on the verge of the Tank, and took water from tank and drunk it ²⁹ first. Then the vast multitude of men followed suit and vindicated their right.³⁰ The procession was a most peaceful one and everything passed off with quality, discipline was wonderfully maintained at the behest of their leader, and their struggle was non-violent and Constitutional, they never did dream of breaking the law. But what happened was, after about two hours some evil-minded leaders of the town raised a false rumor that the Depressed Classes were planning to enter the temple of Vireshwar.³¹ And a group of "Caste Hindu rowdies" attacked the Conference delegates,³² armed with bamboo sticks, the crowd soon became aggressive and the whole town at once became a surging mass of rowdies who seemed to be out for the blood of the Depressed Classes. As the news spread throughout the town, angry caste Hindus began to gather and fearing a further 'onslaught' on the temple, they attacked, beating up many of the offending untouchables. Subsequently, Brahmans held a purification ceremony. After this incidence Dr.Ambedkar announced a Satyagraha Conference in December, to

²⁶ Ibid., p-3.

²⁷ Ibid., p-9

²⁸ E. Zelliott, *From untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar movement*,. Manohar publishers and distributors, 2001,p-68

²⁹ *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and speeches*, Vol-17, Part- 1, *Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and his egalitarian Revolution*, (ed), Hari Narake, Dr.M.L.Kasare, N.G.Kamble, Ashok Godghate, Publisher-Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Source Material Publication Committee, Higher education Department of Maharashtra, 2003, p-6.

³⁰ Ibid., p-6.

³¹ Ibid., p-10.

³² E. Zelliott, *From untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar movement*,. Manohar publishers and distributors, 2001,p-68

establish the right to water, and also established the '*Bahishkrut Bharat*' a bimonthly journal, it started on April 3rd 1927. This journal criticized the Shuddhi (Purification) movement of the Arya Samaj, because the original idea had been to use Shuddhi to create an Arya Samaj purified of caste, and the destruction of caste was forgotten and the goal became simply to bring more and more people into the Hindu fold. That is why the issue of Bahishkrut Bharat published at the time of the Mahad conference had, in fact contained a sharp critique of Gandhi's effort to maintain Untouchables within the fold of Hinduism. During this period, Ambedkar attempted to radicalize the initiatives taken by Gandhi to bring about a social transformation and weld the nation together.³³ Meanwhile British Government had decided to review the political changes shaped by the act of 1919 and improve it accordingly, in order to ease the troubled situation in India.

A Royal Commission was appointed under the Chairmanship of Sir John Simon³⁴ in 1928. Which is also known as Indian Statutory Commission, (Simon Commission). The Simon Commission came on its first visit, and landed at Bombay on February 3rd 1928, to commence the work of re-examination of the Indian problem as declared in the Act of 1919. But the Congress Party decided to boycott the Commission at every stage and in every form. So on its arrival, curses and placards with the slogan "Go back Simon!"³⁵ Meanwhile the Congress called an all-party meeting in February inviting Muslim, Christian, Parsee, and non-Brahman community leaders. But neither Dr. Ambedkar nor any of the depressed classes leaders received any invitation. The committee was appointed by a Pandit Motilal Nehru to draft a Swaraj Constitution for India.³⁶ As regards the Depressed Classes, the Nehru Report said: "*In our suggestions for the Constitution we have not made any special provision for the representation of the 'Depressed' classes in the legislatures. This could only be done by way of special electorates or by nomination.*" But as these two methods were considered harmful and

³³ V. Rodrigues, 'Introduction' in V. Rodrigues (ed) *The essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p-10.

³⁴ *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and speeches*, Vol-17, Part- 1, *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and his egalitarian Revolution*, (ed), Hari Narake, Dr. M.L. Kasare, N.G. Kamble, Ashok Godghate, Publisher-Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Source Material Publication Committee, Higher education Department of Maharashtra, 2003, p-63.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p-64.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p-64.

unsound, the committee said that they were not going to extend either principle. They observed that their Declaration of Rights would be a solution for all the ills affecting the Depressed Classes.³⁷ To co-operate with the Simon Commission the central Government appointed a Committee for the entire British India, and every Legislative Council elected its provincial Committee to work with the Simon Commission. The Bombay provincial committee was selected Dr.Ambedkar along with other members by the Bombay Legislative Council on August 3, 1928,³⁸ to work with Simon Commission. At that time Ambedkar took initiative for establishment of the Depressed Classes Education Society, which established hostels in Panvel, Thane, Nasik, Pune and Dharwad for high school students belonging to these sections.³⁹ Here we can see the continuation of Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaja's educational works.

The proceedings and tours of the Simon Commission lit up the Indian political firmament, and along with other forces it brought to the front force intellect and vitality of Dr.Ambedkar. Eighteen Depressed classes associations gave evidence before the Commission and placed their memorandum before it. On behalf of the Bahishkrut Hitakarini Sabha Dr. Ambedkar submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission. The work of the Simon Commission continued till the winter. The provincial Committees were also drafting their own reports.

The committee, which was appointed by the Bombay Legislative council to co-operate with the Simon Commission after hearing both official and non-official evidence relating to the Constitutional problem, submitted later their report on may 7, 1929.⁴⁰ But Dr.Ambedkar, fundamentally differed with the committee and did not sign that report, and submitted a separate report containing his own views and recommendations on may

³⁷ Ibid. p-64.

³⁸ Ibid., p-65.

³⁹ V. Rodrigues, 'Introduction' in V. Rodrigues (ed) *The essential Writings of B.R.Ambedkar*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p-10.

⁴⁰ *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and speeches*, Vol-17, Part- 1, *Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and his egalitarian Revolution*, (ed), Hari Narake, Dr.M.L.Kasare, N.G.Kamble, Ashok Godghate, Publisher-Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Source Material Publication Committee, Higher education Department of Maharashtra, 2003, p-66.

17, 1929.⁴¹ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar mentioned in his recommendations in section III, that there should be adult franchise,⁴² and franchise should be extended to all adults, male and female above the Age of 21, which is more democratic and universally accepted. “At last the report of the Simon Commission disregarded the meaning and aim of Indian Nationalism and its forces, it recommended a continuation of separate electorate in Indian elections, for want of any agreed pact among the Indian political parties: It was the opinion of the commission that the Nehru Report was not an agreed solution.⁴³ Later on in order to discuss the future Constitution of India the Government decided to hold Round Table Conference at London, it was necessary that the depressed classes must at that critical juncture assert themselves and make it clear to the British authority that be as to what safeguards and guarantees the future constitution of India must contain for the protection of their civic rights. With these views it was decided that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, to gather people from the difference provision of India together for the purpose of the discussion.

Poona Pact And The Origin Of Chamcha Age:

The moment we heard about the Poona Pact, immediately some questions will rise in the minds of the students. It is however proposed to know as to what separate electorate is? What was the underlying purpose of it? Why did Babasaheb Ambedkar demanded it? What was the actual demand? What was Gandhi's attitude towards the demand of separate electorate? Why did Babasaheb Ambedkar signed the Poona Pact? It is necessary to bring out another important facet of the hidden truth of the Indian history, for one who undertakes a comprehensive study of the history of Round Table Conference and the Poona Pact.

The Round Table Conference was indeed a great event in the history of both India and England. But to the Untouchables in Particular it was an epoch-making event in their history; it was this Conference that brought in other Indians with the right to be consulted

⁴¹ Ibid., p-66.

⁴² Ibid., p-69.

⁴³ Ibid., p-71.

in the framing of the Constitution for India. Their voice was to echo for the first time in the history of two thousand years and more so in the Governance of their Motherland. This Round Table Conference was a major platform from which Ambedkar deployed his learning and his ability to think on his feet to supreme effect. He advanced alternative documents for possible constitutional reforms in India, and several suggestions voiced and expressed in these documents were to be incorporated in the India Act, 1935.⁴⁴

As it declared, the British Government convened a Round Table Conference in London, which was inaugurated in the House of Lords by King George V, on 12th November 1930.⁴⁵ It was consisting the representatives of India and the British Political Parties to frame a Constitution for India with a view to satisfying the demand of the People of India. This Round Table Conference was consisted of 89 members, out of whom 16 were Representatives of the three British Parties, 53 Indian members of the delegation representing various interests except the non co-operating congress, and 20 of the Indian states. Among the invitees were 13 eminent Hindu liberal leaders including Sir. Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.R.Jayakar, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Srinivas Shastri, and C.Y.Chintamani. H.H Agha khan, Sir Muhammed Shafi, Mohammed Ali Jinna and Fazlul Huq were representing the Muslims, Sardar Ujjval Sing represented the Sikhs, Dr. B.S.Moonjee represented the Hindu Mahasabha, K.T.Poul represented the Indian Christians, Sir C.P.Ramaswamy Aiyar, Sir Mirza Ismail represented the Indian States. And Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and Rao Bahdur Srinivasn represented the Depressed Classes and also they raised voice about the Backward Communities.⁴⁶

The most important step taken by the British Government is to accelerate the pace of self-rule in India was the Round Table Conference convened by the British Government in 1930. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, along with Rao Bahadur Srinivasan, was invited

⁴⁴ V. Rodrigues, 'Introduction' in V. Rodrigues (ed) *The essential Writings of B.R.Ambedkar*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p-11.

⁴⁵ D.C. Ahir, *Dr. Ambedkar at the Round Table Conferences London (1930-1932)*, Published by Blumoon books, 1999, New Delhi, p-1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Pp-1-2.

to Participate in this historic conference on behalf of the Untouchables, then called Depressed Classes, and now known as Scheduled Castes.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar put his viewpoint in the planar session of the first Round Table Conference, which held on 20th November 1930. Speaking on behalf of the Depressed Classes he said that: “The Depressed Classes form a group by themselves which is distinct and separate from the Muhammadans and, although they are included among the Hindus, they in no sense form an integral part of that community. Not only have they a separate existence, but they have also assigned to them a status, which is invidiously distinct from the status occupied by any other community in India. There are communities in India, which occupy a lower and subordinate position; but the position assigned to the depressed classes is totally different”.⁴⁷ But it is often reminded that the problem of the Depressed Classes is a social problem and that its solution lies elsewhere than in politics. Per contra Dr.B.R.Ambedkar took strong exception to this view, and said that the problem of Depressed Classes will never be solved unless they get political power in their own hands. Ambedkar knew that political power was passing from the British into the hands of those who oppressed the Untouchables, and whose main interest was to maintain the Hindu Social Order. Because of these reasons he gave his suggestions to the British government at the Round Table Conference, which are as follows:

- * In Both Houses of the Federal Legislature, the Depressed Classes will have representation on the basis of their population.
- * The depressed classes shall have the right to elect their own representatives to the provincial and central legislature through separate electorates of their voters.
- * That the depressed classes shall not only have the right to their own separate electorates, but they shall also have the right to be represented by their own men.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p-5.

- * The constitution shall declare invalid any custom or usage by which any penalty or disadvantage or disability is imposed upon or any discrimination is made against any subject of the state in regard to the enjoyment of the civic rights on account of untouchability.
- * Generous treatment in the matter of recruitment to the public services and the opening of enlistment in the police and the military service. Etc.

Before the conclusion of the first session of the Round Table Conference the reports of both the committees were placed and passed by the Conference. It will be noticed that although agreement on details was lacking it was unanimously accepted that the Untouchables were entitled to recognition as a separate entity for Political and constitutional purposes. But the only party in the country, whose attitude to this decision of the Round Table Conference was not known when the first session of the Round Table Conference was closed, was the Congress. This was because the congress had boycotted the Round Table Conference and was busy in carrying on Civil disobedience against the British Government. By the time of the second session of the Round Table Conference, there was a compromise between the British Government and the Congress, and as a result of which the congress agreed to participate in the second Round Table Conference, which held on 17th September 1931. Therefore everybody was looking forward to the congress to lead the conference to success. Unfortunately, the congress choose MR. Gandhi as its representative, as Dr. Ambedkar opines, a worse person could not have been, chosen to guide India's destiny.

Mr. Gandhi presents himself as a man, full of humility. But his behavior at the Round Table Conference showed that how petty-minded he could be. As a result of compromise with the Government just before he came treated the whole non-congress delegation with contempt. Mr.Gandhi was angry, and he attacked everybody who had taken part in producing the minority pact. He was particularly angry about the recognition given to the Untouchable as separate entity, and he never tolerated the enlistment of

Untouchables through civic and political rights.⁴⁸ To begin with, Gandhi was opposed to allow Untouchables to enter Hindu Temples. To quote his own words Gandhi said: How is it possible that the Antyajias (untouchables) should have right to enter all existing temples? As long as the law of caste and Ashram has the chief place in Hindu Religion.⁴⁹ But in the Round Table Conference he gave a statement that, “I am speaking with due sense of responsibility, and I say that it is not a proper claim which is registered by Dr. Ambedkar, when he seeks to speak for the whole of the Untouchables of India. It will create a division in Hinduism...!”⁵⁰ And also he said that he do not mind if Untouchables, if they so desire, being converted to Islam or Christianity. He can tolerate that, but he cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are two divisions set forth in the villages.⁵¹ But he was hiding the already existing divisions in the villages. And also he said that those who speak of the political right of untouchables do not know their India, do not know how Indian society is constructed and therefore he goes on saying with all the emphasis that I can command that if he was the only person to oppose this thing he would oppose it with my life.

In the Round Table Conference there were nine Committees, among them Minority Committee was the most important which was dealing with the Rights of Untouchables and other Minority Communities. But, because of Gandhi’s petty-mindedness it did not succeed. Thus ended the efforts made by the Minority Committee to bring about a solution of the communal problem. Everybody felt that Mr. Gandhi came to the Round Table Conference only to oppose the demands of the Untouchables. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar also realized that Gandhi was the most determined enemy of the Untouchables.

⁴⁸ Dr. M.N. Javaraiah, *Dr. Ambedkar: Father of the Constitution of India*, Published by Siddhartha Grantha Mala, Mysore, p-14.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p-19.

⁵⁰ Vasant Moon, (ed), *Dr. Ambedkar writings and speeches*, Volume-9, *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables*, Published by The education department of Government of Maharashtra, 1991, p-69.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p-69.

Gandhi's great achievement in the Round Table Conference was dividing the Other Backward Classes from Untouchables and also he went to the Muslims telling them that he would support their 14 demands if they in turn oppose the demands placed by the representatives of the Depressed Class. In spite of all these efforts, he was unsuccessful in his attempt, because Muslims did not take back the support, which they gave to Dr.B.R.Ambedkar. Due to these developments British Prime Minister, *Ramsay Mac Donald* dissolved the Minority Committee and said that he will take a decision which, would be acceptable to all and received signatures from everybody except Ambedkar, who categorically refused. After this Gandhi came to India, he was arrested and kept in Yeravada Jail in Poona, owing to his starting at a London press conference that he would be continuing the Non-Cooperation movement against the British Government.

Ultimately, Gandhi failed and Dr. Ambedkar won as the Minorities committee could arrive at no decision, the decision was left to the British Government. On 17th August 1932 British Government announced "Communal Award" and according by awarded Dual voting rights instead of Separate Electorate, much to the advantage of the Depressed classes with Special Electorate system fetching them 78 Special Constituencies. Earlier Mr. Gandhi thought that if separate electorate system is introduced in India, Hinduism is going to break up. To stop this British Prime Minister gave second voting right to depressed classes, through this they can elect Hindus who do work for them and also Hindus will come to Depressed Classes to ask votes, then there is no question of breaking of Hinduism. But Gandhi was unhappy with British Prime Minister for giving dual voting rights and 78 special constituencies for the Depressed Classes, because earlier, Depressed Classes not even had the right to single vote, to participate in the electoral system. There were only three classes having the right to elect their representatives, they were, a) Land lords, b) Tax payers, c) Graduates, among the Depressed Classes there were no Land lords, Tax payers and Graduates at that time, due to these reasons they could not participate in the electoral process in India.

Due to this reason, Babasaheb Ambedkar recommended Simon Commission to introduce Adult franchise. But Gandhi wrote a letter to British Prime Minister to cancel the 78 special constituencies that were given to the Untouchables, if not, he would go on to fast unto death, and he started fasting from 20th September 1932,⁵² as a protest against the separate electorates to the Untouchables.

Gandhi did not want to die. He wanted very much to live...!!!

The fast however created a problem, and that problem was how to save Mr. Gandhi's life. The only way to save his life was to alter the Communal Award, and which, Mr. Gandhi said that it would hurt his principles so much. The prime Minister had made it quite clear that the British Cabinet would not withdraw it or alter it of its own, but that they were ready to substitute for it a formula that may be agreed upon by the Caste Hindus and the Untouchables. It was a baffling situation for Ambedkar since he had to choose between two alternatives. First, the duty which he owed out of common humanity to save Gandhi from sure death and second, the question of protecting the interest of the untouchables concerning the political right that the British prime minister had offered them. Dr. Ambedkar responded to the call of humanity and saved the life of Mr. Gandhi by agreeing to alter the communal award in a manner satisfactory to Mr. Gandhi. This agreement is known as *Poona Pact*.⁵³ The communal award was intended to free the untouchables from the thralldom of the Hindus. The Poona Pact is designed to place them under the domination of the Hindus.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid., p-88.

⁵³ Ibid., p-88.

⁵⁴ V. Rodrigues, 'Introduction' in V. Rodrigues (ed) *The essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p-12.

Text of Poona Pact ⁵⁵

The following is the text of the agreement:

(1) *There shall be seats reserved for the Depressed Classes out of the general electorate seats in the Provincial Legislatures as follows:*

Madras 30; Bombay with Sind 15; Punjab 8; Bihar and Orissa 18; Central Provinces 20; Assam 7; Bengal 30; United Provinces 20; Total 148.

These figures are based on the total strength of the Provincial Councils, announced in the Prime Minister's decision.

(2) *Election to these seats shall be by joint electorate's subject, however, to the following procedure:*

All the members of the Depressed Classes, registered in the general electoral roll in a constituency, will form an electoral college, which will elect a panel of four candidates belonging to the Depressed Classes for each of such reserved seats, by the method of the single vote; the four persons getting the highest number of votes in such primary election shall be candidates for election by the general electorate.

(3) *Representation of the Depressed Classes in the Central Legislature shall likewise be on the principle of joint electorates and reserved seats by the method of primary election in the manner provided for in Clause 2 above, for their representation in the Provincial Legislatures.*

(4) *In the Central Legislature, eighteen per cent of the seats allotted to the general electorate for British India in the said legislature shall be reserved for the Depressed Classes.*

(5) *The system of primary election to a panel of candidates for election to the Central and Provincial Legislatures, as herein before mentioned, shall come to an end after the first ten years, unless terminated sooner by mutual agreement under the provision of Clause 6 below.*

⁵⁵ Vasant Moon, (ed), *Dr. Ambedkar writings and speeches*, Volume-9, *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables*, Published by The education department of Government of Maharashtra, 1991, Pp-88-89.

- (6) *The system of representation of the Depressed Classes by reserved seats in the Provincial and Central Legislatures as provided for in Clauses 1 and 4 shall continue until determined by mutual agreement between the communities concerned in the settlement.*
- (7) *Franchise for the Central and Provincial Legislatures for the Depressed Classes shall be as indicated in the Lothian Committee Report.*
- (8) *There shall be no disabilities attaching to any one on the ground of his being a member of the Depressed Classes in regard to any elections to local bodies or appointment to the Public Services. Every endeavor shall be made to secure fair representation of the Depressed Classes in these respects, subject to such educational qualifications as may be laid down for appointment to the Public Services.*
- (9) *In every province out of the educational grant, an adequate sum shall be earmarked for providing educational facilities to the Members of the Depressed Classes.*

The terms of the Pact were accepted by Mr. Gandhi and given effect to by Government by embodying them in the Government of India Act. The Untouchables were sad. They had every reason to be. There are, however, people who do not accept this. They never fail to point out that the Poona Pact gave the Untouchables larger number of seats than what was given to them by the Prime Minister in his Communal Award. It is true that the Poona Pact gave the Untouchables 148 seats, while the Award had only given them 78.

The Communal Award gave the Untouchables two benefits.⁵⁶

- (i) A fixed quota of seats to be elected by separate electorate of Untouchables and to be filled by persons belonging to the Untouchables;
- (ii) Double vote, one to be used through separate electorates and the other to be used in the general electorates.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p-90.

Now, the Poona Pact increased the fixed quota of seats, it also took away the right to the double vote, and this increase in Seats can never be deemed to be a compensation, for the loss of the double vote. The second vote given by the Communal Award was a priceless privilege. Its value as a political weapon was beyond reckoning, with this voting strength free to be used in the election of caste Hindu candidates, the Untouchables would have been in a position to determine, if not to dictate, the issue of the General Election. No caste Hindu candidate could have dared to neglect the Untouchable in his constituency or be hostile to their interest if he was made dependent upon, the votes of the Untouchables. The Hindus, although they did not celebrate the Poona Pact, did not like it. Throughout their commotion to save Mr. Gandhi's life there was a definite current of conscious feeling that the cost of saving his life may be great. Therefore, when they saw the terms of the Pact they very definitely disliked it, although they had not the courage to reject it. Disliked by the Hindus and disfavored by the Untouchables, the Poona Pact was given recognition by both parties and was embodied in the Government of India Act.⁵⁷

In the light of these considerations, it cannot but appear that the Poona Pact was only the first blow inflicted upon the Untouchables and that the Hindus who disliked it were bent on inflicting on it other blows as and when circumstances gave them an occasion to do so. The two contentions, which the Hindus raised before the Hammond Committee, furnish the best evidence of the existence of a conspiracy by the Hindus, the object of which was to make the Poona Pact, as it could not be repudiated, of any benefit to the Untouchables. The story of how the Congress dealt with the political demands of the Untouchables cannot be left here for the simple reason that it does not end here. The subsequent parts of it are more instructive than those that have gone before.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p-91.

Later on at Nasik, Historical Yeola Conversion Conference held under the Presidentship of Dr.B.R. Ambedkar in 1935, in this historical conference, Dr. Ambedkar declared that: 'He was born as a Hindu but he will not die as a Hindu'. In the same year in December Dr.Ambedkar was invited by the Jat Pat Todak Mandal of Lahore to preside over the Conference, his presidential speech, which he could not deliver, was later published as 'Annihilation of Caste'.

Continuing the story, the next part of it relates to the election that took place in February 1937 to the Provincial Legislatures, as reconstituted under the Government of India Act, 1935. This was the first occasion in its life-time that the Congress came down to fight an election. It was also the first time that the Untouchables got the privilege to elect their own representatives,⁵⁸ for laying foundation for Indian Democracy. Political Parties are essential for the working of democracy. They enable people of different opinion to agree upon some common principles, to work united and to secure political power by Constitutional means. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, who gave prime importance to political power for the emancipation of the Depressed Classes, led their liberation movement under the political banner.⁵⁹ However which political parties Babasaheb Ambedkar had established is a pertinent question. A close analysis of the various organizations he established, would of course, reveal that he had established two political parties, first is the Independent Labour Party in 1936,⁶⁰ and other, Scheduled Castes Federation in 1942.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Ibid., p-94.

⁵⁹ K.R.Kamaji, *Political Thought of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar*, Intellectual Publishing House, p- 90.

⁶⁰ C.Jaffrelot, *Dr. Ambedkar and untouchability*, Published by Permanent Black, 2005, p-73.

⁶¹ K.R.Kamaji, *Political Thought of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar*, Intellectual Publishing House, p- 91.

What prompted Babasaheb Ambedkar to form ILP? The British Government passed the Government of India Act in August 1935 for the Governance of India, which envisaged representation to the Indians in the Central and State Legislatures on large scale. Accordingly general elections were to be held in 1937. The political parties in India were preparing to contest elections under their respective political banners. Naturally, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar also thought to participate in the election,⁶² for the emancipation of socially, economically and politically exploited.

Some leaders of the Untouchables, who were siding with the Congress when the Poona Pact was being forged— such as the late Dewan Bahadur M. C. Raja—cherished the fond hope that the Congress will not inter-meddle in the elections of the Untouchables in regard to the seats reserved for them. But this hope was dashed to pieces. The Congress had a double purpose to play its part in the election to the reserved seats of the Untouchables. In the first place, it was out to capture in order to build up its majority that was essential for enabling it to form a Government. In the second place, it had to prove the statement of Mr. Gandhi, that the Congress represented the Untouchables and that Untouchables believed in the Congress. The Congress, therefore, did not hesitate to play a full, mighty and, a malevolent part in the election of the Untouchables by putting up Untouchable candidates on Congress ticket pledged to Congress program for seats reserved for the Untouchables. With the financial resources of the Congress it made a distinct gain and Babasaheb Ambedkar's Independent Labour Party won 15 seats out of 17,⁶³ and those who won had a well-educated backgrounds.

⁶² K.R.Kamaji, *Political Thought of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar*, Intellectual Publishing House, p- 92.

⁶³ V. Rodrigues, 'Introduction' in V. Rodrigues (ed) *The essential Writings of B.R.Ambedkar*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p-13.

The total number of seats allotted to the Untouchables under the Government of India Act, 1935 are 151. The following table shows how many were captured by Untouchable candidates who stood on the Congress Ticket.

Province	Total Seats Reserved for the Untouchables	Total Seats Captured by the Congress
United Provinces	20	16
Madras	30	26
Bengal	30	6
Central Provinces	20	7
Bombay	15	4
Bihar	15	11
Punjab	8	--
Assam	7	4
Orissa	6	4
Total	151	78

This number of 148 seats was raised to 151 in making adjustments of seats for Bihar and Orissa.⁶⁴

This shows that the Congress got just about fifty-one per cent of the seats reserved for the Untouchables. The Congress in capturing 78 seats left only 73 seats to be filled by true and independent representatives of the Untouchables. The Untouchables were worse off under the Poona Pact than they would have been under the Prime Minister's Award. In point of effective representation, the Untouchables got less than what the Prime Minister had given them. The Congress on the other hand gained by the Poona Pact. Although under the Poona Pact it gave 151 seats to the Untouchables it took back 78 and

⁶⁴ Vasant Moon, (ed), *Dr. Ambedkar writings and speeches*, Volume-9, *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables*, Published by The education department of Government of Maharashtra, 1991, p-94.

thereby made a handsome profit on its political transaction. There was another greater blow that the Congress inflicted on the Untouchables. It deprived them of any share in the Executive. Due to this, the untouchables never hope to get protection from the police, Justice from the judiciary or the benefit of statutory law from the administration, so long as the Public Services continued to be manned by the Caste Hindus. That is why from the very beginning, Dr. Ambedkar had been pressing in the discussions in the Round Table Conference that the Untouchables must not only have the right to be represented in the legislature, they must also have the right to be represented in the Cabinet. The Round Table Conference accepted the validity of the claim and considered ways and means of giving effect to it.

The Congress could not use it to defend its conduct in excluding the Untouchables from the Cabinet for two reasons. In the first place, the Congress was bound by the terms of the Poona Pact to give representation to the Untouchables in the Cabinet. In the second place, the Congress could not say that there were no Untouchables in the Legislatures who were not members of the Congress Party. On the contrary, there were as many as 78 Untouchables returned on the Congress ticket and pledged to the Congress policy. Why then did the Congress not include them in the Cabinet? The only answer is that it was a part of the Congress policy not to admit the right of the Untouchables to be represented in the Cabinet and that this policy had the support of Mr. Gandhi.⁶⁵

There is, however, more direct evidence on this point. In 1942 there held an All-India Conference of the Untouchables. In that Conference resolutions setting out the political demands of the Untouchables were passed. An Untouchable of the Congress Party who attended the Conference went to Mr. Gandhi to ascertain what Mr. Gandhi had to say about these demands and put him the following five questions: ---

1. What will be the position of the Harijans in the future constitution to be framed?
2. Will you advise the Government and the Congress to agree to fix the five seats from a Panchayat Board upward to the State Council on population basis?

⁶⁵ Ibid., p-98.

3. Will you advise the Congress and the leaders of the various majority parties in the legislatures in the provinces to nominate the Cabinet members from among the Scheduled Caste legislators who enjoy the confidence of the majority of Scheduled Caste members?
4. In view of the backwardness of the Harijans, will you advise the Government to make a provision in the Act that Executive posts in the Local Boards and Municipal Councils be held on communal rotation, so as to enable the Harijans to become Presidents and Chairmen?
5. Why do you not fix some percentage of seats for Harijans from District Congress Committee upward to the Working Committee of the Congress?

Mr. Gandhi gave his answers in the issue of the Harijan dated 2nd August 1942.⁶⁶ This is what Mr. Gandhi said: —

1. The constitution, which I could influence, would contain a provision making the observance of untouchability in any shape or form an offence. The so-called 'untouchables' would have seats reserved for them in all elected bodies according to their population within the elected area concerned.
2. You will see that the answer is covered by the foregoing.
3. I cannot. The principle is dangerous. Protection of its neglected classes should not be carried to an extent, which will harm them and harm the country. A cabinet minister should be a topmost man commanding universal confidence. A person after he has secured a seat in an elected body should depend upon his intrinsic merit and popularity to secure coveted positions.
4. In the first place, I am not interested in the present Act, which is as good as dead. But I am opposed to your proposal on the ground already mentioned.
5. I am opposed for the reasons mentioned. But I should like to compel large elective Congress organizations to ensure the election of Harijan members in proportion to their numbers on the Congress register. If Harijans are not interested enough in the Congress to become 4 anna members, they may not expect to find their names in elective bodies. But I would strongly advise Congress workers to see that they approach Harijans and induce them to become members of the Congress."

⁶⁶ Ibid., Pp-99-100.

Is there any doubt that Mr. Gandhi and the Congress were determined in principle not to recognize the right of the Untouchables to be represented in the Cabinet? What is the use in shutting it out in the case of the Untouchables? Nobody has claimed that an unqualified Untouchable should be made a Minister. It only confirms the inner feeling of opposition that lies locked in the heart of Mr. Gandhi. The second misdeed of the Congress was to subject the Untouchable Congressmen to the rigorous of party discipline. They were completely under the control of the Congress Party Executive. They could not ask a question which it did not like. They could not move a resolution, which it did not permit. They could not bring in legislation to which it objected. They could not vote as they chose and could not speak what they felt. They were there as dumb driven cattle. One of the objects of obtaining representation in the Legislature for the Untouchables is to enable them to ventilate their grievances and to obtain redress for their wrongs. The Congress successfully and effectively prevented this from happening. It shows that the representatives of the untouchables became only nominal representatives and not real representatives.

To end this long and sad story, it would be appropriate to mention Dr. Ambedkar who said that the Congress and Gandhi sucked the juice, and threw the rind on the face of the Untouchables. As a result of the Poona Pact, "Stooges" are created among the Untouchables. And which led to creation of "The Chamcha Age" in Indian Politics. The representatives of the untouchables elected on the Congress ticket under the joint electorate system, became the tools of upper caste Hindus. These untouchable stooges of the congress party became the staunch enemies of Babasaheb Ambedkar throughout his life. Besides calling them as 'tools' he had also been calling them as "Agents of Hindus" and "Stooges of Hindus". These stooges, agents or tools of Hindus later came to be known as "Chamchas". Dr. Ambedkar understood the need of giving more awareness to his people, and for that he formed a new political party 'All India Scheduled Castes Federation in 1942, not only to win the elections, but also to educate, agitate and to organize the people.

In 1946 Dr. Ambedkar was elected as a Member of the Constitution Assembly of India, representing from Khulna and Joshur of Bengal from the Muslim League Party. But the congress leaders gave away Khulna and Joshur to East Pakistan, so that Dr. Ambedkar could not enter and represent in the Constituent Assembly. This was Congress' game plan. But Babasaheb Ambedkar decided some how to protect the rights of Untouchables, then he went to London to seek justice from the British and succeeded in convincing them. Britisher's also understood the genuine cause of DR. B.R. Ambedkar and forced the Congress to elect him to the Constituent Assembly, other wise they would postpone giving Independence to India. There was no any other way to Congress Party, so they elected him from the Bombay Legislature. Then the Constituent Assembly drafting Committee elected B.R. Ambedkar as a Chairman of the drafting Committee on 29th August 1947. His main goal of entering into Constituent Assembly was to safeguard the human rights of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes.⁶⁷ After the completion of drafting the Constitution of Republic in 1948, he addressed the Backward Castes in Lucknow and advised them to come under one political banner to gain their rights; also he promised them to make provisions for their reservation in the Constitution. And in a previous meeting he said that the Congress was a burning house and warned his people not to enter it lest they would be burnt to ashes.

Same year in 1948, October 4th, Dr. Ambedkar presented the Draft Constitution to Constituent Assembly, November 25th he cautioned the Government that 'We only had political equality in terms of votes and not socio-economic equality and if this contradiction was not ended at the earliest, the sufferers would blow off political democracy. In the same year November 26th Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution, then India became a Republic Country on January 26th 1950. Dr. Ambedkar cautioned the nation on the eve of the acceptance of the draft Constitution by the Constituent Assembly,

⁶⁷ Dr. M.N. Javaraiah, *Dr. Ambedkar: Father of the Constitution of India*, Published by Siddhartha Grantha Mala, Mysore, p- (II)

“On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one –man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one –man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradiction? How long should we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.”⁶⁸

After, the First Lok Sabha Elections was held under the Constitution of Indian Republic; in this elections Congress candidate N.S. Kajrolkar defeated Dr. Ambedkar in 1952. Then he contested for by-election for Lok Sabha from Bhandara Constituency of Vidarbha region, but here also he was defeated by a Congress candidate Mr. Borkar in 1954. In both these elections, the little known nominees of the Congress defeated Dr.Ambedkar. The joint electorates and reserved seats damaged the independent movement of the Bahujan Samaj. However, Dr.Ambedkar was able to formulate new strategies and tactics to remedy the situation.

Ambedkarism was a dynamic movement as long as he was alive to guide and conduct it. The dynamism was all pervasive and the following two examples will prove the point, he started his publication with “Mooknayak” in 1920, changed to “Bahishkrit Bharat” in 1927 to “Janata” in 1930 and to “Prabhuddha Bharat” in 1955. He founded the Indian Labour Party in 1936, the All India Scheduled Castes Federation in 1942 and contemplated the R.P.I. in 1955-56. This would indicate the Changes to suit the times, but always without losing the spirit of the movement.

⁶⁸ S.K.Biswas, Constitution Review and Disempowerment of the Bahujan, 2002, p-26.

Babasaheb Ambedkar conducted a life long crusade for the emancipation of the Untouchables of India amongst whom he happened to be born. During this process of emancipation, around 1935 he gave a clarion call to the Untouchables and other victims of Brahmanism to uproot the Brahmanism, the spirit of inequality. Thereafter, he started entertaining the dream of 'Prabhuddha Bharat' and worked very hard through out his life for the realization of his dream. He enunciated the steps to be taken to realize his dream of 'Prabhuddha Bharat' at Nagpur on October 14th, 1956. Along with more than a half a million of followers he announced, "*We will raise ourselves. We will raise humanity*". But alas, this was not to happen and he attained Mahaparinirvana leaving the dream to be realized by his lieutenants and followers.

CHAPTER III

THE RISE OF INDEPENDENT BAHUJAN POLITICS AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

A cultural revolt was started in Maharashtra in 1848, which continued till 1956 i.e. for 108 years. From 1848 to 1891 under the leadership of Mahatma Phule, from 1892 to 1922 under the guidance of Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaja and from 1922 to 1956 under the guidance of and leadership of Babasaheb Ambedkar.¹ In the last years of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's life he gave a beginning to two institutions, The Republican Party of India and the Buddhism for the liberation of his people and for welfare of the Country. He had hoped that all of India would become "Prabuddha Bharat" through social transformation.

What made Babasaheb to think, to form a Republican Party of India?

Babasaheb Ambedkar declared the political goal of his struggle. Addressing the large followers he said, on 24th September 1944, at Madras, "Understand our ultimate goal. Our ultimate goal is to become the rulers of this country. Write this goal on the walls of your houses so that you will not forget. Our goal is not for the few jobs and concessions but we have a large goal to achieve. That goal is to become the rulers of this land"². Sharing the political power in terms of equality with other communities ³. And also Babasaheb Ambedkar had a great dream to create a "Prabuddha Bharat". To realize his dream, he struggled throughout his life without losing his confidence.

¹ Dr. S. Mane, *Evolution of Bahujan Samaj Party, Its Rise and Achievements*, A.C.Publications, 2005, p-30

² Ibid., p-4

³ N. Rattu, *Last few years of Ambedkar*, p-93

His struggle was a dynamic movement as long as he was alive to guide and conduct it. The dynamism was all determined and the following example will prove the point, which we already discussed in previous chapter, that is, Babasaheb Ambedkar started his publication with “Mooknayak” in 1920, changed to “Bahishkrit Bharat” in 1927 to “Janata” in 1930 and to “Prabhuddha Bharat” in 1955. He founded the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1936, the All India Scheduled Castes Federation (AISCF) in 1942 and Contemplated the Republican Party of India (R.P.I) in 1955-56. This would indicate the changes to suit the times, but always without loosing the spirit of the movement. ⁴

In the later part of Dr. Babasaheb’s life he realized that the Scheduled Castes Federation had no doubt created among the Scheduled Castes awakening for their rights and principle, self-respect, unity and strength, it also had raised a barricade between them and others classes and that old methods and out look were insufficient with the growing democratic consciousness of the Indian Masses. Accordingly he enunciated new principles of cooperation with all, realizing further that after the independence the Federation had lost its identity and that a broad based Political Party was the immediate need of the idea of dissolving the Federation and form another Political Party viz. ‘Republican Party of India’ to give a national look, open to all, who accepted its three guiding and principles viz. liberty, equality and fraternity. ⁵

According to Babasaheb Ambedkar, Party is like an army. ⁶ It must have

1. A leader who is like a Commander – in Chief,
2. It must have an organization, which includes membership, a ground plan and discipline. Further it must have principles and policy, programs or plan of work. It must have tactics and strategy i.e. it must plan when to do, and how to reach goal.

⁴ Kanshi Ram, *The Chamcha Age: An era of the stooges*, 1982, p-10

⁵ N. Rattu, *Last few years of Ambedkar*, p-45.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p-47

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar therefore, himself prepared the ground plan both of philosophy and the Aims and objects of the Republican Party of India, as set out in the preamble Justice, liberty, equality and fraternity, the attitude of party in public affairs will be governed by the following principles.⁷

1. It will treat all Indians not only as being equal before the law but as being entitled to equality and will accordingly foster equality where it does not exist and uphold it where it is denied,
2. It will regard every Indian as an end in himself with a right to his own development in his own way and the states as only a means to that end,
3. it will sustain the right of every Indian to freedom –Religious, economic and political-subject to such limitations as may arise out of the need for the protection of the interest of other Indians or the State,
4. it will uphold the right of every Indian to equality of opportunity subject to provision that those who have had none in the past shall have priority over those who had,
5. It will keep the state ever aware of its obligations to make every Indian free from want and free from fear,
6. It will insist on the maintaining of liberty, equality and fraternity and will strive for redemption from oppression and exploitation of man by man, of class by class and nation by nation; and
7. It will stand for the Parliamentary system of Government as being the best form of Government both in the interest of public and in the interest of the individual.

But this did not happen. Dr.Ambedkar himself could not really establish the Republican Party of India due to his illness. But, there is a doubt among general readers that Babasaheb Ambedkar launched RPI, which is not a fact. Babasaheb Ambedkar had only planned to launch RPI, but he never launched it ⁸. Ambedkar's followers officially

⁷ Ibid., p-48.

⁸ V. Kumar, *India's Roaring Revolution: Dalit Assertion And New Horizons*, Gagandeep Publications, 2006, p-36.

formed RPI in October 1957, ten months after Ambedkar's death ⁹. But as Dalits think that Ambedkar had launched RPI, this misconception has really kept Dalits emotionally attached to RPI till very recently ¹⁰.

After the death of Babasaheb Ambedkar on 6th December 1956, the leadership crises were aroused due to factionalism among the Ambedkar's followers. RPI leaders lost organic touch with the grassroot reality; especially the Congress alliance appropriated not only the Dalit leaders but also the whole movement. In the 1980s and till the mid-1990s, no RPI candidate could win a single seat ¹¹. The changing socio-economic condition of India forced the young Dalits from Bombay slums to take the issue in their own hands. The abundance of Marathi Dalit Literature further boosted the Dalit assertion and soon another political party with the name Dalit Panthers was launched in 1972 followed by the Black Panthers movement in America. The whole nature of Dalit assertion, for a brief period, moved toward violence and disruption.

The Dalit Panthers movement popularized a new and unified identity for the Dalits ¹². Dalit Panthers movement soon became the victim of struggle among the Dalit leadership themselves who were divided ideologically as some believed in class orientation and hence in Marxism and some were oriented towards caste with Ambedkarism as hub of their mobilization. Further, the Panthers leadership was divided on individual level as well, unable to accept the supremacy of the other leader equal in ranks ¹³.

⁹ C. Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution, The rise of low castes in north Indian politics*, Published by Permanent Black, 2003, Pp-106-107.

¹⁰ V. Kumar, *India's Roaring Revolution: Dalit Assertion And New Horizons*, Gagandeep Publications, 2006, p-37.

¹¹ C. Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution, The rise of low castes in north Indian politics*, Published by Permanent Black, 2003, p-387.

¹² V. Kumar, *India's Roaring Revolution: Dalit Assertion And New Horizons*, Gagandeep Publications, 2006, p-37.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p-38.

Due to these developments, the Dalit Panthers movement got fragmented and lost its impact, RPI had already become inactive as told earlier but the bits and pieces of RPI have made the Dalit assertion further complicated. On the one hand it was RPI and On the other hand it was Dalit Panthers to which Dalit masses were attached in different capacities. There was no empty space where seeds of new movement could be sown. Dalits being emotionally related to Babasaheb's RPI wouldn't allow any other set up emerge. Secondly, whatever space was left further occupied by Dalit Panthers ¹⁴. In this way there was no space available for the new movement especially in Maharashtra and elsewhere in the country, which could emerge independently till the formation of BAMCEF, DS4 and Bahujan Samaj Party. Political assertion which was already present in the form of ILP, AISCF, RPI and Dalit Panthers took a new turn with the mobilization of BSP". This independent assertion gave a new political identity to the Bahujan Samaj in Maharashtra as also in other parts of the Country.

In the last 59 years of Indian Political democracy, the Bahujan Samaj Party has been the first and only the national party of the exploited, neglected and persecuted majority people in India. The Bahujan Samaj. BSP is the only nationwide party, which is founded on the philosophy and struggle of Mahatma Jotiba Phule, Shahuji Maharaj, Narayana Guru, Periyar and Babasaheb Ambedkar. Although it is one of the political parties, essentially it is a part of a broader mass movement for the social transformation in Indian society and economic emancipation of Bahujan Samaj ¹⁵. For many politicians, academicians and others, BSP has been the surprise to Indian politics ¹⁶. But it is today's fact that Bahujan Samaj Party with a deep ideological foundation of Mahatma Phule, Shahuji Maharaj, Narayana Guru, Periyar and Babasaheb Ambedkar, is a social political force at national level and has occupied the central place in Indian politics.

The Bahujan Samaj Party has become the symbol of self-respect for Dalits, Backwards and Minorities in the country. Within brief period, it has become national

¹⁴ Ibid., p-38.

¹⁵ Dr. S. Mane, *Evolution of Bahujan Samaj Party, Its Rise and Achievements*, A.C.Publications, 2005, p-30

¹⁶ Ibid., p-1

party with strong leadership, resource based, cadre-based as well as mass-based,¹⁷ through keeping distance itself from the image of a merely Dalit political party, but has claimed to be the party of Bahujans (Dalits, Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Religious minorities) to carry out countrywide the legacy of Bahujan movement,¹⁸ which was started by Mahatma Jotiba Phule.

How could this happen ? What factors enabled a party that represents the oppressed castes to emerge as major political force in the country? These questions rise in our mind for several reasons. To analyze these questions it is important to know the emergence and development of BSP.

A brief history about Kanshi Ram

Before coming to the emergence and development of BSP, it is wroth to give a brief history and background of BSP founder Kanshi Ram. Kanshi Ram is popularly known as 'Dadasaheb' or 'Mannyavar' among the BSP cadres and bahujan masses. But the origin and social background of Mannyavar Kanshi Ram has somewhat got mystified some people say he is a Civil Servant and so on and so forth. To do away all these mysteries surrounding, BSP's central office released a pamphlet on his life. According to this pamphlet, Kanshi Ram was born on 15 March 1934, in Khawaspur, Roper District, Punjab¹⁹. His father Hari Singh, who belongs to a Ramdasia Sikh (Chamar convert to Sikhism), was in the British Army²⁰. Kanshi Ram completed his early education in his Village Khawaspur later on he completed his B.Sc (Graduation) from Roper District in 1956. In 1957 he qualified a competition for 'Geological Survey of India' (GSI) and went on the training, but he resigned from the job because of the condition of 'service bond'²¹ then he moved to Pune in Maharashtra and joined the Explosive Research and

¹⁷ Ibid., p- (viii)

¹⁸ Ibid., p- 1

¹⁹ Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion And the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh*, Sage Publications, 2002, p-68.

²⁰ V. Kumar, *India's Roaring Revolution: Dalit Assertion And New Horizons*, Gagandeep Publications, 2006, p-115.

²¹ Ibid. p-115.

Development Laboratory at Kirkee, where he was exposed to the bad breath of Hindu social order i.e., terrible Caste System²².

What made Mannayavar Kanshi Ram to revolt against Brahminical social order ?

After joining the Explosive Research and Development Laboratory of Kirkee near Pune as a Chemist, Kanshi Ram faced caste discrimination for the first time,²³ during this period in Maharashtra, particularly in Pune, society was sharply polarized between Dalits leading various types of Ambedkarite organizations, and the upper castes, who remained conservative and Brahminical in outlook²⁴. At that time many young Dalits were constantly discussing the ideas of Mahatma Jotiba Phule and other social reformers. In such kind of atmosphere a particular incident that took place changed Kanshi Ram's life entirely. Explosive Research and Development Laboratory (ERDL) cancelled two holidays, of Ambedkar Jayanti and Buddha Jayanti, and alternate in their place Tilak Jayanti and one additional day for Diwali. A Deena Bhan from Rajasthan, employee in the same organization, who protested against the decision, led to his suspension by the management²⁵ when Kanshi Ram came to know about this incident, he took up the issue and went to the Court, and won the battle. The Court revoked Bhan's suspension and restored the two holidays.²⁶ This assertive personality forced him to resign from the job in 1964, infact he sacrificed his job while fighting for the rights of his colleague²⁷.

After resigning from the Government service Kanshi Ram involved in reading of Dalit literature to discover the root cause of Brahminical social order. In this process, the journey of Kanshi Ram and his movement of socio-cultural revolution and economic emancipation of Bahujan Samaj started from 1964 onwards.

²² Dr. S. Mane, *Evolution of Bahujan Samaj Party, Its Rise and Achievements*, A.C.Publications, 2005, p-2

²³ Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion And the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh*, Sage Publications, 2002, p-87.

²⁴ Ibid., p-87.

²⁵ Ibid., p-87.

²⁶ Ibid., p-87.

²⁷ V. Kumar, *India's Roaring Revolution: Dalit Assertion And New Horizons*, Gagandeep Publications, 2006, p-115.

Indian society is based on a hierarchical Caste System, which is the soul of the Hinduism. Many social saints thought of eradicating the caste system, of these, the prominent are Mahatma Jotiba Phule, Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaja, Periyar and Narayana Guru played major role in the in eradicating the Caste System in their respective regions. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Gandhi also differed on their stand regarding the method of Annihilation of Caste and the future role of oppressed classes in India. Ambedkar saw advancement for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in terms of using politics to achieve social and economic emancipation in modern society. Gandhi on the other hand, held more traditional concept of 'varna system', in which Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes remain, as "Harijans" only their unclean work was made honorable.

This differing arguable position helped to shape different identities among the oppressed communities. Dr.Ambedkar's thoughts as reflected in his writings and speeches have significance in tracing the history and growth of social and political thought in India. Therefore his thoughts have assumed more relevance today. Kanshiram took inspiration from Ambedkar's thoughts and innovative ideas by reading "Annihilation of Caste", and he traveled the whole of Maharashtra to explore Ambedkarism. He joined number of organizations prevalent in Maharashtra at that time, such as People's Education Society, Buddha Club, etc. The RPI was the major Dalit political organization in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. However, Kanshiram was not attracted to it, though he worked for four years. He felt it was a stooge of the Congress. Moreover, by the mid- 1960s the RPI was divided into many fractions and was incapable, of any serious political activity. In Maharashtra, the Congress, under Y.B.Chavan, was able to co-opt Dalit leaders, such as Dadasaheb Roopvate and B.C.Kamble, while in U.P. B.P.Mourya were attracted to the radical doctrine of Mrs Indira Gandhi. Nor was Kanshi Ram attracted to the radical Dalit movements emerging in various states, such as the Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra, or the Dalit Sangharsh Samiti in Karnataka²⁸.

²⁸ Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion And the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh*, Sage Publications, 2002, p-88.

In 1971 Kanshi Ram and his colleagues established the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Minorities Employees Welfare Association, which was duly registered under the Poona Charity Commissioner. The primary objective of this organization was, to subject problems of close scrutiny and find out quick and equitable solutions to the problems of injustice and harassment of the Dalit employees in general and the educated employees in particular. Next step in this evolutionary process under his leadership he created an “All India Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation” (BAMCEF), on 6th December 1978, the death anniversary of Ambedkar. This organization was formally launched with a rally at the Boat Club lawns in New Delhi ²⁹. The term ‘backward’ includes the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and the Religious Minorities. The Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes have been suffering for centuries under the social system of India. The Religious Minorities too have become sufferers at the hands of the brahminical oppressors who became the rulers of India after the exit of British in 1947 ³⁰.

²⁹ Ibid., p-88.

³⁰ Gopinath.M, *How to revive the Phule-Ambedkar-Periyar movement in south India?*, 2001, p-1

All India Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation (BAMCEF)

All India Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation (BAMCEF) is an organization of educated employees of oppressed and exploited communities among the Indian society. This organization stands for a purposeful social cause and it is a movement of the educated employees, by the educated employees but not for the educated employees. And this organization is considered as a Think Tank and a financial bank of the bahun samaj³¹. The main objective of this organization is “Pay back to the Society”. It is a non-religious, non-agitational, non-political organization to uproot Brahminism.

BAMCEF’s ideology is based on the principles of Mahatma Phule, Shahuji Maharaj, Periyar, Narayana Guru and Ambedkar etc. This organization’s major contribution in terms of its goal has been in producing cadre camps to create “Bahujan Activities of Conviction” the members of the group work addressing the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and also Religious Minority masses in the villages, urban localities and in the government offices. Now these organizations have the mass based as well as cadre based activists to take ahead the Caravan of Phule-Ambedkar movement in India. Though, Kanshi Ram established BAMCEF network of the Dalit educated employees first in Maharashtra and adjoining areas i.e., Nagpur, Poona, Jabalpur, Bhopal etc. Later on once he moved to Delhi he extended the network in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh etc³².

³¹ C. Jaffrelot, *India’s Silent Revolution, The rise of low castes in north Indian politics*, Published by Permanent Black, 2003, p-392.

³² V. Kumar, *India’s Roaring Revolution: Dalit Assertion And New Horizons*, Gagandeep Publications, 2006, p-118.

Why Kanshi Ram Started organizing the Educated employees first ?

After the death of Babasaheb Ambedkar in 1956, the employees of Bahujan samaj, enjoying the privilege of reservation all over the country, had forgotten their responsibility of developing their communities by taking ahead the CARAVAN of Ambedkar.

If one asks these employees to pay back to their society they put forth the logic that they got into jobs out of their own labour and efforts, which was really saddening. The second argument is that the reservation quota always remains unfulfilled and those who have already got into the services are posing as deterring agents to others in the society who should rise to the occasion and get hold of such post since lying vacant. This argument is also true but partially. Those, who are already in service and boast of rising to such positions out of their own capability, must also look back into the history of the past thousand of years. Their forefathers were not less capable in any way, but not earn even a class IV job before Phule if not before Dr.Ambedkar. Today we can find a great change all of a sudden. This change has not come automatically. Nor the Gods or the caste Hindu leaders have either generated this. The present, as they enjoy, is out of the sacrifices made by their leaders, who in return expected only one thing from these beneficiaries i.e. to work for their society. To quote Dr.Ambedkar in this context his message as is under:

“Whatever I have done, I have done so after passing through crushing miseries and endless troubles all over my life and fighting with my opponents. With great difficulty I have brought this caravan where it is seen today. Let the caravan march on despite the hurdles that may come its way. If my lieutenants are not able to take the caravan ahead, they should leave it there but under no circumstances should they allow the caravan to go back. This is the message to my people”³³.

This message of Babasaheb Ambedkar, was took to his heart by Kanshi Ram and started educating the miss guided employees of Bahujan samaj through BAMCEF.

³³ M. Chand, *The Bahujan and their Movement*, Bahujan Publication Trust, 1992, p-64.

The main objectives of BAMCEF ³⁴

- To provide hope and help to once own downtrodden society, which has been, made to feel as hopeless and helpless through the centuries old tyrannies committed on it by the exploiters and oppressors in India.
- To build, lay and strengthen the non-political roots of the oppressed and strengthen the non-political roots of the oppressed and exploited society in the fields of social, economic, educational, cultural, scientific, trade, commerce and industry which have been completely destroyed by the tyrant class.
- To become a perennial source of inspiration for the oppressed and exploited society by way of developing moral values for self and by exhibiting those values to the society as a model.
- To create capable, committed and genuine leadership.
- To generate, develop and operate direction centers to guide the oppressed and exploited society.
- To develop and provide resources and skills to the society for its amelioration.

BAMCEF is a humane organization engaged with missionary work, to bring complete social and Cultural Revolution in this land of disparity. It is through its objectives that BAMCEF foresees the accomplishment of such a revolution. It has got its root in the concept of payback to the society.

Many people among the oppressed and exploited society become stunned, while looking at all these, and inspired by the valuable services and the remarkable techniques adopted by BAMCEF. They started feeling that warning given by Babasaheb Ambedkar to the educated employees during his last days has borne fruits. This realization has brought educated employees under the banner of BAMCEF by giving a jolt to their mind. BAMCEF, which is functioning under the Civil Services Conduct Rules, did a miracle job by departing from the stereotype thinking of the general people of Bahujan CARAVAN and by sincerely paying back to the society.

³⁴ Ibid., Pp-93-94

One of the most important programs organized by BAMCEF during this period was 'Ambedkar's Mela on Wheels'. This was an oral and pictorial account of Ambedkar's life and views, together with contemporary material on oppression, atrocities and poverty of Dalits. Between April and June 1980, the show was taken to thirty-four destinations of nine states of the north. Dalits and backwards were moved by watching and listening to the extent of exploitation and oppression of the Dalits. This programme helped BAMCEF to mobilize other sections of the society different from employees³⁵. But, the members of BAMCEF being government employees were governed by Civil Services Conduct Rule and hence could not enter in political activities.

Kanshi Ram was very much aware that as the influence of BAMCEF will grow the government of the day will not spare its members and can penalize by transferring them to remote places or by suspending them from the service. Therefore, he along with the other members decided not to get the organization formally registered and kept the organization without any formal structure³⁶. But BAMCEF got fragmented within the six years of its establishment when Kanshi Ram launched BSP in the year 1984 though its formal division can be ascertained with the formal registration of another faction in the year 1987 with the Registrar of Societies, Delhi under registration No 17809³⁷. Since then one group of BAMCEF that was associated with Kanshi Ram was converted into a shadow organization helping BSP in electoral mobilization for the party³⁸. Dr. Vivek Kumar argues that: Sudha Pai, missed the point when she claims that the BAMCEF was a 'shadow' organization since its inception. Though the fact is BAMCEF became shadow organization after the formation of BSP with a deliberate attempt of Kanshi Ram who was by then more interested in party politics. But he also knew the importance of BAMCEF, as it was the main stay of his movement in terms of, 'Man, Money, and Mind

³⁵ V. Kumar and Uday Sinha, *Dalit Assertion And Bahujan Samaj Party: A Perspective from below*, Bahujan Sahitya Sansthan, 2001, Pp-58-59.

³⁶ V. Kumar, *India's Roaring Revolution: Dalit Assertion And New Horizons*, Gagandeep Publications, 2006, p-119.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p-120.

³⁸ Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion And the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh*, Sage Publications, 2002, p-106.

power’³⁹. But, the leaders of BAMCEF were, handicapped of a political forum, which could mobilize other sections of the society for other issues of the Dalits and could take direct actions such as demonstrations,⁴⁰ to fill this gap, DS-4 was formed.

Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti (DS-4)

The need of a broad base socio-political platform, which can easily include and mobilize other sections of society besides employees gave birth to another organization, ‘Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti’ i.e., DS4 was established on 6th December 1981. The main aim of this organization was to highlight the injustice meted out the Bahujan Samaj⁴¹. Under this banner Kanshi Ram organized many programmes carefully, ‘Poona Pact Denunciation Programme’, ‘Social Action for Equality and Self-respect’, ‘Bariely March against the liquor sellers’ were some of the important programmes organized⁴². And under the leadership of Kanshi Ram the programme of ‘Miracle of Two Feet and Two Wheels’ started a ‘Cycle March’ on 15th March 1983 with 100members and covered a distance of 3000 kilometers within a period of 40 days. During this period the members of the march passed through 53 important centers of the country in seven states telling the masses about their programmes and listening to their grievances. After covering 3000 km by cycle the rally covered 300 kilometers on foot around Delhi. The objective of their programmes was to educate masses. In the words of Kanshi Ram, “85 per cent of the oppressed and exploited people that Dr.Ambedkar nourished for years and built up their movement have today become the tools in the hands of the ruling class. Their habits have been so spoiled that they never feel shame when others use them. Whenever rallies are organized by political parties to show their strength, these poor SC/ST, OBC and Minority people rush to strengthen the hands of their oppressor and exploiters. They neither feel shame for it nor do they think what harm they are doing to their own”⁴³.

³⁹ V. Kumar, *India's Roaring Revolution: Dalit Assertion And New Horizons*, Gagandeep Publications, 2006, p-120.

⁴⁰ V. Kumar and Uday Sinha, *Dalit Assertion And Bahujan Samaj Party: A Perspective from below*, Bahujan Sahitya Sansthan, 2001, p-59.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p-60.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p-61.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Pp-60-61.

Another significant programme of DS-4, 'Peoples Parliament' to hear the voices and problems of the people oppressed which are neither raised effectively nor heard. Therefore, it was an opportunity for Dalits, who cannot enter in to the parliament to raise their problems and sufferings through this program. On 14th October 1982 at the lawns of Boat club in New Delhi the formation of people's Parliament was announced. The 1st session of 'People's Parliament' entitled as "The experimental session" was organized on 25th December in 1982 at the constitutional Club Lawns. According to Kanshi Ram, "People's Parliament will provide them the opportunity for debate and discussion on their burning problems which are side tracked in the National Parliament. Such a debate and discussion if conducted on the large scale over the length and breath of the vast country can definitely influence the National Parliament. Besides such a debate by People's Parliament without any power will be a constant reminder for the oppressed and exploited masses to make the National Parliament a truly representative one as early as possible" ⁴⁴.

The Rise of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and its leadership

Soon after independence, the Constitutional revolution sought to buildup a new social order with dynamic changes in the Indian society through democratic means. Democratically elected governments were left with the responsibility to achieve the unfinished agenda of social revolution or social Democracy as emphasized by Constitution's architect Babasaheb Ambedkar in his last speech in the Constituent assembly ⁴⁵. It is today's fact that Bahujan Samaj Party with a deep ideological foundation of Mahatma Phule, Shahuji Maharaj, Periyar, Narayana Guru and Babasaheb Ambedkar, is a social-political force at national level and has occupied the central place in Indian politics. Definitely this journey is of a super strategy masterminded by BSP leadership. The Bahujan Samaj Party has become the symbol of self-respect of Dalits, Backwards and Minorities in the country. Within a brief period, it has become third National Political Party with strong leadership, resource based, cadre-based as well as

⁴⁴ Ibid., p-62.

⁴⁵ Dr. S. Mane, *Evolution of Bahujan Samaj Party, Its Rise and Achievements*, A.C.Publications, 2005, p-(vi)

mass-based ⁴⁶. The DS-4 launched a similar but bigger movement. From then on processions of cyclists started from five peripheral provinces of India to converge in Delhi. This 100 day-campaign included 7,000 meetings, which were held all over India and was concluded in Delhi with a huge gathering out of which emerged the Bahujan Samaj Party ⁴⁷. The groundwork had done by Kanshi Ram through BAMCEF, DS-4 and Media 'The oppressed Indian', 'Bahujan Times', 'Bahujan Sanghatak' etc, gave him ample mass base to launch a full-fledged political party. Therefore on 14th April 1984 on Babasaheb Ambedkar's 83rd birth anniversary Kanshi Ram, formed Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and made a blue elephant, as a symbol of the Bahujan Samaj Party. And the BSP held its first political convention outside the Red Fort in Delhi in the end of June, and launched an All India Political Action campaign in August in the same year ⁴⁸.

Several years before the formation of the BSP, Ms. Mayawati, a Scheduled Caste Schoolteacher from the District of Bulandshahar, in western Uttar Pradesh, after facing caste discrimination in her home village, started to read Ambedkar's books and subsequently began to take part in the University of Delhi in 1977, she came in contact with Kanshi Ram and was gradually drawn into his political activities. Mayawati joined the BAMCEF, and when the BSP was formed in 1984, she left the position as a schoolteacher and became a full-time political activist for the BSP, ⁴⁹ and she was one of the first candidates to be filed when the BSP began to contest elections in Uttar Pradesh in the middle of the 1984 Parliamentary elections and in the 1985 assembly elections. Mayawati contested from the constituency of Bijnor in western Uttar Pradesh in 1985, but she lost, ⁵⁰ because Congress Party played a political game through making contest Meira Kumar, daughter of the Scheduled caste leader Jagjivan Ram, ⁵¹ whom Babasaheb Ambedkar branded as Stooges of the Congress.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p-(viii)

⁴⁷ C. Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution, The rise of low castes in north Indian politics*, Published by Permanent Black, 2003, p-395.

⁴⁸ M. Inkinen, *Mobilising the Lower Castes: The Rise of Bahujan Samaj Party in India*, Upsala Publication, 2003, p-47.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p-47

⁵⁰ Ibid. p-47.

⁵¹ Ibid. p-47

When BSP entered the electoral arena, immediately it targeted the Congress party as its main, historical enemy. Kanshi Ram even considered that his party had to contest elections because of the Congress attitude to the Scheduled Castes. On the eve of the 50th anniversary of the 1932 Poona Pact, which the Congress was about to celebrate with great pomp, Kanshi Ram published a booklet, “The Chamcha Age”, when he denounced this “agreement” as sealing the political fate of the Scheduled Castes. He argued that the system of reserved seats that had been forced on Ambedkar—who favored a system of separate electorates—had helped the high castes to dominate Congress and to co-opt Dalit candidates who were mere sycophants (Chamchas) or yes – men (Ji huzuri) since the Scheduled Castes did not form a majority in a single reserved constituency. Facing such a situation, the BSP had to contest elections. It was the only way out since ‘A tool, an agent, a stooge or Chamcha is created to oppose the real, the genuine fighter’.⁵²

Over the following years, the BSP increased its campaigning in Uttar Pradesh. The party also carried out a one-year long campaign against ‘untouchability, inhumanity, injustices, insecurity and inequality’, which included cycle marches all over India. Another one-year campaign for social transformation was conducted between 1988 and 1989, with cycle marches going from five different states in North India to Delhi. The BSP also organized several conferences about the position of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Castes and Religious Minorities⁵³. And in the 1989 parliamentary elections, Mayawati again contested from Bijnor and won. She became the first BSP representative to become a Member of Parliament⁵⁴. The electoral performance of the BSP in Uttar Pradesh since 1989 cannot be characterized as anything less than a tremendous success. The party has in only 15 years, emerged as one of the most prominent parties in the state, with 23 per cent of the votes and 98 out of the 402

⁵² C. Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution, The rise of low castes in north Indian politics*, Published by Permanent Black, 2003, p-395.

⁵³ M. Inkinen, *Mobilising the Lower Castes: The Rise of Bahujan Samaj Party in India*, Upsala Publication, 2003, p-47.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p-47.

assembly seats and in the 2002 assembly elections, ⁵⁵ and 24.12 per cent of the votes and 19 out of 80 parliamentary seats.

The success of the independent bahujan politics, stands out as particularly remarkable, if one who considers the fact that represents the Scheduled Castes has never been able to reach such an influential position before, either in Uttar Pradesh or in any other states, now the growth of the BSP enabled the party to obtain from the Election Commission the status of a national party after the 1996 elections. This growth chiefly resulted from Kanshi Ram's long-term efforts to get the bahujan samaj organized, ⁵⁶ to fulfill the dreams of Babasaheb Ambedkar through playing independent politics in Indian Politics.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p-47.

⁵⁶ C. Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution, The rise of low castes in north Indian politics*, Published by Permanent Black, 2003, p-395.

CONCLUSION

There are many studies of caste and caste movements. These movements are almost described either in isolation or with a conservative emphasis, focusing on status-uplift “Sanskritization” and emulation of higher castes as the primary aspect of lower caste activity. The elements of rebellion and opposition to upper caste dominance are neglected. In contrast to this argument, this dissertation focuses on “The Bahujan Movement and its Leadership” particularly in Maharashtra and generally in India.

Indian society is based on a hierarchal caste system having serious repercussions on the society. In History, we find that Gautama Buddha revolted against it and found a movement of social revolution. The philosophy of Buddha has given dignity to human life with the principle of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Therefore, Buddha got large support from the people against the Varna system. Buddha was the first person to revolt and challenge the ideology based on Varna system, which believes in the principle of opposition to Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. This revolt of Buddha against the caste system had created problem to the alien Brahmins (Aryans) who came from Central Asia as nomads in search of greener pastures turning themselves to a priestly class. Gradually, many Brahmins entered into the army of King Brihadratha Mourya who was the grandson of Samrat Ashoka. Later on, his Senapati Pushyamitra Sunga who was an Aryan Brahmin killed Brihadratha Mourya in 185 B.C. He established the Sunga Kingdom and suggested Sumati Bharghava to write Manusmriti and made it the Constitution of the land under the yoke of Brahmins declaring Brahminism as a state religion. It is on the basis of this Constitution, Brahmins were ruling India for centuries together. Babasaheb Ambedkar corroborates all these facts and truths in his book “*Who were the Shudras?*” “*The Untouchables*”.

Those who did not adhere to the Constitution (Manusmriti) under the region of Pushyamitra Sunga were the indigenous people of India who fought against it for a very long period. In the meanwhile, dis-unity started among them and some of them moved

towards jungle in groups. All those who were living in jungle called themselves as Adivasis (Tribals). Presently, they are Constitutionally recognized as Scheduled Tribes. Those who did not go to the jungle, started living outside villages, because they were already forced to slavery and there was no other source of livelihood. Then they were forced to eat the carrion for their survival and slowly their physical touch was prohibited. Due to this reason, they were called Untouchables, now Constitutionally identified as Scheduled Castes. All those people who surrendered to Pushyamitra Sunga and accepted his decision were given the status of Shudras. Presently they are known as Other Backward Classes.

These Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes, who are now seen as separate and distinct communities made part of one class from historical point of view or these communities formed indigenous people of this Country, who separated in the historical process. When Muslim Kings came to India, they brought their religion with them. Those who were victim of the Brahminical social order started converting themselves to Islam. For about 600 years the Muslims ruled India and people from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Castes were converting themselves to Islam in all these years. Same case is with Britishers also who came to India along with their religion. They defeated Muslims and established themselves as rulers by ending Muslim rule. The victims of Brahminism i.e. The Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Castes, converted themselves to Christianity. In between Muslim and British rule, Sikhism came into existence, many of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Castes converted to Sikhism, especially in North India. As regard to Buddhist conversion also, the same fact applies from the historical point of view the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Castes and majority of the Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Buddhist converts are part of one society i.e., Bahujan Samaj who constitute 85% of the Indian population.

Mahatma Jotiba Phule was the first person to initiate unity among these divided, oppressed and exploited masses, and gave a term called 'Bahujan', in modern times after Buddha. He has been acknowledged as the father of Indian Social transformation, for the

great service he rendered to the uplift of the oppressed and exploited masses under one platform called “Bahujan Samaj”. He wanted to build an alliance of Shudras and Ati-shudras (Bahujans) to face the menace of the modern Shetji-Bhatji (Marchant-Brahmin priest) combine. Later on, Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj and Babasaheb Ambedkar directed a life long crusade against Brahminism and put forward the concept of ‘Bahujan Hitaya, Bahujan Sukhaya’ on a proper and superior basis. During the last few decades the concept and name of Bahujan had been defamed and misused. But that does not mean it cannot be differently and properly used.

Mahatma Jotiba Phule, Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj and Babasaheb Ambedkar were the main leaders who gave birth to the Bahujan Movement in Maharashtra by challenging the Brahminical Social Order from 1848 onwards to define the Indian society and the Bahujan Samaj. These great leaders strived throughout their life to instill a sense of self-respect and new identity among indigenous people of India. If Mahatma Jotiba Phule’s movement would not rise and challenge the Brahminical Social Order, the history of Brahminism could have followed the same legacy of Manusmriti, the Constitution of Brahminism. The emergence and rise of Satyashodhak Samaj and its attack on Brahminism was a great blow to Brahminical leadership in India.

Why Mahatma Jotiba Phule, Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaja and Babasaheb Ambedkar gave primary importance to education? So many reasons could be attributed for this. I would like to point out some important reasons to it.

- Firstly, education gives a new vision to the life. And this vision makes people to analyze their present life and status. If they feel their life is inferior, they start thinking of a change, and dream for a new way of life, which won’t make their life inferior. It is proved by the lives led by Mahatma Jotiba Phule and Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaja.
- Secondly, education enables the oppressed to investigate as to how the system of inequality has been created and perpetuated and who are its masterminds. Intellectuals can play major role analyzing all these questions through producing

critical study. Such an experience could be testified by Babasaheb Ambedkar's life and struggle.

- Thirdly, intellectuals from among the oppressed can build an organization to change the age old exploitative system and create a new system, because intellectuals possess the means, i.e., talent, time and treasury (T3) to achieve the liberative end.

Taking stock of the Bahujan movement starting from Mahatma Jotiba Phule (1848 to 1890), Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaja (1874 to 1922), and Babasaheb Ambedkar (1920 to 1956), and presently, with, Kanshi Ram and Mayawati, one can say that the movement has produced not only intellectuals but also committed and dedicated leaders to effect social transformation in the Indian society.

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