

**CASTE DISCOURSE IN COLONIAL
MAHARASHTRA:**

THE LAST PHASE OF NINETEENTH CENTURY

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CERTIFICATE

This is Certified that the dissertation titled “Caste Discourse in Colonial Maharashtra: The last Phase of Nineteenth Century”, submitted is the original work by Santosh Pandhari Suradkar in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of the Master of Philosophy. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree to this University or to any other University to the best of our knowledge.

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*Dedicated to my
Mother and father*

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In Indian society, the caste plays a major role in social, political and economic exploitation. To understand this caste exploitation and evils of social system in Maharashtra, a newly educated middle class started to analyze the side effects of caste system in the nineteenth century. We witness the unabated discrimination in the name of caste even in the twenty first century throughout the country. Therefore, here it seems quite imperative to understand the problems of the caste system from different perspectives. An analytical study of the caste system gathered momentum in the nineteenth century colonial India and prominently in Maharashtra, which was at the forefront in this regard.

In fact, while going through the rational anti-caste tradition in Maharashtra, I was inspired with this and decided to take up this subject for my M. Phil programme. Moreover, it is personal urge to work for the annihilation of the caste system that motivated me tremendously to undertake this study. Therefore, first, I would like to express my sense of gratitude towards Dr. Umesh Bagade whose seminal work on the caste system provided me with some useful insights, which do reflect in my work.

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CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

'Caste system' is a unique and a complex structure of Indian society that naturally accrues characteristics like inequality, hierarchy, discrimination and endogamy on those who are subjected to it. Caste is fundamentally a holistic, hierarchical system which views the person not as an individual but as a functioning part of an interdependent system who helps to maintain that system by following the *dharma*, or duty, that birth has assigned to him.¹ At first instance, it may look like a simple 'division of labour', but with a critical analysis, one comes to know that it is the 'division of labourers' in that it determines one's social standing based on ascription. Caste is not merely a principle of social division, but a comprehensive system of life dealing with food, marriage, education, association and worship². Caste is divided into various sub castes and thus, the Indian society is a conglomeration of various castes and sub-castes having their own culture, traditions and hierarchies. Therefore, it is interesting to observe Indian social map in thousands of castes that further are divided into many more sub-castes.

One of the significant features of caste system is the notion and practice of hierarchy. Purity and impurity of a caste is decided by its position in the social ladder and the social status and occupation is fixed accordingly. According to the Hindu scriptures, one cannot change one's caste-based occupation. And this kind of social stratification was to prevail for thousands of years until the advent of Britishers in India. The Raj's subsequent policies rooted in its colonial modernity were to have a substantial influence eventually leading to flexing of rigid caste features within the Hindu social order. Despite this, for instance, even after the change in hereditary occupations, most of the castes had to hang on to their social status. And therefore, it is important to note that caste in historical sense had conveniently adjusted with social order of the time by providing flexibility to it by limited social mobility. But this flexibility had its limitations, and these limitations were certainly regulated by the

¹ Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt In A Colonial Society, The Non-Brahmin Movement in Western In India 1873-1930*, Scientist Socialist Education Trust, Bombay, 1976, p. 36.

² K.M.Pannikar, '*Caste and Democracy*', Critical quest

hierarchical structure of the caste system. In the Colonial India, caste system accepted modernity in traditional form and tradition got new modern face.

In politics, caste consciousness played a great role in the mobilization of the masses. Caste influence became more pressing and relevant economic and political spheres. Since ancient time in the Indian history, there existed a bifurcated society. One being the oppressor and another being oppressed. This struggle was between Brahmins, the oppressors, highest in the caste hierarchy and non-Brahmins, the oppressed masses. In the colonial period, these two ideologies became ideological strengths of different reformers. Therefore, while discussing regarding nineteenth century social reformers and their ideas, we must know that it is from the vantage point of these ancient ideologies, they put their ways of reformation forward and justified them.

In the beginning of the 19th century, the Maratha land, ruled by Peshwas (later to be called the Bombay Presidency) witnessed the end of Maratha rule and the establishment of British supremacy. This political transformation had caused an upheaval in the religious, social, cultural and educational life of the population there. In a sense, the collapse of the Maratha rule was inevitable. The Maratha dominance was established in greater part of India in the 18th century. The internal feuding weakened their rule and by the beginning of 19th century, only its formal dissolution remained. The methods adopted by the British to strengthen their control were entirely different from the administrative practices of the previous Peshwa rulers. They were at variance with the local way of life, the educational systems and the judicial practices. In spite, of such adverse conditions, the social reformers boldly asserted that the pace of social reform had to be increased.

We must take into account the social conditions in Maharashtra. All traditions, customs, social dictates and transactions had religious sanction. Age-old traditions were powerful. The highest authority over the scriptures were higher castes who wielded religious power, dictated the rules regarding marriage, social behavior and the caste system. Judicial powers were predominantly in the hands of the higher and moneyed or trading castes. Jems Deglas has argued that before 1818 A.D in Maratha state, there

was no single court to do justice work.³ It is sufficient to say here that, the new democratic setup generated by the social and educational institutions created favorable atmosphere for social reformers to counter inimical social and religious practices that eventually became helpful to fight the dominant castes.

To an extent, one could characterize 19th century India as a period of social discourse. Educated people influenced by the western thought, the middle class in India started a social discourse to question the relevance of the social system that had contradictions per se from the western point of view. Plenty of social reformers in varying degree started questioning untenable aspects of the Hindu social order that included men from both oppressor and oppressed community within the Hindu fold. In comparison to other regions during colonial India, the colonial Maharashtra proved to be the vanguard of movement aiming at social transformation.

Antonio Gramsci has ruled that it is through power through that one class dominates the other. To explain the nature of state, he used two concepts of 'dominance' and 'hegemony'.⁴ In the dominance, state always uses state power, and to get subaltern peoples' consent of other class domination, state uses cultural and ideological hegemony. Through Gramsci's theory we can understand the nature of British state in India. To establish their power they used both ways. The colonial structure has its tendency to acquire benefits by appropriating its society into its structure. Therefore, the British felt the need to mentally prepare the Indian populace to accept their domination as well as to spread Christianity and as a result, some western scholars came out to dig the Indian past.

With the establishment of British suzerainty in the eighteenth century, the rapid acquisition of knowledge of the classical languages of Indian by a few British officials, the need for administrative purposes of knowledge of the structure of Indian society, and the intensification of missionary activities, systematic knowledge of Indian society began to develop very rapidly from 1760 onwards. There major traditions of approach to Indian society could be seen by the end of the eighteenth century: the Orientalist, administrative and the missionary. Each had their typical

³ Manohar Kadam, *Narayan Meghaji Lokhande*, Akshar Prakashan, Mumbai. 1996. P.30.

⁴ Umesh Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabhodhan Aani Varga Jati Prabhutva*, Sugava Prakashan, Pune, 2007, p.316.

characteristic views, tied to the kinds of roles which foreign observers played in India and the assumptions which underlay their views of India.⁵

In the last phase of eighteenth century, Charles Wilkins and William Johns had translated some oriental classic texts into English such as Shakuntala, Rutusanhar, Bhagwad Geeta, Manusmruti, etc. and created interest among Europeans.⁶ Orientalists started to study about Indian history and culture. They translated Vedas, Upanishads, Brahmin texts, Puranas into English. Orientalists collected information from ancient Brahminical texts and seem to have been convinced that the texts were indeed accurate guides to the culture and society of the Hindus.⁷ While they collected these sources, they could not understand the role of other religions like Buddhism and Jainism. They considered Buddhism and Jainism to be the parts of Hindu religion. These Orientalists understood that the Aryan Vedic Brahmin tradition is the mean tradition in Indian cultural history.⁸

In the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries played a significant role in the domain of social reforms. To spread Christianity, missionaries started to criticize the Hindu religion; and in their criticism, caste system was their focus of attention. They started to convince people into their religion in fairs (melas), weekly markets and public places.

Through the refutation of Hindu religion on the basis of values of modernity, a period of religious reforms arrived in colonial period. In colonial Maharashtra, reformers and orthodox conservatives became part of this analytical discourse, which was started by Orientalists. Both the Orientalists and missionary groups essentially accepted the Brahminical theory of the four Varnas. Neither group related what they must have known was the structure of the society on the ground of their knowledge of the society derived from textual study and discussions with learned Brahmans. They called these as traditions and other religions like Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism in the Hindu religion

⁵ Bernard S. Cohen, *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, Aldine Publishing Company / Chicago, 1968. p. 6.

⁶ Nalini Pandit, *Maharashtratil Rashtrowadacha Vikas*, Mumbai, 1955, p.37.

⁷ Bernard S. Cohen, *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, Aldine Publishing Company / Chicago, 1968. p.7.

⁸ Umesh Bagade, *Phule-Ambedkarancha Rashtrawad*, Krantijoti Sawitribai Phule Prakashan, 2002, p.4.

as part of it. Through their study of ancient India, conservatives were giving importance to the old Indian traditions, and assuming its antiquity, started to search the roots of European civilizations in ancient Indian literature.⁹ On the other, the missionaries came out refuting Hindu caste system, and did establish through a comparative critical analysis the essence of caste system anchored in Hindu-Brahminism as non-humanitarian.

Indeed, it was a period of crisis for Indian tradition and caste system in the face of modernity. Nevertheless, modernity could not destroy the caste system, and caste still played a major role in the colonial society. As a reaction to the attack on Hinduism, some orthodox middle-class intellectual reformers came out responding to the Orientalists. 1850 Onwards social reform movement took wider space in colonial Maharashtra. Many reformers spoke vehemently on the oppressive structure of the caste system. Some of the significant names were Dadoba Pandurang, Lokhitwadi Gopal Hari Deshamukha, Balshastri Jambhekar, Mahatma Phule, Vishnubava Brahamachari, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, Lokmanya B G Tilak, Ramkrushna Gopal Bhandarkar and Mahadeva Govind Ranade. Among them reformers like Dadoba Pandurang started 'Paramhansa Sabha', Mahatma Phule established 'Satyashodhak Samaj', Ranade and Bhandarkar started 'Prarthana Sabha'.

All these reformers were influenced by deism, which they got from Orientalist ideology, because most of the Orientalists were influenced by enlightenment era and especially by deism. With the help of the deist principle, the Orientalists undertook a critical analysis of the Hindu religion. The Orientalists accepted Sanskrit texts as a means to study the caste system. New middle class was greatly influenced by western worldview of liberalism and through these values; they started to reexamine the Hindu religion. And this they did from the perspective of European class society.

Those who were English educated, had the feeling that their social condition was not praiseworthy. There were so many faults created from thousands of years, and there was genuine desire to reform the society. These intellectuals strongly felt a need to live proudly, by giving up the social evils that harmed the society. Through

⁹ Umesh Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabhodhan Aani Varga Jati Prabhutva*, Sugava Prakashan, Pune, 2007, p.41.

this approach, new educated people started promoting ideas of social reforms.¹⁰ Due to Orientalists' rational argument, newly emerged middle class felt that the evil of caste should be exorcised. Also this new middle class was greatly influenced by materialistic changes around it, and realized it was time for social reform. Among these newly emerging middle class, some non-Brahmin intelligentsia entered into the public sphere and debated on the issues related to the caste, hierarchy and modernity. Some of them entered into the social battlefield. While these people were talking on the reform simultaneously, some orthodox people went the other way defending their past Brahminical culture. In this way, social discourse was started in colonial Maharashtra. Here we can categorize these reformers on their ideological basis in three parts; reformist, orthodox and anti-caste ideology.

This discourse emanated from issues like widow-Remarriage, child marriage, Sati system and women's education. To resolve this problem, they took support of the Brahminical text. Although the religious sources were same, yet their interpretations of religious text were different. In this way tradition of caste analysis started from Dadoba Pandurang, Lokhitwadi, and Rajaram Shastri Bhagwat. They did not only see caste as an obstacle in the path to social progress, but they also attacked on caste distinctions.

Terms such as 'Social reform' and 'social change' were entirely different but most of the scholars used these terms synonymously. The assumption of similarity of terms by the scholars was very problematic. Reform has its own limitations, as it tends to reform only from within the basic structure. Reform movements did not touch the fundamental social values and culture. Contrarily, social change was supposed to break old traditional values and social system. In colonial Maharashtra, some movements stood for social reform and some for social change.

However, the starting of these social movements was preceded by the new scientific knowledge as earlier mentioned that had already penetrated Maharashtrian consciousness. These various social reform movements in the last phase of the 19th century were characterized as the period of enlightenment in Maharashtra. Huge academic writings by western scholars on the caste system had arrived which primarily catered to the Indian middle class beginning from the late nineteenth century and early

¹⁰ N R Phatak, *Mahadeva Govind Ranade*, Mumbai, 1924, p.92.

twentieth century. Among them, Sir Denzel Ebbetson, Herbert Risley, Nessfield and Senart were important writers who provided good analytical approach about caste.¹¹

Reformers like Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, M G. Ranade, B.J. Tilak, and R G Bhandarkar started to talk on social problems, but their point of views and perspectives along with methods employed to see effective changes differed. In the modern times, there were leaders who started raising question on various social evils. Phule was one of the non-Brahmin social transformers; he was struggling for the cause of Shudras and Ati-Shudras.

Period of Study

I have chosen the period of my study covering more or less the last phase of nineteenth century in colonial Maharashtra. The purpose behind choosing this period is to explore wide caste-discourses of the time. In this period, there were many reformers who started to raise questions in many ways. At that time, all social and religious problems were brought to the forefront in their discourse. Caste issue assumed a significant place, and interpretation of caste system was entirely different from each other and this got intensified during the late nineteenth century.

While the caste discourse was on its peak, it was accompanied by an emerging national movement. Moderate nationalist ideology promoted by M G Ranade became the ideology of the Indian National Congress in its beginning. Simultaneously, the ultra nationalist ideology was promoted and was passionately bolstered by Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Due to missionaries' criticism, British colonial policy and social reform movement, caste was taken as an issue to be dealt with in order to widen the social base of the freedom struggle. Also so many ideologies were emerging with a critical outlook to each other. To understand the dynamics of Indian caste system, it is very important to know these wide ranging caste ideologies.

What is obviously necessary, therefore, is to understand the Maharashtrian ideological difference of opinions vis-à-vis caste question. These reformers used different means and ways to spread out their message that included different forms of

¹¹ Yashwant Suman, *Maharashtratil Jatisanstha Vishayak Vichar*, Pratima Prakashan, Pune, 1988. p.13.

media such as newspapers and Jatha (Theater). Many of their messages were accompanied by western thought and analogies. Such a campaigning led to a broad awakening of peoples' minds in Maharashtra, resulting in the discussion of the social problems even at the level of masses, which instilled among them a radical sense of social introspection. Therefore, the second half of the 19th century in Maharashtra could be characterized as an age of initiation of the masses to the ideas of democracy, liberty, equality, fraternity etc. This brought the masses especially exploited, under various ideological leanings to demand for social change that would restore those lost human rights. In this context, my purpose is to analyze the role and contributions of reformers to understand caste problem, therefore, the choosing of this period.

Objectives of the Study

- To know the difference between Nationalist ideology and Non-Brahmin ideology towards the issue of caste.
- To know the impact and importance of caste discourse in colonial Maharashtra, as to how and why various ideologies dealt with this problem.
- To know the trajectory of the various emerging ideologies in colonial Maharashtra and the attendant differences about social change.
- To understand the various ways of social emancipation. In addition, how the reformers perceived the caste problem during the emancipatory process.
- To understand the reasons for the failure of new social elite to mask its real face in colonial Maharashtra.
- To probe into the social conscience of the new intellectual middle class of the time and their contribution to terminate caste.
- Finally, to understand the dynamics of caste system with respect to modernity.

Methodology

My dissertation pursues the exercise at hand from the frameworks of historical and theoretical perspective. Present research has its base in primary sources all of which is available in Marathi language. Much of the source comes from the original writings and speeches of reformers published by the Maharashtra government and some private

publications. Also includes contemporary journals and newspapers available in Teen Murti Library. To understand different reformers' views on caste, I have referred samagra vangmaya (whole literature) as primary source. As secondary resources, I have used books mostly in Marathi language published by various publications in Maharashtra. I have used some English books relating to the reform movement as well. Some research journals and articles have tremendously helped me.

For the present research, I also used other primary and secondary sources, archival records, private papers, autobiographies, memoirs, letters, newspapers and journals. Sources relating to the study were collected from the Maharashtra state archives, Mumbai University of Mumbai, Jawaharlal Nehru National Museum and Library New Delhi, National archives of India, New Delhi, Ferguson Library, Pune and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada university library, Maharashtra.

Chapterisation of the study

1] Caste in Nationalist Ideology.

In the last phase of nineteenth century, in Maharashtra, there were three major Nationalist pioneer reformers, who talked on caste issues; were B G Tilak, M G Ranade and R G Bhandarkar. Bhandarkar and Ranade were influenced by western liberalism. Bhandarkar was an indologist; under influence of Orientalism and deism, he explained the nature of the caste system. Deism and Bhakti movement also influenced Ranade. Through this ideology, he tried to understand caste problem.

This chapter seeks to understand, various ways and reasons used to understand old ideas of caste system by the nationalist reformers. An effort is made to try understanding, how they related caste problem with nationalism. With this, there is also an attempt to focus on their basic idea about origin of caste and how they related caste distinctions with social problems. Therefore, it becomes thoroughly important to understand that while they were trying to build up nationalism among Maharashtrians; the ideological basis they were creating national feeling differed diametrically.

In Indian caste system, purity and impurity are the values of hierarchical social system; hereditary occupations are very much dependent on this notion. Therefore, it

is important for one to examine the various ideas of Bhandarkar, Tilak and Ranade, on the concept of purity and impurity.

During the emergence of nationalism in colonial Maharashtra, caste discourse played a significant role to shape the idea of nation and nationalism. Thus, there is an attempt to explore, how this discourse left its impact on nationalist ideology. Bhandarkar was closely associated with the “Prarthana Samaj” a religious reformist organization. He believed that social reform should proceed with political reforms and throughout his long life; he upheld the cause of social reform. Tilak used Ancient symbols to build up nationalism. While talking on nation and nationalism, he had taken notice of Indian caste system. Effort is made to find out his view on Indian culture and caste system.

2] Non-Brahmin Ideology on Caste.

In this chapter, focusing is only on Mahatma Jotirao Govindrao Phule. The reason for doing so is due to the prominent role he has played in giving birth to anti-caste ideology in the colonial Maharashtra. In addition, Mahatma Phule’s influence on Satyashodhak movement was immense. Even though there were differences among non-Brahmin leaders regarding basic ways to deal with caste problem, ideological base remained the same. It is also easy to distinguish nationalist ideology and non-Brahmin ideology.

Since ancient times, there have been many numbers of anti-caste struggles taking place in India. During colonial period, social reforms gave rise to anti-caste tradition. Mahatma Phule subscribed to these anti-caste analytical approaches. This chapter analyzes as to how Mahatma Phule took ideological support from these anti-caste ideologies. And how he developed his ideology and what were the ideological differences between previous anti-caste ideologies and Phule’s ideology. Here it has been tried to understand his insight on social exploitation, the role played by the caste system. Women’s issue was also part of Phule’s concern. He started women school and spoke vigorously on women’s exploitation. The study also includes Phule’s views on patriarchal caste system. While Phule criticized Hindu rituals, he was also trying to build an alternative culture to Hindu culture. Attention is paid to Phule’s role to

awaken Shudras and Ati-Shudras, and how he was trying to form new identity of Shudras and Ati-Shudras.

Phule was also influenced by revolutionary liberal idea, and he took support of liberal idea to understand caste problem. Phule relates this liberal idea with caste issue. In this discussion, center of focus is on Phule's idea on caste, which gives new perspective to understand origin of caste system and its impact on society.

3] Idea of Emancipation and Discourse on Caste.

Nineteenth century reformers were influenced by liberalism. It is on the basis of the liberal values, that they started to analyze Hindu culture and society. In liberal values, they emphasized on natural rights, individuality. This chapter will search for how these Maharashtrian reformers used these liberal values for social reform. In addition, when they were talking on individuality, they had to relate it with caste problem, for caste system did not allow individual freedom.

The chapter further includes all social issues like women's problem, idea on education, means, and sources to relate the idea of emancipation. Here there is a searching of their definition of social emancipation, ideal society. However, while they were contemplating on social emancipation, my interest is to know how, they did relate caste system with idea of emancipation. Nationalist reformers and Non-Brahmin reformers mostly talked on women's problem like child marriage, women education, widow remarriage, and sati system. While they were talking on these issues, what was their idea on patriarchic caste system? In this chapter undertakes a comparative study among all reformers on their caste view, and attempts to distinguish among multiple viewpoints on caste. Simultaneously, the chapter focuses on the then, newly emerging middle class, and takes note of their contribution in people's upliftment and their approach towards western thought. However, in this chapter I am comparing Gopal Ganesh Agarkar with the nationalist ideology. It would be extremely helpful to recognize Agarkar's different understanding of caste and social order.

CHAPTER-II
CASTE IN NATIONALIST
IDEOLOGY

CHAPTER-II

CASTE IN NATIONALIST IDEOLOGY

In the late nineteenth century, some of the newly educated Indians started criticising the British policy. Their main argument was that the British government was exploiting Indians and that colonial policy was responsible for backwardness. Along with this concern, they dealt with social issues also. Some social reformers realised that to arouse a sense of nationalism among the people and involve them in the process of nation building one has to take care of the prevalent insidious social problems of the land. The Orientalists supplemented similar viewpoint, that the knowledge body existing in India had more to do with religion rather than being scientific and it was “white man’s burden” to uplift Indians was borrowed by the educated Indians. In a bid to reply to this criticism some nationalist leaders ventured out to get inspiration from the past. Some of the nationalist reformers realised that social backwardness had to be addressed and they started to awaken people through various social organisations.

This social and political issue were taken up simultaneously in the fag end of the nineteenth century. As far as social reforms went the caste issue took the centre-stage in this discourse. Many of the nationalist leaders were of the view that caste was a major obstacle in arousing nationalism. Therefore, they took up the question and explored the caste problem and origin of caste and various features of the caste system. Another important development of this period was the emergence of the Indian National Congress.

People like B G Tilak, M G Ranade and R G Bhandarkar, who were in the forefront of the national movement in Maharashtra, gave importance to social issues in their acts and deeds. These three reformers had different and in some cases had same opinions though they were part of the Indian National Congress and the national movement led by Congress. M G Ranade and R G Bhandarkar were moderate nationalists, who believed in progressive social reformism. Tilak was an ultra nationalist; he had different opinions to that of other nationalist leaders dealing with social and political issues.

BHANDARKAR'S IDEA OF CASTE

R G Bhandarkar and M G Ranade with their contemporary friends were the brains behind the founding of 'Prarthana Samaj'. They were members of the newly educated class from Bombay University. These groups were inspired by the working of 'Paramahansa Sabha' and 'Brahmo Samaj'. In 1850, Dadoba Pandurang and his colleagues established the Paramahansa Sabha. Sabha's members were against the caste system. Paramahansa Sabha had certain rules and regulations with respect to membership. For instance, when a new member was admitted, one was made to read a prayer and to eat a piece of bread baked by Indian Christians as an indication that he had given up caste regulations. Also once, in a year or perhaps often, all the members who belonged to different castes should dine together. However, it was an indoor programme, for most of the members were afraid of publicity.

Bhandarkar wrote that he also came under the influence of Paramahansa Sabha when he was a student in 1852. He wrote, "A class fellow of mine who had come under his influence wanted to convert me to the new creed, and use to take me for long walks in the afternoon when he discussed with me the absurdity of caste distinction and their distractive effects on national unity. I was of course intellectually convinced of all this but was not admitted as a member of the body till the beginning of 1853 when I went to Bombay for the prosecution of my studies in the Elphinstone Collage."¹

But the Paramahansa Sabha could not last long because of the disclosure of its members' list by one of its members. As well as, due to their attachment with Vedic culture, they could not strongly attack Varna caste system. As a result this organisation came to an end which made the new intellectual class think about the possible reasons of its demise. Based on the past experiences of Paramahansa Sabha, Prarthana Samaj developed their strategies for social reforms. Bhandarkar wrote, "Some of the members of the Paramahansa society felt that social reform could not have a stable and healthy footing unless based on religious reform. Therefore, they organised the theistic body of the Prarthana Samaj on the model of Calcutta. The

¹ Ramkrushna Gopal Bhandarkar, '*Collected Works of R G Bhandarkar Vol-2*', Ed by The Late Narayan Bapuji Utgikar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, p.480.

guiding principle of this reform was the fatherhood of god and brotherhood of man.”² He says that the attitude of the Prarthana Samajist towards caste was more hostile than that of the old reformers like Buddha and the *Vaisnavas*.

Thus, Bhandarkar led the social reform movement through the Prarthana Samaj. Bhandarkar gave detailed information about the caste system. He showed that how caste emerged in Indian history and what were the reasons for the emergence of new castes. For his writing on caste, he used Sanskrit sources and also some Western literature. During the colonial period, Orientalist writers had put forward the Aryan theory, which Bhandarkar used as a reference to explore the origins of Indian caste system.

ARYAN THEORY

In the nineteenth century, most of the Maharashtrian reformers accepted that the Aryans came from outside and that a battle took place between Aryans and non-Aryans. Bhandarkar wrote that more than four thousand years before Christ, according to the latest researches the Sanskrit speaking people called Aryans migrated into India from the North West. “Their progress at every step was resisted by another race or races which in the *Regveda* are designated by the name of *Dasyu* or *Dasa*. The *Dasyu*'s are contrasted with the Aryas and are represented as people of dark complexion who were unbelievers, i.e., did not worship the gods of the Aryas and perform the sacrifices, but followed another law”.³ He has shown how *Dasyu* people became slaves and were given the lowest identity by the Aryan people. The old word *Dasyu* came to denote a “slave” generally, and the word *Dasyu* acquired the significance of a “robber” as those aborigines who had taken to the mountains fastnesses subsisted on robbery.

According to Bhandarkar Varna system had already existed in Aryan society. But here he distinguished between the previous Arya Varna system and the one which came to exist later. He wrote that there were among the Aryas three social grades or ranks, first Brahmins, second Rajans and third Visas, later a fourth class came into

² *Ibid.*, p.480.

³ *Ibid.*, p.445.

being and were called Sudras.⁴ When Aryan's were in Punjab, they were divided into many tribes, each having a king and families of priests. Further, he mentioned that in the course of time, these grades became hereditary and acquired the nature of castes, and were called Brahmins, Rajanyas, Vaisya, and the fourth class came to be called Sudras. According to Bhandarkar, in the early Vedic period *Varna* system was on the basis of occupation. Through this argument Bhandarkar presented Vedic *Varna* society as an ideal society.

He mentioned that in the Vaidic society the three *Varnas* Brahaman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, did not have social status based on heredity. Anybody could have reached any level of social status. Bhandarkar gives some examples that some non-Brahamana *Varna* Rishi or saints became Brahamana like Kavasa Ailusa and Visvamitra. They were non-Brahmin, but later they reached the level of Brahamana because of their capability. He wrote, "Thus originally, there were these three orders, and as anybody was at liberty to take up any of them that suited his circumstances, the orders were in no sense caste."⁵ He showed that in Aryan society there was individuality, *Varna* society was not based on heredity. He described Aryan *Varna* system as class society.

He mentioned that Aryan people entered India at a comparatively late period during which the aboriginal races had already been formed. Therefore they preserved their own languages and many of the peculiarities of their civilization. For example, that Malayalam, Telugu, Tamil and Kannada belonged to an entirely non-Aryan stock of languages.⁶ He showed that wherever Aryan people had gone they left their influence on the aboriginals.

In the *Rgveda Samhita*, two *Varnas*, which afterwards came to signify a caste are, alluded to the Arya *Varna* i.e., Arya colour or group of men; the *Dasyu* *varna* i.e., *Dasyu* colour or group of men. Later on, there appeared a mention of Brahma, Ksatram and Visas which indicated three occupations, viz., that of priest, rulers and

⁴ *Ibid*, p.446.

⁵ *Ibid*, p.472.

⁶ R G Bhandarkar, *Collected Works of R G Bhandarkar Vol-2*, Ed by The Late Narayan Bapuji Utgikar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune , p.449.

politicians, and the ordinary people.⁷ These occupations had not yet become hereditary and anyone could assume them in accordance with his own circumstances. He denied the strictness of Varna system in pre Aryan society.

ORIGIN OF NEW CASTES

Bhandarkar has cited the reasons that were responsible for the increase in the number of castes. Bhandarkar saw marriages between Varnas as one of the reasons for the emergence of the new castes. Here he described about *Anulom* and *Pratilom* marriage and how through these marriages new castes emerged. He wrote that these preponderant influence of the aborigines is to be accounted for not only by their large number, but by the fact that men from the Aryan community frequently married Sudra wives, though the marriages were considered inferior, and some times Sudra men married Aryan women. The origin of certain castes is traced in to such marriages, and it is even represented that under certain circumstances and after a lapse of a certain number of generations the offspring of those marriages could attain the caste of the original ancestor. If then, fifth and sixth generation of descendents, a child of a Sudra woman by a Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaisya man could become a Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaisya when such marriages were permitted. It must be understood that there is some aboriginal blood flowing through the veins of the high caste Hindus of the present day.

He stated that, earlier a man from the higher castes could marry Shudra women under the law, and generally, a marriage connection could be formed by a man belonging to any of the higher castes with women from any of the lower castes. Such marriages were known call as *Anulom*. However, the law books strictly prohibited reverse marriages, called *Pratilom*, i.e., of man belonging to a lower caste with a women of higher caste. Further he wrote that the *Anulom* marriages allowed by law were later prohibited by legislators.

According to him, there are four castes, and if we find many more in real life, they must have sprung by intermarriages from these four. Moreover, he says that

⁷ *Ibid.*,p.471.

certainly its application to all cases must be wrong, but in order to render the conception of such a theory possible, there must have been a few cases actually of castes springing from such marriages.⁸ The castes emerging through these intermarriages, these so-called mixed castes were considered as Shudras. Further, he wrote that some aboriginal tribes had become castes. He says that marriages in the reverse order, i.e., between a woman of a superior caste and a man of an inferior one, were prohibited by law, but were in practice. He wrote that the authors of *Dharmasutras* and the Metrical *Smritis* gave the names of the mixed castes formed by these two kinds of marriages. On the basis of *Dharmasutras* he found out that the names of some castes, which emerged due to intermarriages, were Vaidehika and Magadha, Chandalas and Nisadas. Because of this understanding of how new caste emerged, he did not think that inter caste marriages could counter caste mentality. To prevent further emergence of castes, he emphasised endogamy which is a peculiar characteristic of caste system. Endogamy maintains that each caste is special and behind endogamy there is a concept of purity and impurity.

Bhandarkar stated that we must consciously set ourselves to destroy the caste system. According to him, national consolidation needed open dining with different castes. Further, he argued that even this open dining may come to exist and yet caste mentality may remain strong.⁹ Nevertheless, he stated that “for this purpose it is necessary that there should be inter-marriages between the different castes.”¹⁰ But when he refers to these different castes he is focusing only on Brahmin sub castes. He doubted if inter-caste marriages among different castes were useful, if such marriages take place, the result will be the degeneration of the race. Bhandarkar obtained support from Brahmanical texts to this end. Bhandarkar made clear that the offspring of an inter marriage between them may prove to be inferior. He showed that the distinction between an Aryan and a Negro is great,¹¹ but in the Brahmin community all sub castes are same therefore he mentioned that “the distinction is not so great between a Chitpavana, a Karhada, a Desastha, a Senavi, a Prabhu, a Daivajna, as to make us fear that the progeny resulting from the inter-marriages between these castes

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.451.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.483.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.483.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.483.

will be degenerate.”¹² We can see here that B G. Tilak also took the same stand towards marriages between Brahmin sub castes and wrote some articles in his news paper *Kesari*, supporting Brahmins’ inter caste marriages. Bhandarkar backs inter-caste marriages only in the case of the same race or if those castes had equal social status in one Varna. Here Bhandarkar accepted the notion of Varna system where some Varnas are superior and some are inferior. He looked towards inter caste marriages as a reason of increasing caste number and the sign of degeneration.

Role of Different Clans in Indian Caste System

In the modern period of Indian history, numerous reformers blamed the outsiders who came to India for their role in perpetuating the caste system. Bhandarkar also took support of race theory to understand the increase in the number of castes. He mentioned that differences of race have been a very fruitful cause of the difference of castes¹³. About the role of these races he wrote, “not only did the aboriginal races form so many independent castes, but there were other races also who made incursions into the country in historic times and swelled the number.”¹⁴ Here for this he has given Maga Brahmin’s example,¹⁵ whose name suggests the influence of Persian priests and says this caste exists as an independent caste in Rajputana and elsewhere in northern India to this day. Also he explained how Abhiras and Gujaras caste came into existence. He wrote that Abhiras and Gujaras, the tribes came from outside during the first to sixth centuries and settled down in India. When they established their kingdom and settled down in India they became a part of Indian caste system and afterwards these tribes became castes. Bhandarkar wrote, “The Abhiras and Gujaras formed separate castes and we have at present Abhira and Gurjara goldsmiths, Abhira and Gujara carpenters and even Abhira and Gujara Brahmanas.”¹⁶ Thus, he emphasised on different clan is one of the major reasons for the emergence of new castes.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.483.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.474.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.474.

¹⁵ Here he says I may here mention a colony of Persian priest called Magi who brought the worship of the Sun into the country, about 200-300 A.D. these are known to Sanskrit literature as Magas and are consider as Brahmanas.

¹⁶ Ramkrushna Gopal Bhandarkar, *Collected Works of R G Bhandarkar Vol-2*, Ed. by The Late Narayan Bapuji Utgikar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, p.475.

Bhandarkar stressed on occupation as a means to understand the origin of castes. He says we have epigraphic evidence that there were in the early centuries of the Christian era a number of trade-guilds such as *Tailikasreni* or the guild of gardeners which had their own constitution. This enabled them to receive in the permanent deposit, sums of money, the interest of which was to be devoted for the benefit of Buddhist mendicants. Guilds such as these became exclusive castes in the course of time. Then there arose a number of religious sects which too hardened into castes eventually.¹⁷

Moreover, Bhandarkar believed that untouchability was one of the reasons behind the increase in the number of castes. Regarding emergence of untouchable castes, he wrote that the most fruitful source for the multiplication of castes was the number of persons who were called *Vratyas*. Those whose *Upanayana* ceremony was not performed at the time prescribed or not at all, were called *Vratyas* and all communication with them was prohibited. They were isolated from society. He wrote that those who violated the Brahmanic ordinances were excommunicated. Such groups formed separate castes. This principle of excommunication continued, being largely resorted to in later times even when there was a slight departure from ordinary usages of caste. Thus, Bhandarkar focused on excommunication which is intrinsic to caste, as one of the greatest obstacles to achieving social unity and nation building.

Bhandarkar highlighted the contribution of those who fought against the caste system. Such as lord Buddha's contribution. Buddha taught the doctrine that all the four castes were equally pure and denied the claim of the Brahmanas to superiority in this respect over the rest.¹⁸ Bhandarkar saw the Bhakti movement as a creator of fraternity within society. He has written that Bhagavad Vasudeva in the Bhagavad-Gita, and all this subsequent followers, confined themselves to admitting all castes to the new allowance of Bhakti or love and karma of the performance of right actions, and did not run down castes as such, or preach its abandonment, though the Vaisnavas of later times such as Ramananda and his followers, Raedas the currier, Kabir, the Mohamedan weaver, etc., neglected it very perceptibly in their everyday relations.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.475.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.477.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.478.

Bhandarkar adopted the principle of the Bhakti movement because it denied the role of Brahmins as mediators between the worshipers and God. Referring to Tukaram, he says that he declares his readiness to worship a Vaisnava regardless of whatever caste he belonged to. But he rejected the anti-Varna caste stance the Bhakti movement and of Buddha's struggle.

Moreover, Bhandarkar wrote that Buddha was a religious reformer and not a social or political reformer, and therefore once he had admitted all castes to the benefit of his system of redemption, he did not force his followers to neglect their castes in social relations and thus practically to give it up.²⁰ He wrote that saints did not look upon caste as a social evil, but disregarded it in their friendliness with each other as serious devotees of God whom they loved; and further he wrote that all the revolutions we have gone through since the sacrificial religion came into disregard, have been religious and moral revolutions and not social or political revolutions. But the structure of Indian society during Buddha's period was different. Regarding Buddha's revolution Sharad Patil, an eminent scholar, has written that, Buddha did not attack the caste system because in the time of Buddha, the caste system had just emerged. Therefore, Buddha did a revolution to annihilate *Varna* system but not caste system.²¹ Even Bhandarkar did not accept the role of Bhakti movement at a large level in the context of the caste system, but nevertheless he was influenced by the Bhakti movement and its principles. When the Prarthana Samaj was started some girls used to sing Tukaram's poems. Bhandarkar composed rhymes and in that he used Tukaram's poems. Dr R G Bhandarkar, Sir G L Chandavarkar, Vaman Abaji Modak and Vithal Ramaji Shinde all these persons were doing Kirtans also. Bhandarkar had belief that Tukaram's religion has the capability to become global religion, but due to lack of political support it has not become global religion like Buddhism, Islam and Christianity.²²

He raised several questions about the social evils. In one of his articles, 'Social History of India', he says that one should ask the question why this social degeneration should go on continuously for a long time without any obstacle. In this

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.478.

²¹ Sharad Patil, '*Brahmani Sahityache Sounderya Shastra*', Sugava prakashan, Pune.1988.p.7.

²² Rajendra Vora [ed], '*Adhunikta Ani Parampara*', Pratima Prakashan, Pune.2000, p.48.

article, he gives strong reasons for social evils. According to him, "The reason seems to be that the tyranny under which the Hindus have lived from times immemorial, have weakened their moral fibre if not entirely destroyed it. We have been subject to a three fold tyranny; political tyranny, priestly tyranny, and a social tyranny or tyranny of the caste."²³ According to Bhandarkar the real cause of the social problem was that of these three tyrannies, caste tyranny was ignored by most of the reformers in his time; they were aware of the social problem but not on its root cause; Bhandarkar says "crushed down by this no man has dared to stand and asserted himself. Even religious reformers have shunned the legitimate consequences of their doctrines to avoid coming into conflict with the established order of things. The promptings of his better nature or the pangs of conscience, a Hindu has had to suppress for fear of the three agencies, and now the better nature has almost ceased to prompt or the conscience to bite."²⁴

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He criticised people for being silent about caste issues. He wrote, "We have shown a capacity to shake ourselves free from priestly and social tyranny? I am afraid, not much. But this is certain, that unless we rouse our conscience, and activate the higher feelings of our nature, and, with the strength derived from these, stand erect against priests and caste, there is no hope of our being able to turn back the current of deterioration and degradation, that has been flowing from the very olden times and increasing in force as it advances."²⁵ In this way Bhandarkar not only attacked the caste system but also the domination priests enjoyed in Hindu religion. Priests were in the forefront of social discrimination because they were authorised interpreters of Hindu law.

Bhandarkar focused on the origin of caste and the reasons behind the increase in the number of castes. However, he did not explain how caste system is contributing to social exploitation. He stressed on annihilating caste distinctions but could not give programs. When he was writing against the caste system, he failed to support the contemporary anti-caste movements.

²³ Ramkrushna Gopal Bhandarkar, 'Collected works of R G Bhandarkar Vol-2', Ed by The Late Narayan Bapuji Utgikar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, p.469.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.469.

²⁵ R G Bhandarkar, *Collected Works of R G Bhandarkar Vol-2*, Ed by The Late Narayan Bapuji Utgikar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, p.469-70.



RANADE'S IDEA ON CASTE

Mahadev Govind Ranade was one of the leaders of the theistic movement of western India that was started about 1867-68. This movement did not take an aggressive stand. Before starting his social work, Ranade was in favour of other social movements and their methods of working. In the early nineteenth century Brahma Samaj was established in Bengal and Dadoba Pandurang set up the Paramahansa Sabha in Maharashtra but it collapsed when their activist's names became public. Therefore, the social reformers who emerged in the last phase of the nineteenth century started to search for a new faith of social and religious reform.

Ranade knew that his compatriots were keen on adhering to the practices of their ancestors, and that there was no place on earth with religious practices so mixed up with social customs as in India. Mr. Ranade's love for his country was so deep and genuine, his concern for the regeneration of his countrymen was so acute and deep-seated, that he always welcomed with prompt good judgment, all help, whether it came from the foreign rulers of the country, or from the enlightened rulers of the native states or from the frigid and lonesome old-fashioned ecclesiastical authorities, their holinesses the Shankaracharyas, and the much scandalized Shastris.....²⁶

The theistic idea of God, according to Mr. Ranade, is that God is immanent in the universe. He was very much inclined towards the Ramanuja sect of Vedantism. He remarked, "As a matter of fact, both before Shankaracharya's time and after his death, the modified *Advaita* system of Ramanuja has played a great part in Indian philosophy, and to it may be traced the rise and progress, throughout India, of the *Vaishnava* sects who have attained to a higher and truer conception of theism than any of the other prevailing systems."²⁷ Ranade was also influenced by English Liberalism. He knew about and the work of the Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and Satyashodhak Samaj.

²⁶ Ranade Mahadeva Govind, Religious and Social Reform-A Collection of Essays and Speeches, Compiled by Kolasker M B, Bombay, 1902,p.29.

²⁷ *Ibid.*,p.8.

From 1870 onwards, he started to take up the task of social enlightenment. He knew that individual effort would not bring about social change, therefore, an organisation was most important and to this end, he established an organization as well as gave support to other organizations like Prarthana Samaj, Sarvajanic Sabha, Samajik Parishad and Oudyogik Parishad. Objectively analysing the faults and lacunae of the traditional social system was the first step on the way to reform.²⁸ D G Vaidya in his history of the Samaj writes that motive of Prarthana Samaj was to get emancipation from social differences in Hindu society, as well as from worshipping many Gods and their statues; therefore, they suggested the worship of one God.²⁹

In the last phase of the nineteenth century, there was a debate that what should come first, political reform or social reform? In Tilak's point of view, that social reform will create conflict within society and it will become an obstacle in the political movement. But Ranade suggested that social and political aspects are both part of human life and depend on each other. A similar stance was taken by G G Agarkar.

Ranade knew that without social reform all other reforms remained incomplete. He says "You can not have a good social system when you find your self low in the scale of political rights, nor can you be fit to exercise political rights and privileges unless your social system is based on reason and justice. You can not have a good economic system when your social arrangements are imperfect. If your religions are low and grovelling, you can not succeed in social, economic or political spheres."³⁰ Thus, Ranade emphasised both political and social reform.

In his book, 'History of the Rise of the Maratha Power' Ranade has described the role of Maharashtrian saints in the establishment of equality in the society. In his article 'Hindu Protestantism', he described the nature of the Christian Protestant creed and compared with the path of the Indian saints movement.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.40.

²⁹ Vaidya D G, *Prarthana Samajacha Itihas*, Prarthana Samaj, Mumbai, 1927, p.3.

³⁰ D G Vaidya, *Prarthana Samajacha Itihas*, Prarthana Samaj, Mumbai, 1927, p.120.

He has drawn a picture of the saints as social, religious and secular reformers. According to Ranade, the Bhakti movement was a great platform for all caste people to come together for religious purposes. However, it was not only a gathering of the people; its purpose was to decrease caste mentality, which is exploiting society on the basis of social hierarchy. He wrote that what was remarkable about saints and prophets was that about fifty were from other parts of India. And ten women, and as many Mohammedans, and the rest about eighty, comprise about an equal number of Brahmins and non-Brahmins; and among these last are representative men of all castes and creeds: butchers, spinners and weavers, goldsmiths, barbers and mahars, kings and farmers, bankers and soldiers.³¹ He stated that no country in the world can present such a galaxy of pure and pious men born in humble circumstances. Thus, he has shown how there is no prohibition on any caste and creed and that the movement spread to all classes and to Hindus and Mohammedans alike.

Writing about the method of the saints' movement, Ranade described their way of struggle as silent. He wrote that their struggles led to neither wars or bloodshed nor persecutions, inquisition or banishment. They worked silently as God's spirit works in us, silently but surely.³² This is a moderate way, which Ranade used in his social and political life. Ranade described how these saints fought against the social evils and how they protested against the supremacy of the Sanskrit language against the tendency to exaggerate the importance of rites and ceremonies, against the hold of the Yoga system of austerities and the supposed powers it conferred on the Yogi; against the strictness of caste rules and distinctions; against cruelty and impurity, against animal and human sacrifices, against the worship of cruel deities and the performance of Shakti rites; and Against Polytheism, though not against idolatry. Ranade concluded that if we are true to our ancestors, this is the work and these are the lines on which we should carry on the struggle.

Ranade says Mohammedans invasions for a time seem to have paralysed all activities but because of the saints' movement, gradually the national spirit was regained. Ranade says that these saints came out for struggle and took up such a

³¹ Mahadeva Govind Ranade, *Religious and Social Reform-A Collection of Essays and Speeches*, Compiled by Kolasker M B, Bombay, 1902, p.201.

³² *Ibid.*, p.202.

position because of the circumstances of their own birth and education. Further he wrote that “as observed above nearly half of them were of castes other than Brahmans, and some of them of very low castes indeed. Many of the Brahman reformers also had some stain in their inherited purity which led or forced them to rebel against all artificial restraints.”³³

Regarding contribution of the saints’ movement, he says that caste strictness had reduced. Here he focused on the saints’ movement as an anti-caste movement. He wrote “The result of all this elevated teaching is seen in the fact that caste exclusiveness now finds no place in the religious sphere of life, and it is relegated solely to the social concerns of men, and even there its restrictiveness is much relaxed, as any one can judge who compares the Brahmans of southern India, with their exclusive caste prejudices, and their abhorrence of even the shadow of the lower castes defiling Brahman streets, with the comparative indifference shown in such matters in the Deccan portion of Maharashtra.”³⁴

About mediator in the Hindu religion, he wrote that there is no need for any type of mediator in the religion. He has shown how the saints’ movement denied the role of Brahmans in the religious rituals. Pandharpur, which was a main centre for saints, was also a worshipping of their god called *Vithoba*. Every year people gathered at Pandharpur for the annual fair. For this fair peoples come from different areas and different castes therefore this social gathering was against caste exclusiveness. According to the saints as people were the children of God, There was no mediator between them. Ranade wrote that “In this part of India, the domination of the Brahmin caste as the God of creation, whom the other caste should serve and worship, lost much of its potency, and men and women, high and low, came to feel that they were free to attain salvation by faith and love in spite of their low origin.”³⁵

About the contribution of saints, Ranade says the saints’ movement modified the strictness of the old spirit of caste exclusiveness. It raised the Shudra classes to opposition of spiritual power and social importance almost equal to that of the Brahmans. It gave sanctity to family relations, and raised the status of women.³⁶

³³ *Ibid*, p.211.

³⁴ *Ibid*.,p.215.

³⁵ *Ibid*,p.215.

³⁶ *Ibid*,p.227.

TILAK'S IDEA ON CASTE

Origin of Caste

Tilak believed that Aryans came from outside Hindustan. These Aryans were white people and they were different from black people who were aboriginals of Hindustan. Tilak says that the Aryan people who came to Hindustan in the Vedic period were non-vegetarian, nevertheless, the Varna of Hindustani black non-vegetarian people is not the as others about how the word Hindu came into existence, he wrote that the people who were staying on the west side of *Indus* River were called as Hindus by the non-Aryan people. The people, who were called as Hindus were the followers of Vedic religion.

He emphasised that notions of purity and impurity were intrinsic to the origin of caste. He rejected the idea that caste distinctions were based on the differences in inter dining, customs, habits, life style and thought. He also rejected the role of Brahmins in increasing caste distinction. Tilak opines that "the saying that the caste discrimination was the result of differences in the eating habits and ideologies of different castes is absolutely incorrect. And that Brahmins or *Bhatbhikshuk* were responsible for it is equally wrong, rather more meaningless."³⁷

Tilak accepted that the Aryan people came from the north-western side of India; and there was a struggle between Aryans and non-Aryans. Moreover, Phule also searched the origin of the caste system in the struggle between Aryans and non-Aryans. Tilak argues that, "the Aryans who entered Hindustan from north-west did not annihilate *Dasyus* and this became the basic reason of caste discrimination in Hindustan."³⁸ Moreover, he says Aryans granted minimal rights to the Shudras and included them in their *Varna* system. In this way, Aryans stayed with Shudras for a long time. Tilak suggested to Americans and Australians that, they should learn from India that how to prevent caste distinction. He mentioned that the way we handled Shudras, similarly Europeans have handled their different races (to the Negro).³⁹ He considers European apartheid as a caste system which is entirely different from the caste system in India.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.114.

³⁸ Bal Gangadhar Tilak, '*Jatibhade*', 16 may 1893, SLT, Vol-5, p.115.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.115.

Tilak says that caste distinction is based on merit, and is not artificial but natural. Here indirectly he gives justification to the Brahmanical social order, where all Varnas have different merit, which is decided by birth. Through this interpretation, he denied that caste was the creation of human beings. He says that for maintenance and continuance of caste specialty, members should make relation through marriages within caste. He stated that, if in the past we had not continued to follow these rules; by this time, definitely we would have lost our merit and reached a very low level. To maintain this merit some people have to take responsibility.

He wrote on the causes resulting in the emergence of a number of new castes. Regarding this he says, "If we throw light on the *Varna* discrimination between Arya and *Dasyus*, we come across the origin and causes for the present caste discrimination in Hindustan."⁴⁰ Thus, Tilak searched for the origin of caste system in the struggle between Aryans and non-Aryans. In this way he opposed inter-caste marriage and he relates it with caste and *Varna's* merit. Further, he wrote, "If the above mentioned origin of caste system in Hindustan is true, then we are forced to say that our hope to make a single caste through the inter-marriage should be given up".⁴¹ But within one *Varna*, he agrees to permit inter caste marriage on the basis of same caste merit, and regarding this inter caste marriage he talked about only Brahmin community. He felt bad that within Brahmin community Kokanastha, Deshastha and Karhade Brahmins are not willing to allow inter caste marriage with each other. To convince these communities he wrote four articles in his newspaper '*Kesari*'. On the basis of Shastras he tried to convince them; "These four *Varna* had inter-dining relationship among them... while the *Varna* who have stopped maintaining these relations used to accept marriage proposals among themselves."⁴² He made it clear that these marriages should be within the group. For that, he says, "We do not tell anybody to build their children's relations with people inferior to them".⁴³ Thus, there is no need to have such type of relations with other castes, so this question is only about those who are of same status and have equal family conditions. Therefore, he argued that there should

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.116

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.116

⁴² Bal Gangadhar Tilak, '*Kokanastha, Deshastha Va Karhade-1*', SLT, VOL-5, p.3.

⁴³ Bal Gangadhar Tilak, '*Kokanastha, Deshastha Va Karhade-4*', SLT, VOL-5, p.17.

not be any hesitation to conduct such marriages within these three Brahmin sub castes. In order to convince these castes he says these castes must conduct marriages with each other because all have the same status.

From the nineteenth century onwards, the process of class differentiation was started due to the British policy, and traditional economic relations were shaken. Modernity started to challenge the traditional customs. Economic change was one of the major reasons behind this. Modernity witnessed the emergence of a newly English educated middle class drawn from different castes. Moreover, modernity awakened the tendency to critically analyse traditional knowledge regarding human relationships particularly caste and class. These newly emerged middle class wanted to come up as a high class, but simultaneously they were bound within the caste restrictions, therefore the reformers promulgated materialistic changes and did not criticize the caste system as a whole.

While this Brahmin inter-caste marriage issue was going on in Pune, at the same time orthodox Brahmins came to the forefront to convince the people against the proposed Brahmin inter-caste marriages. Simultaneously, those who were in favour of inter-caste marriages also came out to convince people and to get legal authority from their priest Shri Shankaracharya.⁴⁴ These people wrote a letter to the Shankaracharya requesting him to allow inter-caste marriages within these sub castes “if there is unity within the group of people, it is good for all time and in all manners, and to create unity among people there is no other way but to maintain physical relations.”⁴⁵ The Brahmins presented a stance in favour of inter caste marriages as a whole, which Tilak systematically denied.

The principle of modernity was emerging in the phase of economic changes. In this changing period, Tilak knew that caste system cannot play the role which it used to play earlier. Therefore, he says that the restrictions of the caste system should be loosened now. For a long time Brahmins treated Shudras very lowly and now this feeling should decrease, and this is possible only through inter-caste marriages

⁴⁴ He is elected for life from among the distinguish Shastris. He presided over gathering whenever a major dispute arose in Hindu religion.

⁴⁵ Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *Kokanastha, Deshastha Va Karhade-4*, SLT, VOL-5, p.15.

between Brahmins and Shudras. Further, regarding this he raised the counter question that if some people desire that Brahman and Shudras marriages should happen, are Shudras also willing to marry with Ati-Shudra people?⁴⁶

According to Tilak, different castes can remain equal without going for inter-caste marriages, which can be visualised within the Brahmin community sub castes having equal status. He wrote, "If we see the present condition of our country we must try for the betterment of our nation in every possible way by enhancing the talents possessed by different castes. If we exclude inter-caste matrimony nevertheless different castes will remain of equal status, which can be made clear from the differences in subdivisions in the Brahmanical class."⁴⁷ He suggested improving or maintaining speciality of caste, according to qualities endowed by the *Varna* system. But through this maintaining process, there are chances of increasing inequality among different castes. Here Tilak's concern was only about Brahmin community and he wanted their dominating status to continue.

He wrote that if somebody wants to change his traditional caste based occupation, he should be allowed to do so.⁴⁸ During the process of modernisation, traditional caste professions started losing their form, because of rapid changes in the materialistic world. The first jolt was to the occupation of upper castes, which were in the forefront of society. This could be realised through the historical perception where Brahmins had changed their caste based occupation from priest hood into political rulers (e.g. Maharashtra Brahmin). The flexibility was enjoyed by upper castes; it was restricted for lower castes due to traditional law of Manu. Therefore, the caste occupation remained unchanged for lower castes but due to colonial policy, these castes came forward for their economical upliftment. Due to changing circumstances, Tilak also wanted to allow people to change their occupation, but according to him, social status would not change. Thus, according to him any person's status should be based on his capability and merit. Tilak agreed to marriages within one *Varna* and particularly in Brahmin *Varna*. He called this marriage as *Savarna Vivaha* meaning elite marriage. He says that it is necessary, because through this marriage system we

⁴⁶ Bal Gangadhar Tilak "*Jatibhade*", 16 may 1893, SLT, Vol-5, p.117.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.117.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.117.

can maintain our caste and *Varna's* speciality or merit. In this way he is denying hybridisation of *Varna*. About this elite *Varna* marriage, he wrote, "if required to express in few words the real purpose behind the marriages among upper castes is not merely to have the posterity but to expand one's own clan and caste."⁴⁹ According to Hindu texts, the marriages among different *Varnas* are a process of degradation. After such type of marriages elite *Varna* could not claim that they are superior, because they would not be able to show which was pure *Varna* or their clan.

According to Tilak, *Varna* system was good for the maintenance of caste specialties; "due to *Varna* system we have maintained our importance from thousands of years and now we don't have much freedom nevertheless we are living and if we left our importance, definitely we will lose what we have..... but not only this we will be forced to face difficulties like dogs".⁵⁰ Here he pointed out that this *Varna* system is necessary to maintain caste differences.

According to Tilak, caste based social position cannot change. Chhatrapati Shahu was the ruler of Kolhapur state, when *Vedokta* episode took place, and Tilak had taken a stand on this issue. That incident was about whether the *Shudra* king is entitled to *Vedokta* rites or not. It was not a question only of rites, but about social status and rights in Hindu religion. Tilak related this issue with caste status arguing it is very wrong that through the use of the *Vedokta* rite, any caste would be the beneficiary of high status. Emphasising his point he said that within the Brahmin community women are also using *Puranoakta* rites. Therefore, nobody can say that they are *Shudra* caste. He concludes that due to the change of rites, castes cannot change their social status. Through this view Tilak stated that the caste status would continue on the basis of *Varna* system. For that he wrote, "Brahmin women do not have the permission to read out *Vedic* hymn, but they are remaining Brahmin by caste. Marathas should keep in mind that even if they read out *Vedic* hymn they will remain Marathas."⁵¹ Tilak meant only Brahmins have the authority to perform these rituals. In Kesari, he commented that Europeans are studying the Vedas "but while thinking about this question, it should be kept in mind that it is not the question of who reads

⁴⁹ Bal Gangadhar Tilak '*Hindu Hinduche Sankar Vivaha*', SLT, VOL-5, p.190.

⁵⁰ Bal Gangadhar Tilak '*Samajik Sudharneche Marga-2*', SLT, VOL-5, p.143.

⁵¹ Bal Gangadhar Tilak '*Marathe Aani Vedokta Karma-2*', SLT, VOL-5, p.153.

or studies *Vedas* but who has the real authority to preach *Vedas*.”⁵² Thus, he gave support to Brahmins holding religious authority.

Tilak agreed that a couple of Europeans have done significant work on ancient Indian history. In that, he focused on Max Muller’s work in which the author pointed some similarities between Europe and India. Through the efforts of European resurrection of the Indian ancient past, people were now becoming aware of their glorious days. Despite the work of Europeans, people still never believed that their religion and social system are very wrong. In this way he searched for some notions from ancient India to create nationalism to bind the people together. He tried to bring out the cultural glory to ignite nationalism.

Institution of Indian caste and religion came into being by the process of assimilation and crystallizationand these processes remain favourable to each other, therefore Indian caste system has retained its firm grip.⁵³ In the process of assimilation, three processes were working, *Vaidikikaran*, integration and harmonization.⁵⁴ As far as hybrid caste is concerned Tilak used the method of assimilation for acceptance; “hybrid caste will be counted in Hindus, if tomorrow a Brahmin marries to a Shudra woman, he loses the identity as a Brahmin, but this can be said without any objection that he remains Hindu.”⁵⁵ He said that those who want to stay in Hindu religion should follow Hindu culture and celebrate their hybrid caste marriages through Hindu rituals.

In Tilak’s point of view, caste system is an injury to the society, but its annihilation is impossible. He says, “If somebody feels responsible towards the progress and betterment of Hindustan, then by keeping well in his mind that, it is impossible to knock down the present caste system and keeping this fact in mind he should start setting up further structure”.⁵⁶ Moreover, he says we are not saying that caste system should not be annihilated but that the process of annihilation will take

⁵² *Ibid.*,p.154.

⁵³ Umesh Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabhodhan Aani Varga Jati Prabhutva*, Sugava Prakashan, Pune,2007,p.23.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*,p.23.

⁵⁵ Bal Gangadhar Tilak ‘*Hindu Hinducho Sanskar Vivaha*’,SLT,VOL-5,p.191.

⁵⁶ Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *Jatibhade*, 16 may 1893, SLT, Vol-5, p.116.

time: “Even if caste discrimination is not abolished, it is not impossible to a great extent rather completely reducing the caste malice.”⁵⁷ Thus, Tilak did have concern with caste problem, wherein his response to annihilate caste distinction is in the negative.

According to Tilak, the caste system prevents inter-caste unity among the communities. Without unity, we cannot fight against the British Empire and to gain political power people needed to unite on one platform and to this caste distinction was an obstacle. Therefore, Tilak emphasized the need to decrease the rigidity and strictness of caste distinction. He did not argue that without annihilating the caste system there is no other way of creating unity within our society.

Tilak pointed out that Religion has interfered in every aspect of marriage. In Hindu religion a young girl needs permission from Brahmins to meet a young boy. In terms of marriage and rituals he adamantly opposed the religious mediation. Therefore, he opposed such interferences from priests. He says that it is a very sad thing that we are not thinking why we are paying to priests [he called *Bhatjibua*]. In religion, priests are doing some rituals for their own interests. He says some rituals are natural in human life like human intercourse etc. Therefore, in these natural rituals he denied the role of Brahmins. But he is only speaking of priest’s role in regard to marriage, and chooses to be selectively silent on the role of priest in social and religious exploitation.

Some social reformers assumed that the colonial rule was an opportunity to address the social issues in Hindu religion. In colonial Maharashtra, men like Phule, Bhandarkar, Ranade and other reformers showed a strong concern with social problems. Therefore, they were saying that social reforms must precede political reforms. R G Bhandarkar said that if we are not willing to give rights to our own caste people, then we do not have the right to demand the political rights from the British government. Tilak denied Bhandarkar’s arguments. In *Kesari* he wrote, “Bhandarkar’s idea is totally immature and we only want to say that, Dr Bhandarkar

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.116.

who had built up the connection between social improvement and political rights are doubtful and baseless.”⁵⁸ He strongly opposed the idea that the political reform should start after the social reform was completed.

As far as Tilak is concerned, social reform must go through religion, which means social reforms will take place in a religious way. He wrote, “The manner in which we run constitutional or legal movement in political issues in the same manner textual movement should be run in social issues.”⁵⁹ He pointed out that, we should not do those things, which are not allowed in *Dharmashastra*. He wrote, “According to the religious text, any work should be carried out taking three rules into consideration legally accepted, optional and prohibition. While the things which are prohibited should be strictly avoided.”⁶⁰ He asked, what are the differences between Buddhism and Bhagawat Dharma? He says Buddhism does not believe in caste distinction, while Bhagwat Dharma also gives less importance to caste distinction. But the major difference is that Buddhism’s reform is not going into Hindu religion while Bhagawat Dharma’s reform is based on Hinduism. Here, there are major differences between Phule and Tilak’s approaches. Tilak wanted to bring social reform through religious ways but Phule absolutely rejected the role of religion and established alternative culture.

Here he opposed anti-Text [*anti-Dharmashastra*] reform. But in this process caste issue will remain isolated rather than caste getting more legal authority. Because caste system has strong base in Brahmanical texts and there is a common belief in Hindu religion that, the holy texts are dictated by Gods and those who speak against the holy texts, are denying the existence of God. Hence, holy texts are very powerful in Hindu religion and that is why we can see that in colonial India most of the Hindu reformers covertly and overtly borrowed the support of the holy texts to acquire public support for social reforms. In ancient India, texts were the chief source to constitute the social, economic and political life. Therefore, the caste hierarchy became unquestionable. Regarding reformers, he says, all our reformers are only utilitarians because they did not believe in religion but in Europe those who are

⁵⁸ Bal Gangadhar Tilak ‘*Samajik Sudharneche Marga*’, SLT, VOL-5, 21 Jan 1896, p.138.

⁵⁹ Bal Gangadhar Tilak ‘*Hindutva aani Sudharna*’, SLT, VOL-5, 12 Jan 1904, p.299

⁶⁰ Bal Gangadhar Tilak ‘*Tulshibagetil Sabha-2*’ SLT, VOL-5, 4 Nov 1890, p.245.

utilitarians are religious utilitarians, such as Martin Luther who had faith in the Bible and Christianity.⁶¹ Therefore, he suggested our reform must be undertaken in a religious way.

While Tilak was talking on social issues, at that time some anti-caste movements were of the opinion that, we are exploited because of Brahmins' conspiracy and were blaming the Brahmins. At that time, this issue became very significant, and this debate took place between Brahmins and non-Brahmins in colonial Maharashtra. About this debate, Tilak said that if some people are saying that Brahmins have captured and plundered them, this is totally wrong. He wrote that if they are saying Brahmins have plundered Non-Brahmins, Kshatriya and Vaishya are also parts of non-Brahmins, then how it is that Kshatriya and Vaishya community had the right to gain and utilize state power and wealth. So further he asked, then how can we say that Brahmins did not give opportunity to them to come up to their level. He says that it was only religious rights which Brahmin had kept in their hands. But here Tilak discusses only economic and political status and even in that the rest of the large number of castes were not having power. In India, social exploitation played a greater role than political and economical exploitation. In social exploitation, human status would be decided by birth. In social exploitation, religion has played a major role, but Tilak did not labour on it.

In his whole life, Tilak talked on the greatness of the Varna system, but in one article, he has questioned the existence of *Varna* system. He has written that Brahmins have isolated non-Brahmin people, and is absolutely a wrong thing: and if "four-fold *Varna* philosophical system was ever been in actual practice or not is doubtful".⁶²

Regarding the importance of *Varna* system, he said all *Varna* people have their own *Varna* specialties and some Karma. He wrote, "Every *Varna* depending upon its...is independent of other *Varna*'s. And mind not to forget that this is its

⁶¹ Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *Hindutva Aani Sudharna*, 12 Jan 1904, [SLT] vol-5, Kesari Prakashan, 1976, p.299.

⁶² Bal Gangadhar Tilak 'Swarajya Brahman Va Brahmnetter', [SLT] vol-5, 18 Sept 1917, p183.

special merit.”⁶³ Here he is giving importance to Karma and he advocates that the caste differences should be on the basis of merit, not on birth.⁶⁴ Tilak asks one to maintain one’s speciality or *Varna* guts, and in this process people would face some problem but it is the duty of religion to make people strong to bear this burden.

He talked of reviving Hindu religion and suggested that both reformers and believers should keep one thing in their mind that Hindu religion is not responsible for all the bad that has happened. The reason behind the vulnerability of these people is, because of their non-inclusion in religion. Those who are talking only of greatness of religion should not be happy only about their past and about their glory: “it will be more creditable, if we give our thought to how we lost our ancient glory and how can we regain it.”⁶⁵ Here the religion he is talking of revival is *Sanatan Dharma*.

Tilak criticised Sayajirao Gaikwad the Ruler of Baroda State on the caste issue, he criticised on Sayajirao Maharaj’s statement that God has made only two castes, one is woman and other is man. As far as Tilak is concerned this is totally an immature idea, because there are so many castes and their caste differences like Aryas, Yahudi, Nigro, Chini and Mangolian. He argued that these regional differences divided them into several castes. Thus, Tilak denied natural human differences.

BRAHMINICAL DOMINATION

Tilak says that other castes wants to improve their conditions like Brahmins and that this is a natural thing. If Brahmin will try to capture top rank in trade, definitely the conflict will be created between Brahmin and other castes. Regarding this he wrote that it should not happen. He suggested that “by ignoring antagonism among the different castes, it is our responsibility to improve conditions of every caste.”⁶⁶ Further Tilak suggesting to the Brahmins that now those days are gone, where one caste can establish their domination over others and therefore “if we want to do something then that work should be carried out with the co-operation of people

⁶³ Bal Gangadhar Tilak ‘*Brahman Va Brahmnetar*’, [SLT] vol-5, 16 March 1920, p.197.

⁶⁴ Ibid,p.199.

⁶⁵ Bal Gangadhar Tilak ‘*Punarvivaha-3*’, 29 March 1892,p.265.

⁶⁶ Bal Gangadhar Tilak ‘*Brahman Aani Tyanchi Vidya-4*’, SLT,VOL-5,p.669.

from all the castes and all the regions.”⁶⁷ Here he talks about all castes but simultaneously he is trying to maintain Brahmin domination. But he adds that even if this end is accomplished, nevertheless, this would not lessen the traditional authority of the superior castes in the domain of politics.⁶⁸ Tilak has written in *Kesari* that the Brahmins had played a great role in Maratha politics. In Peshwas,⁶⁹ they had a great model and experience. Therefore, he thought Brahmins should be on the forefront of Indian politics.

Here, he is giving responsibility to Brahmins and suggesting that it is the responsibility of Brahmins to resolve the problems, which Hindustan is facing. He gave advice to Brahmin people to take leadership in their own hands. He wrote, “Brahmin class especially in the south had attained importance because of their top brass role in politics, to achieve this or that”.⁷⁰ Here he raised the question to explore reasons for our backwardness. And what is the pathway to resolving this problem? And he says, intellectuals should think about our low level of living: “Even in that too, say it because of caste religion or according old rituals, we feel that Brahmin people and especially Maharashtrian Brahmins had the special responsibility of finding out the solutions and carrying out this work.”⁷¹ In this way Tilak wanted to continue Brahmanical domination in the society. He wrote that how British gave clean chit to the Brahmin people, in the same way if Brahmins will give clean chit to non-Brahmin people for their self defence, so it will be right according to Darwin’s theory (the doctrine of evolution) but not good from the point of view of morality to the nation.

Thus, R G Bhandarkar, M G Ranade and B G Tilak started to deal the caste issue in a different manner and began to answer the Orientalist and anti caste movements. Also some nationalist leaders felt that without improve social conditions we can not bring about political reform. Therefore, they launched the Social Conference from the Indian National Congress platform. But later due to Tilak and

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.669.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.669.

⁶⁹ The state was rule by Minister in Maratha state called them ‘Peshwa’

⁷⁰ Bal Gangadhar Tilak, ‘*Brahman Aani Tyanchi Vidya-4*’, SLT, VOL-5, 7 July 1896, p.669.

⁷¹ Bal Gangadhar Tilak, ‘*Brahman Aani Tyanchi Vidya-4*’, SLT, VOL-5, 7 July 1896, p.683.

other ultra nationalist leaders, this Social Conference and was adjourned talk on social issues was not allowed on the National Congress platform. It was marginalised for a long time and came into the forefront again only after Mahatma Gandhi entered the national movement.

According to the nationalist leaders, caste was an obstacle in the path of nationalism, therefore, some of them demanded demolition of the caste system, but failed to formulate adequate programmes and policies to this end. Even spoke of an ideal nation and nationalism in the Vedic period as well as of the glory of the Aryans. Therefore, their stance had great limitations, because caste denied from ancient mythology and enjoyed strong religious backing. Moreover, they did not take up the problems of the Shudras and Ati-Shudras, who were the real exploited of Indian caste system. Therefore, they failed to get support from the common people. They had their own limitations, because the community which they represented were the real stake holders of the existing caste system. Moreover, they had their own limitation about resolving caste issues, because they were bound in Vedic religion, which gives authority to the caste system. However, they were successful in creating nationalism awareness about British exploitation.

CHAPTER-IV
IDEA OF EMANCIPATION AND
DISCOURSE ON CASTE

CHAPTER-III

NON-BRAHMIN IDEOLOGY ON CASTE

Mahatma Jotirao Govindrao Phule was born into Mali caste (gardener) in 1827. Phule spent his whole life in Pune city, which was dominated by Brahmanical cultural, religious and political glory. Originally, Jotirao's family was known as Gorhays came from Katgun village in Satara district of Maharashtra. Although he started his schooling in *Gavhathi* local school, he had to leave the school in order to help his father in family farming. Two of his neighbours were impressed by Jotirao's intelligence and his thirst for knowledge. One was a Muslim teacher and another was a Christian gentleman who persuaded his father Govindrao to allow him to study in a secondary school. In his child hood he came in contact with Muslim friends, and due to their criticism of Hindu religion and caste distinction, and also due to missionaries' work, he became aware about Hindu religion and caste system.¹

In addition, an incident took place in 1848 that made him aware of the tyranny caste system wielded and the predominant position of the Brahmins in the social set-up. He was invited to attend a wedding of one of his Brahmin friends. As the bridegroom was taken in a procession, Jotirao accompanied him along with the relatives of his Brahmin friend. Coming to know the fact that Jotirao belonged to the Mali caste, which was considered inferior by the Brahmins, the relatives of the bridegroom insulted and abused him. Jotirao left the procession, returned home with tears in his eyes, and narrated his experience to his father who tried to pacify him. After this incident, Jotirao made up his mind to defy the caste system and serve the Shudras and women who were deprived of all their rights as human beings under the caste system.

Jotirao gave priority to education as a tool of social change, and he believed that educating women was in a sense educating society; therefore, in 1848 he started a girl's school, where his wife Savitribai was the first teacher. As a result of it, the

¹ Y D Phadke (ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskriti Mandal, Mumbai. 2006. p.336.

reactionaries threatened Jotirao's father with dire consequences if he did not dissociate himself from his son's activities. Yielding to the pressure, Jotirao's father asked his son and the daughter-in-law to leave his house as both of them refused to give up their noble endeavour and in fact established another school for Mang and Mahar caste.² Phule realised that without education they would not realise their human rights. On 25th March 1853, 'The Poona Observer and Deccan Weekly report', published his letter about this Mang and Mahar School, wherein he described "this event as a new era in the Hindu cultural history."³ On 24th September 1873, he established social organisation called '*Satyashodhak Samaj*', which was to spread within and without Maharashtra. According to Rosalind O'Hanlon, "this initiative set off a broad and very active movement of the lower castes which had to have a profound effect upon the growth of political organisation in the Bombay Presidency, and the shaping of the nationalist movement towards the end of the century".⁴ In his life, he worked for the cause of Shudras and Ati-Shudras and women's emancipation and to bring about a complete transformation in the culture and life of the oppressed people. Till his death in 1890, he was the member of the Satyashodhak Samaj.

In 1875, in its organisational report, the Satyashodhak Samaj described its goal as the emancipation of the Shudras (socially backward castes) from the Brahmin, Bhat, Joshi and Upadhye's exploitation. It is through the religious text that, these subordinate castes have been exploiting Shudras for thousands of years. Therefore, to educate Shudras to be aware of their rights was the mission of the Samaj.⁵ The Satyashodhak Samaj included all the socially suppressed and oppressed people and exploited Shudras and Ati-Shudras, labours, farmers and women of all castes.

Phule and his Satyashodhak movement adopted some methodological approach from anti-caste tradition and from modern era of enlightenment to be critical analyse the dominant culture. His work completely varied from that of other organisations.

² Both caste are untouchables, they do not come under Varna system. Phule called them ati-Shudra. In present time they are in scheduled caste.

³ Y D Phadke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskrity Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.654.

⁴ Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste conflict and ideology*, Orient Longman, Cambridge University Press, p.1.

⁵ Y D Phadke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskrity Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.205.

Method of social change

If historically one would evaluate the history of the oppressed lower castes, one would realize the fact that Phule's anti-caste ideology had a strong base in traditional anti-caste movement based on rationality. Before the establishment of the Satyashodhak Samaj, the ideas of Kabir and Tukaram were needed to congregate Shudras and Ati-Shudras. Like Tukaram, Phule attacked the notion of caste in his writings but he never called the poems of Tukaram as *abhang*, rather he identified them as *akhand*. Due to its limitations, the Bhakti movement produced spiritual enlightenment rather than having a major impact on the caste system. This might be the reason that Phule was against idolising the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra.⁶ But Phule's criticism of Hindu religion was on the basis of rationality which was used by Bhakti movement in medieval Maharashtra.

In India, Buddhism and Jainism had strong tradition of being anti-Varna caste. These ideologies were working in different forms in various epochs. In nineteenth century caste discourse, some reformers started to use this traditional anti-caste ideology to liberate people from mental slavery. The Buddhist text '*vajrasuchi*' gave philosophical support by providing rational discourse to all Maharashtrian anti-caste religious movements.⁷ Dadoba Pandurang, a religious revolutionary of nineteenth century, was influenced by this Buddhist text enabling him to discourse on caste distinction.⁸ Phule was very much influenced by *vajrasuchi*'s method in a new form in modern period and interpreted all Hindu myths through this method. *Vajrasuchi* critically appraised the story of caste origin, which Phule made use to expose the religious authority of caste. With rational vision, he appraised the origin of the four Varnas and raised a question that while the four Varnas came from Brahma's body where then did the British and other non-Indians come from. Further, he wondered how different parts of the body could give birth. The domination of Brahmin religion was built on the principle of the Vedas. In other words, the Vedas were the backbone for all types of social stratification including Brahmin domination, caste system and gender discrimination.⁹

⁶ *Ibid*.p.595.

⁷ Umesh Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabhodhan Aani Varga Jati Prabhutva*, Sugava Prakashan, Pune, 2007, p.310.

⁸ *Ibid* .p.310.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.324.

Aryan and non-Aryan Struggle and the Origin of Caste

Aryan and non-Aryan struggle was a central issue taken up by the nineteenth century social reformers. Among them the interpretation of Aryan and non-Aryan struggle was quite different. Tilak, for example, emphasised the superiority of Aryan culture and considered the conquest, and assimilation of non-Aryans, as a sign, not of tyranny and injustice, but strength and vitality of the Aryan races. On the other side, Mahadeva Govind Ranade presented the religious ideas of the Aryans as a basis for national political unity and held the primitive people of south India responsible for corruption of Aryan customs by introducing customs that degraded women such as sati, polygamy, polyandry and communal land tenure'.¹¹ R G Bhandarkar and G G Agarkar spoke of Aryan glory. Phule's interpretation of the origin of caste system was entirely different.

According to Phule, Aryans came from Iran in groups in search of a prosperous wealthy and fertile land. Phule mentioned, in his literature, that the Aryans entry was the cause of degradation of India. He argued that "the extreme fertility of the soil in India, its rich productions, the proverbial wealth of its people, and the other innumerable gifts which this favoured land enjoys, and which have more recently tempted the cupidity of the western nations, no doubt, attracted the Aryans, who came to India, not as simple emigrants with peaceful intentions of colonization, but as conquerors."¹² Whether they (Aryan) came from Iran or anywhere else, is beside the point. Phule was not writing Aryan theory from a sociological point of view, but his interpretation of history provided strength to his struggle. He rejected the history of Shudras and Ati-Shudras written from Brahmical perspective. If we keep this in mind, we can make sense of his polemic, and see its historical necessity and inevitability.¹³

According to Hindu texts, Aryan period was very progressive, glorious and golden period. Phule squarely denied the above interpretation and argued that Bali's

¹¹ Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste conflict and ideology*, Orient Longman, Cambridge University Press, p.149.

¹² Y D Phadke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskriti Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.128.

¹³ G P Deshpande, (Ed) *Selected Writings of Jotirao Phule*, Left Word Publication, New Delhi, 2002, p. 7.

kingdom was the golden period in Indian history. According to Phule, “there was no distinction in Bali’s state. The kingdoms of most of these rulers (chiefs) were in prosperous condition, and it would be no exaggeration to say that the land of king Bali was literally flowing with milk and honey. Just then, the Aryans i.e. the Iranians discovered the useful and novel art of archery. So some adventurous, violent, covetous and ever avaricious Iranian Brahmins, Iranian Kshatriyas and Iranian Vaishyas banded together and invaded this land a number of times and , it is rumoured that at the end of the their campaigns, the Aryans flayed the skin off the bodies of the brave warriors of this land.”¹⁴

Further, he described that Aryans subjugated or displaced the aboriginal people after defeating them and called aboriginal people by such opprobrious terms as Shudras ‘insignificant’, mahari ‘the great foe’, antjyaja, chandal etc.¹⁵ Further he says “Under such leaders as Brahma, Purshram and others, the Brahmins waged very protracted wars against the original inhabitants. They eventually succeeded in establishing their supremacy and subjugating the aborigines to their entire control. Accounts of these conquests, enveloped with a mass of incredible fiction, are found in the books of the Brahmins.”¹⁶ Later when Brahma dies these Aryan, people began to be called Brahmins. Later on, the laws were developed to impose restrictions upon Shudras and Ati-Shudras. When they fought with aboriginal people, Mahars gave them a tough fight; therefore they were treated poorly, and were made outcastes.

Regarding the origin of caste, he wrote that earlier, there were no distinctions between farmers. Later on some farmers continually engaged in land cultivation and became Kunbis, those who started gardening became Malis, and those who started domesticating animals became dhangars. Initially this type of distinctions was based on materialistic changes, but later it came to be called caste.¹⁷

Phule called Shudras and Ati-Shudras as Kshatriyas. However, in his point of view Kshatriya means those who were real inhabitants of this land, of this ‘Kshatra’ region. They used to be known as astiks, pishachas, rakshasas, ahirs, kakatas, bhuts,

¹⁴ P G Patil, (translated by) *Collected Work of Mahatma Phule vol-2 Selection*, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay. 1991. p.8.

¹⁵ Y D Phadke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskrity Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.128.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.p.129.

¹⁷ *Ibid* .p.263.

kolis, mangs, mahars etc. After defeating the aboriginal people of this land, the Aryans, who were divided into three Varnas, incorporated shudras as a fourth category of Varna, thus came into existence the 'chaturvarna system'. In the kingdom of Bali there was no notion of superiority and inferiority within society, all were equal. But Aryans came with their three classes and adopted Shudras as the fourth class. He argued that "finally the Aryans created a fourth category (class) comprising all the Shudras in the land of Baliraja and assimilated them among the Iranian Brahmins, the Iranian Kshatriyas, and the Iranian Vaishyas. They (the Aryan Brahmins) further banned imparting education (instruction) to the original (brave) Kshatriyas of this land (of Bali) i.e. the Shudras and Ati-Shudras here".¹⁸ Thus, Phule has made the ideas behind the chaturvarna clear and stressed that Varna system came into existence due to Aryan people to India.

According to Phule's point of view, caste affiliation cannot be determined on the basis of personal qualities. He wrote, "We cannot determine the various caste distinctions based on the temperaments or personal nature or personal qualities of different human beings. Some parents provided a fine liberal education to their children and made them well behaved and well trained, and thus became qualified to shoulder high responsibilities (positions). On the other hand there are other parents who take great pains (efforts) to provide their children with the best possible education, but they are extremely dull and un-receptive, and hence turn out to be 'learned fools' and vicious to boot, with the result that they tend to perform mean jobs. (You will also grant that) virtue or vice is not hereditary (which can be passed on by the parents to their children). For, we often find that the children of virtuous and profoundly learned parents do not turn out always as virtuous. Nor do the children of cunning (shrewd) Aryan Brahmins turn out to be as virtuous as the Shankaracharya himself. So an impartial and just gentleman can never say that if we choose intelligent children of the Ati-Shudra Chamars (shoe-makers) and train them properly they will not become scholars who will hold a candle even to the Shankaracharya himself."¹⁹ Through this interpretation, Phule gives hopes of inspiration to Shudras and Ati-Shudras that they can break caste restrictions and reach a high level. He broke Hindu religious concepts basing on which caste occupation is decided as also social status.

¹⁸ P G Patil, (translated by) *Collected Work of Mahatma Phule Vol-2 Selection*, Government of Maharashtra Bombay. 1991. P.8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* P.7.

Further he wrote that our creator had sympathy about Shudras and Ati-Shudras' condition, therefore he always sent people who were against caste system. Phule looks towards Mohammedans as believers in equality. He wrote, "Our most compassionate creator, in his infinite mercy, sent the Mohammedans who believe in him as our common creator and who had supplanted (destroyed) all invidious caste distinctions among them, to this country in order to liberate the helpless (crippled) Shudras and Ati-Shudras from the trammels of the cunning, wicked Aryan thraldom. But unfortunately the Mohammedans set at nought his commendable commands and were given to a luxurious way of life such as song and dance, soft and enervating comforts of life and a taste for good and rich viands. Thus, they were so intoxicated with power and luxury (pelf) that they imagined themselves to be in the seventh heaven. So incensed was our creator with the Mohammedans that he cast them into the utmost straits and destroyed all their glory and grandeur".²⁰ After failure of Mohammedans, he saw the liberators in the English people and said, "the English people rose to prominence and prosperity from a barbarous state, endowed them with many admirable qualities (of head and heart) such as bravery, and sent them (directed them) to our country to accomplish his mission of releasing the helpless Shudras and Ati-Shudras in our land from the trammels of the cunning and wicked Aryan Brahmins' thraldom".²¹ He accepted that under the British government, we got individual freedom to present our thoughts without any hesitation.²² Phule saw deism in Muslim and Christian religions as that which created goodwill and brotherhood in society and made all equal in their religion. Moreover, Christianity and Islam emanate not as unequal religions rather they argued for equality; therefore, he talks in favour of both religions but against Hindu religion.²³ Here he saw that both religions were not only destroyers of Brahmin domination but also against idol-worship.

Phule described all aboriginal castes as Shudras and Ati-Shudras and endeavoured to connect them into one identity. It was the process of demarcating

²⁰ *Ibid.* P.10.

²¹ P G Patil, (translated by) *Collected Work of Mahatma Phule vol-2 Selection*, Government of Maharashtra Bombay. 1991. P.11.

²² Hari Narke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule: Shodhachya Navya Vata*, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Jotirao Phule Aani Rajashri Shahu Charitra Sadhane Prakashan Samity, Maharashtra Shasan, 2006, p.26.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.27.

Shudras identity from Brahmin in order to foster a feeling of unity among them, and widen the struggle against Brahmanism to establish universal principle of humanity.

Formation of new identity

The interpretation of the term 'Maratha' was on a regional basis comprising all from Mahar through Brahmin in Maharashtra.²⁴ It means that Phule was conscious that Maratha identity itself was a regional identity, in which he included Mahar and Mang in one identity i.e. Maharashtrian untouchable castes. Phule acknowledged the Brahmins' interpretation that there are only two Varnas in this fourth age called *Satiyug*. It was easy for Phule to gather non-Brahmin people in one identity. Phule called these non-Brahmin castes Bahujan.²⁵ In addition, he called to Shudras and Ati-Shudras Kshatriya. Wherein, in his point of view they are aboriginal of Indian land.

Education to Shudras' and Ati-Shudras' Emancipation

Phule's undertaking the emancipatory venture was aware education was an imperative and a main weapon to free oppressed people from mental slavery. Therefore, his proposition to government that if Shudras and Ati-Shudras children are not willing to go school then government should make a law for compulsory education. To materialise his action, he established schools, teaching students in various disciplines.

When British government established Hunter commission for education, Phule addressed the commission, submitted some demands, and suggested the significance of compulsory education until at least 12 years of age for children.²⁶ He was annoyed by the peoples' attitude of spending huge money to establish temples, but not to open schools for Shudras and Ati-Shudras children. Phule knew that the economic backwardness would not permit Shudra students to attend school. Phule gave more examples about why Shudras and Ati-Shudras students are educationally backward. In that he says due to caste distinction, untouchable castes were prohibited from taking

²⁴ Y D Phadke (ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskrity Mandal, Mumbai. 2006. p.337.

²⁵ *Ibid*.p.772.

²⁶ *Ibid*.p.145.

education.²⁷ Shudras got isolated because British government was spending money on higher education instead of primary education.

His comparative understanding of European slavery with the slavery of Shudras and Ati-Shudras came with a conclusion that Indian slavery is worst than European slavery and he admired, those who fought against domestic slavery.²⁸ He knew that British ignorance about Brahmin exploitation of Shudras in the past and present times. Hence, he emphasised British writers to comprehend inhuman exploitation of Shudras, which might instigate them to know what they have missed out. To emancipate Shudras and Ati-Shudras from caste practices, he asked British government to intervene and prohibit the social practice or social evils by making law to this effect. Phule said due to illiteracy Shudras have a lack of self-respect, economically very poor and they are always dependent on others.²⁹

Religion and exploitation

In Hindu culture, religion is at a high level to which nobody can criticise. Phule called to Hindu religion as an artificial religion crusader against Hindu religion because its religious text is saying that this religion is created by God, but Phule denied their interpretation and gave importance to natural religion rather favouring artificial religion like Hinduism. According to Phule, truth is natural which is same everywhere. Hence, he called his religion *Sarvajanik Satyadharma*.

Phule wrote that Arya Brahmin made religious text to exploit Shudras. This exploitation has occupied their whole life. Before to birth any Shudras child, from that time religious rituals start's to till his death, not only death after death his son should do death anniversary rituals. Through these rituals, Shudra got exploited whole life.

The Aryan banned on Shudras education and they are exploiting them from thousands of year, whose evidence gets in Manu Smriti. While this discrimination was going on that time Buddhism played a great role to emancipate Shudra from Brahmins

²⁷ *Ibid* .p.767.

²⁸ *Ibid* .p.124.

²⁹ *Ibid*.p.767.

artificial religion. Later Shankaracharya took the support of Turkey people to finished Buddhist people, and thereafter Shankaracharya made some changes in Hindu religion to become more firm.

In colonial period, mostly social reformer and nationalist leader were searching their backwardness in their history. There was misconception in the minds of Shudra that cause of their backward or slavery of foreign government was leaving of their own religion but Phule revealed that the Hindu religion and Brahmin conspiracy was the root cause of their slavery. Although, Hindu religion reformer had different interpretation but everyone referred Brahmanical text source of their religion.

According to Phule, Aryan came to India they make slave to Shudras and Ati-Shudras for longer time but this slavery could not sustain without religious text in which every one had assigned their caste occupation, which was basically a religious duty. In this manner Brahmin brought religion in every human act like the Shudras religion to serve the Brahmin, doing thief its thefts religion, doing fraud its fraud's religion, to wash cloth its washer man's religion etc.³⁰ Therefore we can see in Indian society, human behaviour is bound in religion. All human acts will be verified through the religion. Hence, in Indian society, for women there is *Stridharma* (women's religion), therein she is totally imprisoned from thousands year, she could not challenge about her slavery.

In Hindu religion, caste occupation has been related with Dharma. According to Hindu Religion, performing the act of caste occupation is the duty towards religion, for instance, if cobbler makes shoes it is cobbler's religion and so on. Phule rejected this religious concept with sharp remark that it is not their religion but a profession.³¹ They prohibited uttering against religion by contextualising notions into law to prevent other castes from raising their voices. An individual should follow the code of law while performing his caste duty. To program the minds of those belonging to lower castes, they constructed the gospel of occupational relation with code of law. According to Phule, it was not their religious duty; rather it was their profession

³⁰ *Ibid.* p.371.

³¹ *Ibid.* p.482.

where one could change as per his capability. It implies that Phule attacked on hereditary occupation where man cannot change one's social status. Through this idea, Phule did open the process of social endosmosis by giving more stress on individualism. Phule relates individual freedom with human rights, which according to him are natural rights.

By creating the concept of destiny, according to Phule, Brahmins used to fool the Shudras and Ati-Shudras for their own personal interests. He linked mental attitude of people to destiny to their thinking pattern. Brahmins never took the responsibility of something bad that would happen to Shudras and Ati-Shudras but diverted their mind to destiny so that the socially backward will always think that whatever wrong happened to them was predestined. Therefore, Phule was totally against the Hindu concept of fatalism that destiny extends the hope of a better future to the next birth.

In Phule's view, every religion will have at least a modicum of truth. In addition, he says in one home a woman can follow Buddhism, her husband can follow Christianity, their daughter can follow Islam and if their son wants to follow Sarvajanic Satyadharma, he can.³² Here the significant thing is that when he counted all religions he did not count Hinduism with in the framework of religion, which suggested that he had made up his mind that people should not follow Hinduism. Phule concluded that being part of Hindu religion, one cannot change one's social position and one cannot annihilate caste system. He says that, there is no single religion that contains absolute truth.

According to Phule, Brahmins are saying that we accepted Vyas and Vasishtha Rishis (saint) as Brahmins in our religion but they were not Brahmins they were sons of Shudra women. Then Phule asked the counter question; but their fathers were Brahmins, that's why you allowed them in your religion and that is not a big deal. The question is; how many Shudra people did you allow into your religion?³³

³² *Ibid.* p.533.

³³ *Ibid.* p.367.

According to Phule, Hindu religion and culture have patriarchal values because of which Brahmin women were subject to inhuman conditions. Hence, Phule attacked patriarchy as a system. According to Phule, Brahmins have imposed restrictions on women through religion. Most of the religious texts have been written by men and in their own favour. As per Phule's point of view, there is no religion which is written by women. If women were learned enough, then men would never have been able to be so partial and so deceitful.³⁴ Phule considered women as being discriminated within caste system.

God and Exploitation

In Hindu religion, there are stories of incarnation of Vishnu. He debunked all these stories based on rationality. While exploring these stories, he used Thomas Paine's method that is 'in the truth there must be coherence' and if there is no coherence, it means that it is not the truth.

Mahatma Phule wrote that when the Aryans entered India, they made the Shudras slaves, politically and then mentally. According to Phule, it was a mental slavery, which they created through the ban on Shudras' education.³⁵ He wrote that to make Shudras permanent slaves, Aryans wrote some fake texts in their own interest. Later, Aryans said to the Shudras that God dictated these texts. God's purpose was that Shudra would provide service to the Brahmins for fulfilling their life.³⁶ On this basis, the text got legal authority; therefore, nobody could challenge the text. With this legal sanction, they were able to call themselves superior. In this way, the notion of caste and Varna gets indirect legal authority. The Veda's statement that the Four Varnas were born out of four parts of primeval man gives support to the theory of origin of Varna caste system.³⁷ Let us note the simple fact that Phule himself was firmly against any notion of revelation.³⁸

³⁴ *Ibid.*p.531.

³⁵ *Ibid.*p.146.

³⁶ *Ibid.*p.138.

³⁷ Umesh Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabhodhan Aani Varga Jati Prabhutva*, Sugava Prakashan, Pune, 2007, p.312.

³⁸ G P Deshpande, *Selected Writings of Jotirao Phule*, Left Word Publication, New Delhi, 2002, p. 10.

Phule's notion of God was different from that of the Hindu God. Phule called his God 'creator'. He made his God's image based on rationality and humanity. Phule got the concept of his God from deism and from Thomas Paine. According to Paine, our 'Maker' has made us all humans and have got freedom by birth and all are equal by birth.³⁹ Thus, he called God in Marathi as Nirmik.

Brahma was the main figure in Brahmin religion because he was the creator of Varna system. Therefore, Phule critically discussed his image. He showed how Brahma was immoral and tried to destroy his image. Phule verified the Hindu notion for example; Hindu God is formless, then how did he write the four Vedas. Further, he asked the question that even if the God wrote Vedas in Sanskrit and in the world only few people know Sanskrit, then how can we say that he made Vedas for all human beings and for their emancipation. In addition, if God made Vedas for all human beings then Brahmin alone would not have been allowed to read the Vedas.

Brahmanical domination

According to Phule, Brahmins have created some stories to show how they are more respectable than God. He says, They have left it on record, in one of their spurious scriptures, that when "the Sage Bhrigu kicked Lord Vishnu (or Adi-Narayan as they rever) on his chest, he (Vishnu) began to rub (massage) Bhrigu's foot gently lest it (Bhrigu's foot) was hurt (by the kick). One can clearly see through this subterfuge. As Adi-Narayan put up with the indignity of being kicked on his chest by Bhrigu and further demeaned him by gently rubbing (massaging) Bhrigu's foot, the Brahmins wanted to impress upon the minds of the Shudras that even if the Brahmins wanted to kick them and buffet them to death; still they should submit to this indignity meekly. This is the real intention or purpose of the Brahmins."⁴⁰ In this, Phule explained the story of a Brahmin who had made his image at a higher level than God had. The psychological message of this story was that if God hurts a Brahmin, he also feels bad and says sorry. Therefore, Shudras should follow politely, without any resistance, because Brahmins have authority, even are the real *Bhudeo*, Gods on earth.

³⁹ Hari Narke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Gaurao Granth*, Dr. Babahsaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Phule Aani Rajashri Shahu Charitra Sadhane Prakashan Samity, Mumbai, p. 253.

⁴⁰ P G Patil, (translated by) *Collected Work of Mahatma Phule vol-1 Slavery*, Government of Maharashtra Bombay. 1991. P.32.

Phule exposed the influence wielded by Brahmins on British administration. Phule knew the role of media in the reform movement,⁴¹ and he criticised the Marathi media, which was controlled by Brahmins. He criticised the British understanding that Brahmins are representatives of Hindus.

Therefore, he suggested to Queen Victoria that recruitments for all posts should be open to all, based on their caste numbers.⁴² However, most of the posts in the British administration were held by the Brahmins. In this regard, Phule states that if Shudras were not eligible for that post, they should recruit European workers but not Brahmins. This demand for the recruitments of Shudras in British administration was a demand for democratisation of government services. While nationalist leaders were demanding Indianisation of ICS which was related to the ambitions of the newly educated middle class', Phule was describing Shudras' and Ati-Shudras' representation in services.

Phule suggested that one has to leave behind the belief that Brahmins are superior. He attacked the practice of offering food to the Brahmins, in the religious rituals'. He says that when in the Shudras and Ati-Shudras' home any person dies, one has to offer food or donation to Brahmin, but when a Shudra dies, are Brahmins doing such rituals?⁴³

Phule called the Sarvajanik Sabha and National Congress as Arya Bhat Brahmins' organisations.⁴⁴ The Sarvajanik Sabha consisted mostly of Brahmins. Further, he said that if it is a universal organisation then have they ever thought about Mahars' deprivation, or brought them into their Sabha or struggled for them.⁴⁵ He raised the question; how many Mahar and Mangs are literate? This National Congress is always demanding that Indians be taken in services; demands pertain only to the elite castes.

⁴¹ When some Bombay Satysamajist member gave printing press, at that time Phule was not interested to start news paper. And it was issue due to had dispute between Phule and his friend Bhalekar. Phule did apposed because due to Shudras illiteracy.

⁴² Y D Phadke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskrity Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.618.

⁴³ *Ibid*.p.461.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*.p.519.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*.p.520.

Phule criticized some of the contemporary organisations about their isolation from caste issues. He raised the question in his book called *Satsar* that if Brahmo Samaj is saying that we do not believe in the caste distinctions, then why are they not making Shudras *Brahmo* and involving them in the Brahmo Samaj.⁴⁶ Phule concluded that now we do not want any Brahmanical organisation, therefore we do not need to join Brahmo Samaj and Prarthana Samaj.⁴⁷

Phule says Britishers were earning money from taxes, which they are getting in large numbers from Shudras and Ati-Shudras, but instead of using the money for providing education to Shudras and Ati-Shudras, they were spending this amount on Brahmins' children's education. Phule attacked the new educated middle class that was emerging from Brahmin community for not doing work for the rest of illiterate society. He showed how they are following their tradition and modernity in a new way. About their diplomacy Phule wrote that "it is a fact that the children of the cunning Bhat Brahmins were educated (became scholars) through the English schools opened for them out of the funds collected by way of taxes from the ignorant Shudras and Ati-Shudras. They desired to hide effectively from public view the Brahmanical plot which had a religious garb but whose kernel was purely political. This deceit was resorted to in order to save them from possible embarrassment. Thus blindfolded, they hastened to establish two Societies the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj. The religious philosophy on which these two societies are founded is a hotchpotch stealthily purloined from the tenets of Christianity. The (Brahmin) followers of these two societies (meditate, worship) with closed eyes before the imaginary Brahmaji, and by this ruse (practice) are attempting strenuously once more to instil into the minds of the ignorant Shudras and Ati-Shudras the old fiction (heresy) regarding the imaginary Brahma."⁴⁸

In Hindu religion, there was a ban on undertaking a journey out of the country over the seven seas. Phule connected this issue with Brahmins' conspiracy and wrote that the ban on journey over water was in order to continue their domination. They feared that if Shudras are exposed to Western society, this will demystify slavery and

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p.365.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p.366.

⁴⁸ P G Patil, (translated by) *Collected Work of Mahatma Phule vol-2 Selection*, Government of Maharashtra Bombay. 1991. P.24.

they would not tolerate Brahmin domination. Further, he says that due to this ban we could not progress. Brahmins prevented Shudras and Ati-Shudras from reading the Vedas because they did mischievous things in their past and the evidence to prove their mischief is in Vedas. Therefore, they were not willing to permit others to read Vedas nor did they encourage the translation of Vedas because they knew its reality and phoniness. According to Phule though the British were exploiting Shudras, their colonial policies were giving Shudras an opportunity to come up economically.

Phule looks upon Muslim and British rulers as the emancipators of Shudras and Ati-Shudras.⁴⁹ He argued that Muslims gave freedom to Shudras and Ati-Shudras from Arya Brahmins by involving them in their religion of one God and brotherhood and started inter caste marriage and inter dining with a human dignity. Christian missionaries and some other Britishers translated all Brahmanical literature that opened the eyes of Shudras and Ati-Shudras to the exploitation by Aryan Brahmins.

Phule attacked the Peshwai regime.⁵⁰ He exposed the inhuman attitude of the state towards Shudras and Ati-Shudras and the rigidity of caste in their rule with a high level of caste distinction. Rigidity somewhat was to be diluted under the British government when Shudras and Ati-Shudras got the opportunity to emancipate themselves. Therefore, thanking his creator he wrote that, “the roots are eternally grateful and beholden unto the all merciful God and they further pray to him, “O Lord! (we make this statement because) after the advent of the English Raj (rule) here, the common people heaved a sigh of relief, for they were freed, at long last, from the inhuman oppression and tyranny (born of envy and jealousy) religious, ethical administrative and diverse other manifestations (of the same)”⁵¹

He started social awareness campaign among the Shudras and Ati-Shudras to open their minds to the question as to why the Brahmins are the owners and Shudras and Ati-Shudras, their slaves. He exhorted the Shudras and Ati-Shudras to cast off the fake religion that is the root cause of their slavery. In his point of view, originally, there was no caste distinction among human beings and as they trusted on Brahmins’

⁴⁹ Y D Phadke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskriti Mandal, Mumbai. 2006.p.478.

⁵⁰ State of Maratha rule by Brahmin minister called Peshwai.

⁵¹ P G Patil, (translated by) *Collected Work of Mahatma Phule vol-1 Slavery*, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay. 1991. P.53.

lip interpretation, it made them to believe on caste distinction without any enquiry. In Marathi, there is rhyme, '*rushiche kule ani nadiche mule yacha shodha karu naye*'⁵² meaning clan of rushi (saint) and root of river one should not ask. He attacked on this religious concept, which would not allow the non-Brahmins to do a critical analysis of the Hindu religion.

He wrote that Ramdas⁵³ created negative attitude in Shudra people, Ramdas says that you ask your own selves that there is nobody happy in the world. This way Ramdas tried to give a pessimistic lens to look at the world. Phule criticized some Maharashtrian saints like Dnyaneshwar and Ramdas. He wrote that these saints did not talk on shudras' exploitation; they did work only for their own castes.⁵⁴

Besides social prejudices, Phule also identified economic reasons behind exploitation of Shudras-the preponderance of Brahmins, as landowners and administrators. The village accountant and keeper of land records was called *Kulkarni*. According to Phule, the Kulkarni played a great role in Shudras' exploitation. He said, "Many kulkarni's catch hold of some illiterate Shudras in dire distress, lend money to them and made them sign mortgage deeds in favour of themselves (the Kulkarnis). Kulkarnis incorporate a difficult set of condition of mortgage deeds from the ones they read out to the illiterate and their own caste men (other Kulkarnis) aid them in this nefarious practice. The illiterate unsuspecting Shudras affix their thumb impressions on these mortgage deeds, and in due course of time the rapacious Kulkarnis pocket the Vatan of the Shudras, to the Shudras' eternal mortification and penury."⁵⁵

Myth to History

Phule's struggle was for the emancipation of Shudras and Ati-Shudras. Phule knew that in any struggle a people should know their history because history provided inspiration for an ideal society. Phule understood that history has been written by the

⁵² Y D Phadke (ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskriti Mandal, Mumbai. 2006. p.369.

⁵³ Ramdas was Brahmin saint in Maharashtra.

⁵⁴ Y D Phadke (ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskriti Mandal, Mumbai. 2006. p.175.

⁵⁵ P G Patil, (translated by) *Collected Work of Mahatma Phule vol-1 Slavery*, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay. 1991. P.48.

Brahmins and Shudras' and Ati-Shudras' history was ignored by them. Therefore, Phule searched for Shudras' history in the Hindu religious texts and traditional local myths. For writing the history of Shudras and Ati-Shudras Phule, accessed Puranic myths and therefore he made traditions, customs and the Puranas.⁵⁶ Because Shudra were far away from education from long time, he was to follow a method that had been developed in Europe where Vico had introduced to rewriting history that Phule got through the Christian missionary.⁵⁷

In the Hindu religion, there is the story of king Bali who was killed by Vaman, the fifth incarnation of Vishnu. This story has been described in Mahabharata and Bhagawat Purana. In south Indian local tradition and particularly Keralites⁵⁸ and Maharashtrians recognised Bali as cultivators' king.⁵⁹ According to the Puranas, Bali was the king of Asuras and was very popular among the people. In this story Vaman asked Bali three steps of space and Bali granted, Vaman then put his three step in following way, first on Earth, sky and last step he putted leg on his head and pushing him into hell. After Bali's death, the Shudras people lost their glory and were degraded. Phule took support of this myth to depict Bali's kingdom as the golden era of India. Phule constructed Bali's image as a philanthropist king. Bali's state was divided in nine regions (*Khand*), therefore these regions' chief officers were called *Khandobas*. These officers *Bhairoba*, *Jotiba* and the nine *Khandobas*, all took care of people's happiness. To create Bali's image Phule used traditional myths and some stories, on whose basis he showed that Bali was (*as Rayatecha Raja*) people's king. He described how all people were happy in his state and were equal. Therefore, people still took his name in their daily lives. Phule says that therefore people are always expecting that Bali's kingdom should return. Due his supposed greatness, in Maharashtra there is one popular proverb that '*eeda pida jao aani Baliche rajya yeo*'⁶⁰ 'May sorrows and troubles disappear and the kingdom of Bali come'.

⁵⁶ Umesh Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabhodhan Aani Varga Jati Prabhutva*, Sugava Prakashan, Pune, 2007, p.333.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.333.

⁵⁸ Onam festival and its ten days calibration in Kerala, in this festival people remembers to Bali.

⁵⁹ Hari Narke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule: Shodhachya Navya Vata*, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Jotirao Phule Aani Rajashri Shahu Charitra Sadhane Prakashan Samity, Maharashtra Shasan, 2006, p.196.

⁶⁰ Y D Phadke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskrity Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.162.

Phule used Bali's myth to illustrate Brahmins and Shudras' differentiation in their cultural traditions.⁶¹ Phule depicted that Bali's kingdom was a democratic one, and he has shown the democratic notion in Bali's state. Bali was ideal humanitarian person to him but not in historical contest. Therefore, Bali's name was not only used for Indian contest but also in the European to represent those who fought against injustice.⁶² In Europe, Phule called those who struggled against slavery and injustice, as Bali's followers. Phule wrote that when Shudras were exploited by Brahmins with the assistance of religious texts, that time King Bali had come to provide justice to them on the basis of equality and to establish the state of Nirmik (creator).

As about, inter caste marriages, Phule has showed that there was (in Bali's kingdom) inter caste marriage among Shudras in their history. He wrote that this time there is prohibition about inter caste marriage but inter dining is open, on this basis we can say that they were (kunbi, mali, dhangar) one farmer caste's people.⁶³ Here for inter caste marriage Phule gave instance that Khanderao of Jijuri who was the kulswami of Shudra married Mhalsabai (kunbi caste) and Banabai (dhangar caste), through this instance he wrote that there was inter caste marriage among Shudras.⁶⁴ All these instances occur in the Bali's state where culture of inter caste marriage and inter dining used to happen without any restriction. In this way, Phule depicted the Kingdom of Bali as a welfare state and shown that it was caste less society.

Alternative culture

In every society, two type of traditions exist; one is elite tradition and the other tradition of the masses.⁶⁵ Since ancient times such type of traditions existed. Most of the anti-caste culture emerged against dominant culture but later on these traditions became part of the traditional caste system. Thus, these anti-caste movements were

⁶¹ Hari Narke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule: Shodhachya Navya Vata*, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Jotirao Phule Aani Rajashri Shahu Charitra Sadhane Prakashan Samity, Maharashtra Shasan, 2006, p.196.

⁶² Y D Phadke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskriti Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.174 -75.

⁶³ *Ibid* .p.263.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*.p.263.

⁶⁵ Hari Narke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule: Shodhachya Navya Vata*, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Jotirao Phule aani Rajashri Shahu charitra sadhane Prakashan samity, Maharashtra Shasan, 2006, p.4.

against caste system but later they struggled hard to fight against the caste but with less success. Phule knew that caste system was bound in tradition and cultural values that always support to retain caste system. Phule thought without annihilating this traditional culture, caste system could not be finished. Therefore, he started a new alternative culture in relation to golden era in Bali's kingdom, while other reformers were searching their lost glory in Vedas.

Phule saw that cultural domination in the form of caste is more powerful than others. Therefore, he sought to give up Hindu culture by establishing a new culture as he knew that in Hindu religion, Shudras' and Ati-Shudras' emancipation will not materialise. In his new culture, there was a revolutionary feeling and it was against every type of cultural domination and exploitation. According to Gail Omvedt, it was a Cultural Revolution. Through this Cultural Revolution, he denied the role of Brahmins in religion.

Hindu religion, in all its rituals needed the mediation of a Brahmin. Without him, a ritual cannot get legal authority and it would not be accepted by society, but Phule denied the Brahmin's role. Phule expressed his sensitivity in his poem with dissatisfaction of Hindu religion. He appeals to the Shudras and Ati-Shudras to leave this fake religion to create a brotherhood among them. Thus, he established a new religion called 'Sarvajanic Satyadharma' (the universal religion of truth). As we know, caste is nothing but culture that has its association with religion. To liberate them from cultural slavery, he developed an alternative culture with all new rituals. These rituals, introduced under the banner of Satyashodhak Samaj and for significant occasions like marriage, worshiping, had their affiliation to respecting non-Brahmin heroes. At a meeting held in Bombay in 1885, for instance, Phule was at pains to emphasize that the lower castes should organise their ritualistic and religious activity themselves, so that the role of Brahman priest becomes redundant.⁶⁶ Bali and his all ministers are ideal heroes in his poems and created their image as the emancipators Shudras and Ati-Shudras in order to generate hope in Shudras to regain Bali's state. In Hindu religion, there were various rituals performed among various castes but it is decided according to their social status. On the contrary, he clearly mentioned that

⁶⁶ G P Deshpande (Ed), *Selected Writings of Jotirao Phule*, Left Word Publication, New Delhi, 2002, p. 5.

these rituals could be used by any castes; there would not be any demarcation on the basis of caste status.

The concept of merit (Punya) was related with complex rituals in Hindu religion. On other side, Phule's conception of merit is that it lies in those who do not hurt others mentally and physically. Phule knew that if Shudras and Ati-Shudras will follow Hindu culture then they would not be liberated because following Hindu culture means to maintain the existing Brahmanical social order. In other words, according to M N Srinivas (sociologist), it is the process of sanskritization where the lower castes follow elite culture and standard of living in order to attain superior social status. This process of emulation goes in favour of caste system having the base in Varna.⁶⁷ But Phule did not follow elite culture. Therefore, Phule denied sanskritization process to establish alternative culture as an option to Shudras and Ati-Shudras rooted in India's history. Phule discovered Shudras and Ati-Shudras' culture and tradition in non-Brahmin culture. This was a process of exploring new ideas and possibilities rooted in the old tradition of anti-caste struggle.

In India, Sanskrit was a religious language and culturally an elite language. Hence, Shudras were not allowed to learn Sanskrit. All Hindu religious texts were in Sanskrit. In Pre-British Maharashtra, Sanskrit had political support in Peshwai. However, after decline of Peshwas, Britishers were not willing to hurt Brahmins and started Sanskrit colleges in Pune with fixed donations for Sanskrit education. Therefore, when Phule started his writings, he did not use elite language and he denied supremacy of Sanskrit language. He wrote his literature in Marathi, which was a language of the masses. Phule rarely used the term Hindu or Hindustan. When Phule talks of India as a nation with the vision of *Balistan* means place or land of Bali. Here he totally denied that it was the land of Hindus.

Mid nineteenth century onwards in colonial Maharashtra, most of the social reformers and nationalist leaders used Shivaji's history for their struggle with a variety of interpretations. There was a different type of Shivaji's image created by Brahmins that Shivaji was seen as '*go Brahmin pratipalak*' meaning protector of

⁶⁷ Umesh Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabhodhan Aani Varga Jati Prabhutva*, Sugava Prakashan, Pune, 2007, p.8.

Brahmins and cows. Phule denied Brahmanical interpretation about Shivaji's image, discovered Shivaji's tomb, and described his contribution in Maharashtra. He made his image as a benevolent king and king of cultivators. Therefore, in his poem he called Shivaji '*kulwadi bhushan*' meaning an ornament of cultivators.

The Universal Religion of Truth

Ever since ancient times in India many religions emerged as anti-caste religions and later became victims of Indian caste system. Buddhism was an anti-Varna religion but this was almost driven away from India. Therefore, Phule could not get a religion of anti-caste nature having its base of equality. As a result, Phule established '*Sarvajanik Satyadharma*'.⁶⁸ According to Phule, truth is the base of religion. Truth is the single religion in the world. Phule talks on religion, not from a conservative point of view by commenting on Indian religious but with an enlarged world view. According to Phule, truth is same everywhere, which is why he called his religion as '*the universal religion of truth*'.

In the Phule's point of view there is no single religion carrying the seeds of universal truth from beginning to the end. He has shown that how in Hindu religion there is no coherence, leading to utter inconsistency. To demonstrate this, Phule critically described the stories within the Hindu texts about God and religion. He says if God has created all people then why some are superior and the rest are inferior. If all rivers are to flow into the sea, then how only one river would be pure?⁶⁹

To gain God's (creator) goodwill, Phule stressed on human relations, which would be good for all human beings. He denied taking his name constantly for his prayer; he gave emphasised on act of humankind's betterment. He denied the process of food offering to the God. He wrote, on the earth, our creator has created all the existing things. Therefore, what is the need to give back his things? He wrote if you want to offer something to God, then offer to those who are struggling for the cause of

⁶⁸ Hari Narke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule: Shodhachya Navya Vata*, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Jotirao Phule Aani Rajashri Shahu Charitra Sadhane Prakashan Samity, Maharashtra Shasan, 2006, p.21.

⁶⁹ Y D Phadke (ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskritiy Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.459.

the society and to those who are excluded. We should offer food to everybody those who are struggling, for the good of the humanity; we should not make a distinction if one is a Brahmin, a foreigner or an untouchable.⁷⁰

Even though there is no all-encompassing truth in any religion, but in all religions there are some truths. Phule took a secular stand and he says, we should not be obsessive about our religion and we should not hate any other religion. He wrote that “the reason of this deep division among them according to me is as follows: they do not think in impartial and dispassionate (rational) manner about their own religion or about other (people’s) religion, but hold (believe) obdurately and obstinately that their own religion has the monopoly or truth. I am convinced that if all of us think impartially and dispassionately about our (different) religions, we would never be so foolish or rash to dub other people’s religion as untrue.”⁷¹ Here Phule’s idea is similar to deism.

In the *Satsar* Phule demonstrates that the essence of Hinduism is that the majority Shudras and Ati-Shudras should serve Brahmins for no avail. For our assistance or bitterness whenever we want, we will adopt to Mohammedans or Christianity either we will ask to our creator to provide good religion for us. Arya Brahmin never took care of us.⁷² Here Phule comes to a conclusion that now one should leave Hindu religion.

We can understand through his thought that what type of ideal society he was expecting. His book ‘Sarvajanic Satyadharma Pustak’ was authored in his last days. In that he wrote, I have written this book for ‘*prabhudha*’ means ‘enlightened’ people.⁷³ We can see here that Buddha serves an ideal person to him. He wrote that one who does not fear anything and behaves truly forever, sharing happiness with all human beings would be called Buddha, who is an ideal for human beings.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ *Ibid* .p.464.

⁷¹ P G Patil, (translated by) *Collected Work of Mahatma Phule vol-2 Selection*, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay. 1991. p.38.

⁷² Y D Phadke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskrity Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.369.

⁷³ *Ibid*.p.560.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*.p.574.

Social Change based on equality

Phule's understanding was that all are equal in society, which is made by nature. To establish equality he attacked patriarchy. Phule says Buddha, Christ, Musalmans, mahars, Brahman are all brothers,⁷⁵ and must treat each other as brothers. In Phule's viewpoint, our creator had made all of us, then how can we say that one is superior and another inferior. Both men and women got freedom by birth that is an intrinsic fundamental right. All human beings have a right to use their human rights; nobody can take away from them. Here he denied hierarchical social status and wrote that we should allow every one to enjoy their rights. About freedom, he wrote that our creator has given all human beings full freedom to express, to write, and to publish their personal opinions and views regarding the human rights. Phule stated that along with Brahmin women, all the women belonging to Shudras and Ati-Shudras fold should get equal rights like upper caste men do. According to Phule, all human beings are alike.

Untouchability

Phule traced the origin of untouchability in Aryan and non-Aryan struggle. At the arrival of Aryans into India, there were struggles between the inhabitants of this land and Aryan Brahmins. The original inhabitants lost the battle, they were imposed with severe restrictions through the religious law, and untouchability was a result of this, which was to continue for two thousand and more years. Arya Brahmin lawyers fixed the position of mangs and mahars to a degraded state with religious sanctions. Manusmriti imposed prohibitions on them and they became outcastes to live away from the society. Phule wrote that Aryans were always enjoying with Britishers, drinking and eating along with them without any hesitation but they keep away themselves from mangs. If marriages were conducted at mang's home, they take donation and accept good food from Mangs and still they dub them untouchables.⁷⁶ Our creator has created everybody as pure as anybody and no body is impure. There is no one brilliant by birth and all have equal brains. Due to untouchability, the

⁷⁵*Ibid.*p.290.

⁷⁶*Ibid.* p.592.

untouchables are deprived economically and religious law code prevented them to take any other profession and forced them indulge in robbing others. Phule touched the basic problems that were faced by untouchables in their daily life. Phule wrote that in our history Shudras' condition was very pathetic due to slavery. If a Brahmin will keep physical relation with the Shudra women, he would get very soft punishment, but for the same crime, Shudra will get strict and hard punishment.

Phule suggested that from now, onwards Brahmins should change their behaviour and if they will bring change in their behaviour then they will get good response from Shudras and Ati-Shudras. For that, he wrote, "there is only one remedy for their sins. All the Aryan Bhats/Brahmins regard themselves shamelessly as the earth-Gods. If they genuinely repent for this crime, and if they search for the (eternal) truth and if they sincerely try to follow the path of the truth (if they genuinely worship the truth and try to translate it into actions), then (and then) only will the Shudras and Ati-Shudras, and the bhils (Tribals) and the fisherman etc. will not take revenge upon them for their past and present crimes committed against them, but will certainly forgive them (*magnanimously*)."⁷⁷ And "when all the Aryans Bhats/Brahmins will discard (through away) their spurious, wicked, bogus scriptures and when they will begin to behave in a truthful manner (when they will follow the path of the truth in their dealings with) towards all human beings (all men and women), then all the men and women in the wide world will bow down reverently before the benevolent creator of us all, and will pray unto him fervently for the welfare and happiness of the said Aryan Bhats/Brahmins (who were their erstwhile tormentors) undoubtedly (I have no doubt about it)."⁷⁸ Regarding Brahmins' behaviour, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar tendered advice to Brahmins to make improvement in their behaviour and gave an indication to Brahmins that if they would not bring changes within them then they will face problem. Here it seems Agarkar had observed the Satyashodhak Samaj's activities, and their attitude towards Brahmins.

⁷⁷ P G Patil, (translated by) *Collected Work of Mahatma Phule vol-2 Selection*, Government of Maharashtra Bombay, 1991. P.32.

⁷⁸ *Ibid* . P.32.

As regards who can be called true people, Phule wrote that “men or women who do not regard either themselves or their blood relations or their own kith and kin or their own friends and companions as the only pre-eminent, sacrosanct or specially privileged *hereditarily*, and who do not regard other human beings as of mean lineage or as unholy, such persons should be designated as the votaries or followers of the truth.”⁷⁹ Though he emphasised on moral aspects of life, Phule blended spiritual life with practical life.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* P.35.

CHAPTER-IV
IDEA OF EMANCIPATION AND
DISCOURSE ON CASTE

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IDEA OF EMANCIPATION AND DISCOURSE ON CASTE

In the nineteenth century, most of the Maharashtrian reformers were influenced by the liberalism. When they started to speak out on social problems, they used the notion of liberalism to perpetuate their ideas. Within the frame of the liberal values, they raised certain issues related to women, economic, social, and political problems. Liberalism provided great ideological support to Indian nationalism in the late nineteenth century. The reformers received the values of liberalism from the west. Liberalism had brought about major changes in western countries like the establishment of the values of individualism, human rights and democracy, which encouraged the reformers to bring about social reforms in Maharashtra.

John Locke was the founder thinker of liberal theory. Being a religious person, he links individual rights and human welfare with the existence of God. J S Mill has given substance to human morality. Human dignity constitutes central value for him. The individualism is considered a key value for the freedom in any society. All human beings have a right to get happiness. If anybody for his own happiness snatches another person's happiness, it is an immoral act and injustice to that person. Therefore, as long as one individual's freedom does not create trouble for others each individual should have, food, attire, education, marriage, occupation, consultation of liberalism, this is, the ideology of liberalism.¹

The general belief of liberalism is that the aim of politics is to preserve individual rights by providing the maximum freedom of choice. The common aspect of socialism and conservatism emerged with the conjunction of the Enlightenment, the industrial revolution and the political revolutions of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. Liberalism retains a faith in the possibilities of ameliorating the present social conditions, which is related to the idea of progress widely accepted in

¹ G B Sardar, *Ranade Pranit Samajik Sudharnechi Tatvamimansa*, Published by Pune University, Pune, 1973, p.85.

the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The idea embraced the prospects for development in knowledge, in welfare, and in morality.²

In the west, the classical liberalism started taking shape in 1688 in England. John Locke (1632-1704) was the main philosopher of revolutionary liberalism. His revolutionary liberalism was based on 'social agreement' and 'natural rights'.³ Thomas Paine was a great revolutionary liberalist. Another liberal was John Stuart Mill.⁴ In nineteenth century colonial Maharashtra, Phule, Agarkar, Ranade and Gokhale were influenced by his thoughts. They discussed liberal values in the framework of social issues from the perspective of revolutionary and classical liberalism. While Mahatma Phule was influenced by revolutionary liberalism, Ranade, Agarkar and Gokhale were influenced by classical liberalism.⁵

Maharashtrian socio-political thinkers were attracted towards the French Revolution as well as the political structure and the governance in England. During this time, the process of the emergence of nationalism had started in Maharashtra.⁶ Those who read the history of England and social philosophy were impressed by liberal ideas. The new middle class had started internalizing new knowledge and trades. However, this liberal consciousness did not pull them out from the clutches of caste superiority which was based on prestige.⁷

Liberalism and the Indian social system

Materialism was at the root of the western liberalism, which was entirely different from Indian society. Liberalism was in favor of materialistic changes brought about by the rapid industrialization. Therefore, liberalism got full support from the middle class who were mostly traders. Liberalism emerged as a value which countered the medieval social structure. During the Renaissance, the religious authority was questioned and subsequently divorced from politics. Liberalism gave

² This definition has taken from the Oxford dictionary of politics.

³ Hari Narke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Gaurao Granth*, Dr. Babahsaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Phule Aani Rajashri Shahu Charitra Sadhane Prakashan Samiti, Mumbai, p. 252.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 252.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 251.

⁶ Nalini Pandit, *Maharashtratil Rashtrawadacha Vikas*, Mumbai, 1955, p.24.

⁷ *Ibid*, 1955, p.18.

support to natural rights and human dignity. In western society, an individual can reach any position through his capacity that could be conceptualized in terms of individual mobility but Indian society was based on hierarchy where individual cannot change his social status. Therefore, when Maharashtrian reformers enforced liberal values, it had a profound impact upon them.

The Indian social structure is peculiarly characterized by the Varna caste system. The caste status had the sanction of religion and was called a natural right. Due to religious law, individual rights were denied. In Indian past history some anti-Varna caste movements emerged which fought for individual rights. Therefore, these values were not new in Indian tradition. The seeds of liberal values were possessed by the lower castes; they were aware of resistance against social and economic exploitation.

In the Indian society, two types of culture existed; one of the lower castes and other of the upper castes. The dominant culture of the upper castes had spread to all castes. This dominant culture always followed the hierarchical system in which liberal ideas had no space. Therefore, in the Indian tradition, it was difficult to adopt the values of liberalism. The emancipation concept was related to religion instead of personal efforts. There were so many examples about personal efforts for the religious emancipation and hence, gradually culture of sacrifice for the political, economic and ideological freedom started as a new idea for India.

Individualism and Caste

Indian social system would not allow castes to change their status, due to its nature of graded inequality, for common cause which one needs the people's participation across caste and creed. Therefore, there was a need to emancipate and give individual rights to everybody from caste, village and family, which was still based on the medieval social structure. Indian social system is based on inequality but individualism demands freedom and equality in society. Old tradition and culture

were major obstacles in the way of individual freedom and social progress. That is precisely why the liberal ideology took the form of social reform movement.⁸

Ranade's liberal idea shared propinquity with the aristocratic (abhijat) individual economic principle, and modern method of European historical analysis and pride of Indian culture and tradition.⁹ According to Ranade, it is not easy to accept a new tradition because society is bound by old traditions. Therefore, to convince people, Ranade made a coalition between tradition and liberalism.¹⁰ While everywhere an aggressive individualism was in discourse, in that epoch Ranade roughly conjectured the motives of the welfare state and which he connected to individualism and collectivism; this shows his prophetic vision.¹¹ Ranade adopted a realistic approach towards social reform. He supplemented with religious texts and western knowledge his critical arguments, which were legally grounded.

The burning question whether the state should interfere in individual's life or not? In this regard, the people who favored the state's role in making laws to prevent social evils adopted liberal ideas. Ranade was in favor of state's action to eradicate social evils and said, "Individual liberty of action is no doubt a great force, but this liberty has its limitations imposed by the fact that no man's liberty should encroach upon the liberty of those who surround him. Whenever there is large amount of unredressed evil suffered by people who cannot adopt their own remedy, the state has function to regulate and minimize the evil."¹²

Agarkar took a rational stand to understand the need of old tradition and critically analyzed Indian traditions and customs. He believed that the ideas of Mill and Spencer can inspire individuals to achieve the idea of freedom. For the progress of Indian society he emphasized on material changes. According to Agarkar's philosophy, individual is one free value and individual exists not for society but

⁸ G B Sardar, *Ranade Pranit Samajik Sudharnechi Tatvamimansa*, Published by Pune University, Pune, 1973, p.100.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.73.

¹⁰ Nalini Pandit, *Maharashtratil Rashtrwadacha Vikas*, Mumbai, 1955, p.41.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 1955, p.49.

¹² Mahadeva Govind Ranade, *Religious And Social Reform-A Collection of Essays And Speeches*, Compiled by Kolasker M B, Bombay, 1902, p.103.

society exists for an individual.¹³ On the contrary, according to Tilak society is more important than an individual.¹⁴ Agarkar, in conformity with the principle of reforms, demanded that the British government should make laws. Tilak said that 'Self reform' and 'Self welfare', are the basis of world reform and world welfare. To do self-welfare or charity, the knowledge of individuality should be there in our heart.

For Agarkar, individual was a sacred entity and he urged that all individuals irrespective of their castes, creeds and sex, should get the opportunity to develop their best potentialities in themselves. It is this principle of equality of opportunity that is founded idea because of unprofitable circumstances. The society did not have the capacity to assimilate this ideology¹⁵, despite of having been enriched by ideas adopted from Mill and Spencer. Agarkar might have spread this ideology in the lower castes instead of elite castes to bring change in society because revolutionary ideas have always been welcomed by depressed classes as sufferers are aware of the imperativeness of such ideas and reflect their personal agonies.

According to Bhandarkar, our social system is a great obstacle in the achievements of individual rights. Due to social restrictions, people cannot progress. He says that the object of social reform is to eradicate such evil customs as it had undermined the energies of the Indian people and prevented the free expansion of their powers and capacities.¹⁶

On human right, Phule says that our creator (nirmik) created us equal without any idea of superior or inferior. All are equal to enjoy the freedom of individuality and this individual freedom is a natural right. When Phule talks of individual freedom, he confers equal rights to women. To bring individual rights in the society he emphasized on caste annihilation. Without the annihilation of caste, there would be no equality, fraternity and liberty. Thus most of the reformers emphasized on individuality in connection with the caste system but in the action to annihilate caste they failed.

¹³ Nalini Pandit, *Maharashtra Rashtrawadacha Vikas*, Mumbai, 1955, p.81.

¹⁴ Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *Rashtriyatvachi Kalpana*, 23 April 1901, [SLT] vol-5, Kesari Prakashan, 1976, p.504.

¹⁵ Nalini Pandit, *Maharashtra Rashtrawadacha Vikas*, Mumbai, 1955, p.91.

¹⁶ R G Bhandarkar, *Collected Works of Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, 4 Vols*, Ed by The Late Narayan Bapuji Utgikar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, 1928-1933. p.527.

Nation, Nationalism and Caste

After the establishment of the British government, nationalist feelings were aroused. For thousands of years Indian caste, creeds and traditions were bound with culture of Hindu consciousness. Revivalism drew from the old literature, philosophy and history, to initiate the Nationalist movement in Maharashtra.

The basis of Nationalism was equal culture; equal desires with an equal interest to build the social unity. In the nineteenth century, most of the reformers carefully studied ancient and modern histories of both the west and India and found nationalism and nation built based on language, religion, community and region¹⁷. Indian reformers had great examples of western nationalism.

Ranade critically analyzed the condition of religion, society, politics, economy and education for nation building. According to Ranade, British government was Gods gift, but it did not mean that he was in favour of the British government; rather he criticized British colonial policy to create a feeling of nationalism. Ranade was in favour of reconstructing or reestablishment of Hindu culture, rather than breaking tradition without giving a thought over it. In his point of view, Vedic religion not only stands for spirituality but also for the achievement of prosperity. Ranade knew that without bringing any changes in the minds of people through social reform, we could not lead a nation to progress. Like Mill and Spencer, he also believed that the transformation of a society is a gradual process.

In 1869 while the Deccan Sabha was going to be established, it published its manifesto, in which Ranade wrote that “the spirit of liberalism implies a freedom from race and creed prejudices and a steady devotion to all that seeks to do justice between man and man.”¹⁸

From the above remark, it seems that Ranade had accepted the view that they are weak to create a good feeling within society. He wrote, “This has been a weakness

¹⁷ Umesh Bagade, *Phule Ambedkarancha Rashtrawad*, Krantijoti Savitribai Phule Prakashan , Nashik, 2002, p.1.

¹⁸ G B Sardar, *Ranade Pranit Samajik Sudharnechi Tatvamimansa*, Published by Pune University, Pune, 1973, p.74-75.

of the Samaj movement, both of our own and of the Arya and Brahma Samaj that they have failed as yet to stir the heart of the nation, and their influence is only operative over a few souls brought up in a particular atmosphere.”

Bhandarkar knew that there are huge distinctions among various provinces, because India is more different than the nations of Europe. There are thousands of castes, and many languages. Bhandarkar thanked the British government, because of its nature of equal justice. He says that there is no distinction between Brahmin and Mahar in the British state; both are getting the same punishment for the same crime. Due to prohibition of education to other lower castes, our country is losing source of knowledge.¹⁹ Bhandarkar observed the caste restrictions to be a reason of our backwardness.

In Bhandarkar's point of view the caste system prevents the formation of a homogeneous nationality. He says “we must remember that caste is the greatest monster we have to kill. But for annihilation of caste even education and intercourse as regards food does not destroy it.”²⁰ But when he felt that people could not come out to destroy caste at that time he says that “if, however, you think we can form a nation with a caste, let us try. But at least, caste jealousies must be forgotten in practical matters, not opposed to caste rules, and we should act towards each other as if no caste differences existed between us.”²¹ Further, Bhandarkar knew that the western knowledge is a source of creating awareness to nationalism among the people. English education and European ideas provided great opportunity to inward with feeling of the new National aspirations, which were grafted on our mind.

Vishnushastri Chiplunkar was Tilak's Guru and his nationalism draws from his own language, history, culture, country, province, class and caste and these were the source of his nationalism.²² This ultra nationalism was based upon the glory of Vedic culture for Chiplunkar and Tilak. Through the pride of old tradition, culture and caste, Chiplunkar did attack on other reformer and western thinkers. Due to this

¹⁹ R G Bhandarkar, *Collected Works of Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, 4 Vols*, Ed by The Late Narayan Bapuji Utgikar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, 1928-1933. p.490.

²⁰ *Ibid*. p.515.

²¹ *Ibid*. p.524.

²² Nalini Pandit, *Maharashtratil Rashtravadacha Vikas*, Mumbai, 1955, p.58.

conservative stand his idea became obstacles in the way of modernity and social progress. This ultra-nationalist and moderate ideology had emerged before the establishment of Indian National Congress.

Tilak knew that the caste is a great obstacle to create nationalism among people. For Tilak national feeling is greater than other, wherein nation can reach its top level. He says, although there are some social fault lines, these may not act as hurdles to a nation's upliftment provided there is a notion of freedom and nationalism among its people.²³ The same statement was made by M G Ranade at Pune in front of the Gaikward, the king of Baroda state.²⁴ Therefore, Tilak made clear the distinction between social and political reform. He said that social and political reform is very different. If we really want the progress of nation, then we should concentrate more to generate nationalism.²⁵ Here Tilak gave the example of Burma where political reform brought social changes in the condition of the women. It also had casteless society despite having lack of great feeling about nation.

Later Tilak made it clear that Hindu religion and the Hindu nation is more important to him rather than social reform. If we try to promote national pride and the desire to work altruistically, then the reforms we want will come automatically.²⁶ Ranade had a different opinion on this issue that any era is not separate and man is representative of all eras. All eras are a result of individual effort. Therefore, humans should work for all good things. We should not be dependent on the times because it shows our weakness.²⁷

According to Tilak, the essence of nationalism is egalitarian welfare. Therefore founding nationality on the basis of one religion, one language, and one region would be of no avail.²⁸ This is a significant criteria laid down by Tilak. For this purpose, he stressed on public education and self-respect for nationality and added that the emergence of the concept of nation state, there is the need of public

²³ B G Tilak, *Samajik Sudharneche Sarg-2*, 16 May 1893, [SLT] vol-5, Kesari Prakashan, 1976, p.142.

²⁴ Y D Phadke (Ed), *Mahatma Phoolle Samgrha Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskriti Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.401.

²⁵ B G Tilak, *Samajik Sudharna Aani Rashtriy Unnati*, Lokmanya B G Tilak, 5 May 1903, [SLT] vol-5, Kesari Prakashan, 1976, p.157-58.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.159.

²⁷ Narher Phatak, *Mahadevo Govind Ranade Yanche Charitra*, Mumbai, 1924, p. 369.

²⁸ B G Tilak, *Rashtriyavachi Kalpana*, Lokmanya B G Tilak, 23 April 1901, [SLT] vol-5, Kesari Prakashan, 1976, p.507.

education, self-respect and altruism.²⁹ Like Chiplunkar, he also adopted the thought about self-respect but was more practical than his Guru. The source for this self-respect was glorification of the Vedic period and the use of the historical symbols. Tilak got support from those people who felt that they lost their ancient glories past and were nervous about the missionaries' criticism. For public education, he started Shivaji festival and Ganesh festival which became common platform to gather all people for the national cause.

Tilak stated that if we have equal welfare in political terms and not have equal welfare in caste, society and religion, then we have to keep this thing in our mind that all human beings are different from each other in the religion, education, language, in our pre-history and trade etc but despite it all we have to start nation building.³⁰ This implies that Tilak tried to perpetuate the prevailing social status.

In Tilak's point of view, Peshwai was a good state and model for swarajya, or self-state. Tilak was trying to create national unity through Hindu cultural revivalism, wherein people were bound by their past history and culture. According to Nalini Pandit, in the late nineteenth century, people's self-respect emerged through this cultural revivalism and therefore nationalism got strong with new emotional support.³¹

Tilak related nation's development with caste-merit (improvisation of caste division of labor) and he says that the improvement of particular caste-merit depends the national progress.³² Regarding social reform, Tilak wrote that in India there are so many castes and in this situation to bring one common reform which would favor everybody will be impossible to find out.

In the last phase of nineteenth century, Sahuakar's and Jamindar's grabbed farmers' lands. Therefore farmers started to riot against them, the Deccan riots was one of those. It is in this situation that the British started to take legislative action to prevent the farmers' pathetic condition. In reaction to this, M G Ranade and B G Tilak came out with stiff opposition to the British interference.³³

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.507.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.508.

³¹ Nalini Pandit, *Maharashtratil Rashtrawadacha Vikas*, Mumbai, 1955, p.55.

³² B G Tilak, *Jatibhade*, Lokmanya B G Tilak, 16 may 1893, Samagra Lokmanya Tilak [SLT] vol-5, Kesari Prakashan, 1976, p.117.

³³ Yashwant Suman, *Maharashtratil Jatisanstha Vishayak Vichar*, Pratima Prakashan, Pune, 1988. p.296.

With the emergence of moderate and ultra nationalism, non-Brahmin ideology built its nationalism through non-Aryan culture. Phule made the criteria that caste must annihilate, and without the annihilation of caste system, we cannot become a nation.³⁴ Therefore, Phule stated that our country is not a nation due to its division into thousands of castes. There is no unity in society, every where people are bound in caste mentality. He wrote “the cunning Aryan Brahmins who follow the mischievous, cunning and treacherous religion of their Aryan ancestors look down upon all the ignorant Shudras. (It is an ironical fact) that the ignorant Shudras treat the Mahar’s as contemptible, while the ignorant Mahars treat the Mangs equally contemptuously. The taboo ridden ultra orthodox cunning Aryan Brahmins not only treat the Shudras and Ati-Shudras contemptuously, but they refuse to inter dine and inter marry with them. They have gone one step further and have totally forbidden the Shudras and Ati-Shudras to inter dine and inter marry among even themselves. Because of these mischievous taboos and restriction (imposed by the Aryan Brahmins upon the Shudras and Ati-Shudras), they are seen following diverse habits regarding food and drink, divers etiquettes etc., which are at variance with one another. If the mass of the people are so raven and divided among themselves, they form a veritable hotchpotch. How can such a hotchpotch ever form a ‘Nation’? (Be ever called a ‘Nation’?) Dear friends, note that these cunning Aryan Brahmins invariably treat to other sections of the population in our land (in the world?) contemptuously and they regard all others with jealousy and hatred from the bottom of their hearts.”³⁵ Phule denied the idea often created by other contemporary nationalist reformers that India is a nation. Phule says India is not a nation but is in process of becoming one. Thus, Phule appeals to people for nation building. Here this is a very significant idea about nation building because if we are saying that India is a nation then there would be no question about the process of nation building.

Phule felt that if Shudras and Ati-Shudras would not able to take benefit from democracy and nationalism then some other people will benefit in their name which

³⁴ Y D Phadke (Ed), *Mahatma Phoolle Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskrity Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.523.

³⁵ P G Patil, (translated by), *Collected Work of Mahatma Phule vol-2 Selection*, Government of Maharashtra Bombay. 1991. P.26-27.

would be a danger to the basic values of democracy.³⁶ Phule emphasized on compulsory education. Phule searched the values of democracy in non-Brahmin tradition and in particular in the Bali state than in western democracy.

Phule wrote that Brahmins interpreted nationalism according to their interests. They connected nationalism with their religion. According to other reformers, nationalism is related with religion. In the contemporary period, those who were talking of nationalism were trying to build nationalism in a religious framework while Phule's nationalism was based on rationality and equality.

Phule said that Indian National Congress was not a national organization and it represents the Brahmin people. For nation building, Phule looks towards caste system as the main obstacle in nation building. According to him without the annihilation of caste system, we cannot build a nation. Because to build a nation there should be oneness he called it '*eykmay*' means oneness in the society, but in our country there are thousands of castes having their own multiple interests. He argued that his contemporary reformers and nationalist leaders were of a common opinion, that caste is an obstacle in nation building but none of them struggled to annihilate it. Phule thought that a Brahmin organization would not help Shudras and warned them not to join their organization by keeping faith on them. He suggested that Shudras and Ati-Shudras should think for their own emancipation.³⁷

Phule's struggle was to provide freedom to illiterate Shudras, which was essential for their progress. If there is no freedom to speak, then man can not express his valuable ideas. Here Phule is more concerned about human rights. Phule argued that through this freedom man would fight to regain his natural rights that were captured by the Brahmins.³⁸ Phule knew that British government will collapse; therefore, it is a great opportunity for Shudras to emancipate themselves in British rule.

³⁶ Hari Narke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Gourao Granth*, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Phule Aani Rajashri Shahu Charitra Sadhane Prakashan Samity, Mumbai, p. 201.

³⁷ Y D Phadke (ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskriti Mandal, Mumbai. 2006. p.356.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p.140.

Phule admired the history of caste struggle to create his nationalism on the basis of and through cultural unity, which he explored in Bali's democratic kingdom. Here Phule pointed out why Bali's state was a welfare state and why it was a nation because there was no caste system, all people were from one caste where women were free and nobody was exploited and there was no exploiter. Thus, Phule laid the idea that if we want to make India a nation then first we must annihilate caste system and its related problems.

For nation, building there should be a national society, and a society is built and survived by communication, contact and through collective action. But caste system would not allow this to happen. Therefore, national society is not created in India.³⁹ Phule did attack on untouchability especially caste mentality which has prohibition on social communication. In this way the process of national society is made from the down trodden. In Phule's struggle, Shudras and Ati-Shudras issues were at the center because according to him the Shudra is the protector and real pillar of the nation.⁴⁰

Phule criticized Ranade; in his book, *Satsar* saying that Ranade is teaching empty cunning wisdom to maharaja Gaikwad, the ruler of Baroda state. Ranade said that the existence of caste distinction would not become trouble in our national upliftment.⁴¹ For Phule the root cause of our backwardness was caste system. When Ranade made such a statement, Phule warned to be aware about such Brahmins' conspiracy and wrote a book called *satsar*.

Ranade spread the idea of liberalism but got little response from people due to social circumstances. The ideology had been spread among the newly educated higher castes. In France and England, this liberal ideology was initially supported by the middle class, who were owners of small trade and industries. Feudal system was detrimental to them. On the basis of individual freedom, faith in knowledge, equal

³⁹ Umesh Bagade, *Phule-Ambedkarancha Rashtrawad*, Krantijoti Sawitribai Phule Prakashan, 2002, p.31.

⁴⁰ Y D Phadke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskriti Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.766.

⁴¹ *Ibid*.p.401.

opportunity and open competition they attacked the old owners and their ideology.⁴² In the western countries liberalism got support from traders, which was their capital's need but missed such class in Maharashtra.

Maharashtrian newly educated middle class was not willing to accept recent emerging values of liberalism, because liberalism was not conducive to their traditions and customs. This newly educated class entered into professional jobs. Their social status remained attached to their tradition bound conventions despite their becoming Doctors, lawyers, journalists and writers. They were impressed by ultra nationalism of Tilak and Savarkar rather than the liberalism of Ranade⁴³. Even though they did not actively participate in Tilak's struggle due to their moderate nature (caste nature).⁴⁴

In Maharashtra, liberal ideology had some limitations as it was adopted by upper castes who started family reforms rather than social reforms. They knew that untouchability and caste system is not conducive in character; nevertheless, they did not launch any program to annihilate these social evils.

In Europe, liberalism was a revolutionary theory of a newly emerging middle class. In England, it emerged in its genuine and fundamental form and in France; it emerged in a revolutionary form while in India it came in a moderate form.⁴⁵ Because those who were influenced by liberalism were mostly under the clutches of the Social condition, it did not allow them to bring fundamental changes in social system neither it provided a strong ideology for struggle. Therefore, Indian liberal ideology was always far away from struggle.⁴⁶

Education and Emancipation

In the late nineteenth century there was a strong educational movement. While Ranade was talking of higher education, Phule emphasized education for Shudras and

⁴² G B Sardar, *Ranade Pranit Samajik Sudharnechi Tatvamimansa*, Published by Pune University, Pune, 1973, p.99.

⁴³ G B Sardar, *Ranade Pranit Samajik Sudharnechi Tatvamimansa*, published by Pune University, Pune, 1973, p.101.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.101.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.105.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.105.

Ati-Shudras.⁴⁷ Phule stressed free and compulsory primary education. Agarkar, Gokhale and Ranade thought in an aristocratic manner. According to them only Brahmins, educated and wellborn people can run or bring reforms in social, political and economic spheres. We can see that Tilak also emphasized this idea and encouraged them for taking this responsibility.⁴⁸

For Bhandarkar, English education appeared to be a useful instrument to create nationalism by reforming the other human institutions. He wrote, “Our English education has evoked in a sense of nationality, and we have been thinking of the evils from which our nation is suffering, and endeavoring to remove them by the introduction of reforms, political, social, moral and religious.”⁴⁹

In 1882, Phule delivered his speech in front of the Hunter commission. In his address Phule described the present educational condition in that he quoted “I wrote some years ago a Marathi Pamphlet to expose the religious practices of the Brahmins and incidentally among other matters, adverted therein present system of education, which by providing ample funds for higher education tended to educate Brahmins and the higher classes only, and to leave the masses wallowing in ignorance and poverty.”⁵⁰

Phule and Satyasamajists were thinking that this is the cause of the mental slavery of Shudras and Ati-Shudras and suggested to educated people to uphold this struggle against artificial domination to emancipate them from such inhuman mental slavery. Phule had the belief that one day Shudras will leave their slavery to fight against Brahmin domination. To expand the belief Phule wrote one book called ‘*eshara*’ (warning) in which he wrote “we are not at all surprised at this empty cunning wisdom of those self-styled (garrulous preachers) who hates the Shudras and Ati-Shudras with all their hearts’. When the pernicious caste distinctions will

⁴⁷ Hari Narke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Gourao Granth*, Dr. Babahsaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Phule Aani Rajashri Shahu Charitra Sadhane Prkashan Samity, Mumbai, p. 255.

⁴⁸ B G Tilak, *Brahman Aani Tyanchi Vidya-4*, Lokmanya B G Tilak, 7 July 1896, Samagra Lokmanya Tilak [SLT] vol-5, Kesari Prakashan, 1976, p.669.

⁴⁹ Bhandarkar, R. G., *Collected Works of Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, 4 Vols*, Ed by The Late Narayan Bapuji Utgikar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, 1928-1933. p.479.

⁵⁰ Y D Phadke (ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskrity Mandal, Mumbai, 2006. p.244.

disappear, the Ati-Shudras will condemn in no uncertain terms, the (devilish ban) imposed by the Aryan Brahmins, on their taking education. Once they become educated, they will come to know the evil designs and deeds of the Brahmins and hence will not design to touch their cunning, wicked books with pair of tongs. The Shudras will not pay respect to the Brahmins who style themselves as the most worthy of respect among the eighteen Varnas. They will also not entertain them (the Brahmins) with sumptuous feasts gratis (they who are not better than mere manual workers). They will never respect the Brahmins who play on the 'Tabla' nor would they salute them as they trade in lies."⁵¹

To liberate people from Brahmin exploitation, Phule asked that we have to send our Shudra and Ati-Shudra children to the school and should start to teach them true knowledge. After educating and realizing, the truth one day a virtues person among these shudras and ati-shudras will pay tributes for our contributions.

Just posing both traditional Indian and western education system, Agarkar stated that he felt unhappy with the former education because the traditional Indian education set up imparted education only to the Brahmin class and excluded the majority of lower caste people from attaining it. In 'Sudharak' he quotes that Brahmins have monopolized education and it is this status that gives them the name due to their suffering from illiteracy. Therefore, what becomes a matter of imperative and relevance is the inquiry of illiterate status of non-Brahmins.

Women and Emancipation

Women's problem was a major issue in nineteenth century social reforms. Mostly reformers came out to resolve this problem than newly educated middle class was influenced by western notions about women. Their idea was that becoming higher class can resolve their problem which was nothing but imitation of higher class. This was an impression that attracted most of them to bring changes in women's condition because their status was a sign of progression in the western society. For this, Maharashtrian reformers gave evidence from the ancient

⁵¹ P G Patil, (translated by), *Collected Work of Mahatma Phule vol-2 Selections*, Government of Maharashtra Bombay, 1991. P.49.

Brahmanical texts. Also through western values like liberalism, Maharashtrian reformers started to raise the question of emancipation of women.

But at the same time some nationalist leader like Tilak was against the issues of women. According to Tilak, as it is impossible and immature to bring railway and telephone from Veda; in the same manner it is impossible to bring notions of women's freedom from Veda and Smriti text.⁵² Thus, Tilak also knew that in the Vedas there is no validation for women freedom.

When Tilak talks about women's upliftment, he does not give freedom to women for her progress. In his point of view women are not independent her under development is due to her dependence upon men. He has written that our women's upliftment or deterioration is dependent on men's upliftment or deterioration. Therefore, until and unless there is man's upliftment, women cannot progress by themselves, in our perception it is impossible.⁵³ Here he is following old religious concept about women, which was created in the Brahmin religion. In patriarchy women are not looked as an individual human being, these women are only for the service of man.

In 1887 at Pune, female high school announced its new educational pattern, which was established by Ranade, at that time Tilak replied to them through *Kasari*. He wrote that in this world responsibilities of man and woman are different from each other. Therefore, their education also could not match each other. Hence, this education should not be to do separate business, and then it should be for her housework.⁵⁴ And where these types of education are not available, that is useful for us. Just as for the artisan, trade is more important than education, similarly for women homework is more important than education.⁵⁵ Here Tilak gives God's support to women's responsibility. He says God has distributed the responsibilities of man and

⁵² B G Tilak, *Nyaymurti Ranade Yanche Apurva Yuktichapalya-1*, Lokmanya B G Tilak, 16 may 1893, [SLT] vol-5, Kesari Prakashan, 1976, p.85.

⁵³ B G Tilak, *Gelya Natalatil Band*, Lokmanya B G Tilak, 10 Jan 1905, [SLT] vol-5, Kesari Prakashan, 1976, p.174.

⁵⁴ B G Tilak, *Female Hightschoolatil Shikshan-2*, Lokmanya B G Tilak, 4 Oct 1887, [SLT] vol-5, Kesari Prakashan, 1976, p.215.

⁵⁵ B G Tilak, *Female Hightschoolatil Shikshan-3*, Lokmanya B G Tilak, 11 Oct 1887, [SLT] vol-5, Kesari Prakashan, 1976, p.220.

woman according to their characters. Further, he wrote that if she gets free time from household and if somebody is interested in teaching her then they could teach her. Which is in favour of *stridharma* and Hindu dharma.⁵⁶ Here Tilak uses the word *stridharma*, in this concept women are bound by so many restrictions, and this *stridharma* says that women's duty is to just provide service to men. Through this concept, Brahmin women were also exploited through child marriage, Sati and ban on remarriage of widows.

According to Phule, the condition of shudras and woman is the same; both are the victims of this social system. The interesting thing is that in all his literature, he wrote about the entire human kind, which he calls in marathi '*ekandar manav stripurushachya hitartha kele*'⁵⁷ (for both women and men). He viewed the problems of woman separately. He attacked the patriarchal notion, which implied playing greater role in women's exploitation in all over the world. He had a global view about women's exploitation. According to him, all men are same and treated women in inferior manner. While talking on women's discrimination, he talked of Brahmin women's exploitation. Even Brahmin women were not spared by the Brahminical social system.

The Brahminical religion created the concepts like 'women's character' and 'women's nature'. Through these concepts, they have shown that women are more vicious and adulterous. But Phule took women's side and exposed men's virtuous quality created in Brahmin religion and showed the faults in man's nature.⁵⁸ Through this interpretation, he challenged the Brahminical texts and their cultural and patriarchal domination.

Phule was a non- Brahmin social transformer fighting against Brahminical social domination, but also fought for the problems concerning Brahmin widows. Phule organized a protest march involving barbers against shaving the heads of Brahmin widows, encouraged widow remarriage, and built a home called '*Bal hatya*

⁵⁶ B G Tilak, *Female Highschoolatil Shikshan-2*, Lokmanya B G Tilak, 4 Oct 1887, [SLT] vol-5, Kesari Prakashan, 1976, p.215-16.

⁵⁷ Y D Phadke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskriti Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.449.

⁵⁸ Umesh Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabhodhan Aani Varga Jati Prabhutva*, Sugava Prakashan, Pune, 2007, p.321.

pratibandhak gruh' to assist the delivery of widow pregnant Brahmin women. Phule was the first man to take such a daring step.

Phule gave more importance to women than men⁵⁹ due to their capacity to bear a child and to always suffer for their families. Phule knew society emerging from the family where she plays a major role in family progress. Women are exploited for thousands of years and were never given a chance to express their desire and ideas.

According to Sati System, a woman must end her life as soon as her husband dies. The society pressurized the woman to jump into the burning pier of her husband. Regarding this Phule questioned--why not even a single man jumps into the fire after his wife's death. He makes a point that after the death of his first wife or even if she is alive man goes for second or third marriage, but women cannot do so. Thus, to continue this dominance she was always deprived of all the basic human rights and was never allowed to take education.

Tarabai Shinde was a social reformer who wrote a book on women's condition in which she blamed men for the pathetic conditions of women. She said that man conspired against women to maintain his dominance. Some reformers criticized her view. Amongst them were Phule's colleagues. Therefore, in 1883 when Krushnarao Bhalekar and Narayanrao Lokhande criticized Tarabai Shinde and Pandita Ramabai, at that time Phule strongly criticized Bhalekar and Lokhande in his book *Satsar* part 1 and 2, which he wrote in 1885. Phule says that there is darkness all over the world; because human being lost truth, and treated the women as a *Dasi* and blame on their sister, wife, mother, daughter and sister in law that all women are fraudulent. Therefore, due to this patriarchic system, society is degrading.

Bhandarkar was concerned about the problems of women. According to Bhandarkar, women can change the society if they were educated and they ought to be. They would be powerful instruments for advancing the general condition of our country. They will bring up every new generation in such a manner that it performs its duties efficiently.⁶⁰ Bhandarkar also raised the problems of widow women in terms of human rights.

⁵⁹ Y D Phadke (Ed), *Mahatma Phule Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskrity Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.465.

⁶⁰ R G Bhandarkar, *Collected Works of Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, 4 Vols*, Ed by The Late Narayan Bapuji Utgikar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune , 1928-1933. p.488.

Bhandarkar says that in the whole of the Rigveda there is no allusion to practice. He wrote that after the deterioration of Aryan moral feeling had established itself. The customs was generally adopted from the tribe's among which it existed, and the precept about the burning of the widows was laid down in some of the metrical Smritis, not without protest from others. But later on Pandits, in their exposition of the law, denied the authority of the protesting texts and decided that the burning of widows was lawful and it became the general practice.

He stated that it is a fact that connection between a girl of thirteen or fourteen years and a man of thirty-five or above proves fatal to the life of girl. However, he blamed the educated person of lacking courage to come out for marriage with widows. He pointed out that even highly educated men of the present day do not have the scruples to resort to the practice. It is in their power to marry a grown-up widow and make an unfortunate female creature happy, and secure themselves as a suitable companion.

Pandita Ramabai established 'Sharada Sadan' for widow women. She was against orthodox Hindus like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and his followers who accused her of using Sharada Sadan for their conversions.⁶¹ Tilak suggested Ramabai that now she should leave her name Pandita and use reverend.⁶² Phule was the first person who analyzed Ramabai's work.⁶³ M G Ranade, R G Bhandarkar and their Prarthana Samaj colleagues gave active support to Ramabai's motive. But when the attacks of orthodox people became more powerful they withdrew their support. In this situation, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar came forward, gave support to Ramabai, and advocated all her social motives.

Ranade showed that in the Vedic period women's condition was good. He has written that as Aryan society grew slowly out of its savagery, one by one female heirs, first the wife, then the daughters, afterwards the mothers and the sisters began to be recognized as heirs to a separated Aryans householder...liberty to choose husband in the form of Swayamvara, marriage by free choice, so well illustrated in the stories of

⁶¹ Rajendra Vora [ed], *Adhunikta Ani Parampara*, Pratima Prakashan, Pune.2000, p.271.

⁶² B G Tilak, *Pandita Baiche Panditya*, Lokmanya B G Tilak, 12 Jan 1904, [SLT] vol-5, Kesari Prakashan, 1976, p.494.

⁶³ Rajendra Vora [ed], *Adhunikta Ani Parampara*, Pratima Prakashan, Pune.2000, p.271.

Sita, Damayanti, Rukhmini and Druapadi, that it was allowed as a matter of course. Among the Brahmins, women gave up study and contemplation, refrained from marriage altogether, and lost none of their importance by this act of self-abnegation.⁶⁴ Through this example, Ranade showed that in Vedic period women had individual rights and it was a liberal society. On this basis, he claimed to make improvement in the conditions of women. Ranade wrote that Vedic age was the classical age of Indian history where nation thrived in all lines of activities.

Through the religious texts, Ranade showed that the condition of women has degraded in present times compared to the past history. Thus, he talked of women's problem in the textual frame work and focused on later Vedic period that how Indian civilization declined and for that he blamed Buddhism and non-Aryan culture, Shak, Hun and Jats for women's lowered conditions.⁶⁵ He wrote about the role of invasion of Barbarians and Mongolians that "they brought to the surface races of men with a lower civilization, more patriarchal, and, therefore, less chivalrous ideals of life."⁶⁶ Thus, for women's lower condition he held Mohammedans to be responsible.

On the issues of individualism, Ranade took the stand of property rights for women and separate family setup, which is favorable to individualistic society.⁶⁷ Ranade drew the glory of Vedic culture for women's emancipation and gave call for its revival for society's betterment. Further, he wrote, "with the advance of female education and a better appreciation, this great blot which has disfigured the social condition of India for the past thousand years or more, will be removed, and this country will be restored to the purity and elevation of its ancient grandeur."⁶⁸ He wrote that most of the restrictions about women came in existence through the non-Aryan races he wrote that polyandry has always been a normal institution of the non-Aryan races.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Ranade Mahadeva Govind, *Religious and Social Reform-A Collection of Essays and Speeches*, Compiled by Kolasker M B, Bombay, 1902, p.30-31.

⁶⁵ Umesh Bagade, *Phule Ambedkarancha Rashtrawad*, Krantijoti Savitribai Phule Prakashan', Nashik, 2002, p.277.

⁶⁶ Ranade Mahadeva Govind, *Religious and Social Reform-A Collection of Essays and Speeches*, Compiled by Kolasker M B, Bombay, 1902, p.99.

⁶⁷ Umesh Bagade, *Phule Ambedkarancha Rashtrawad*, Krantijoti Savitribai Phule Prakashan', Nashik, 2002, p.280.

⁶⁸ Ranade Mahadeva Govind, *Religious and Social Reform-A Collection of Essays and Speeches*, Compiled by Kolasker M B, Bombay, 1902, p.52.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.99.

Ideal Society

According to Tilak, the society reaches its highest level of prosperity when all men get equal work and equal happiness. To materialize this thing, one has to distribute the instruments of happiness amongst the society or if it is a combined property then, society should be hold. Without this, society never gets happiness.⁷⁰ In Tilak's point of view, our condition was better during Peshwai. They enjoyed freedom at that time and people were courageous with full capability and enforced ideas to bring changes in social circumstances during Peshwai era.

While accepting any reform, According to Tilak, we should not forget that our roots are in the Aryan culture. There is a similarity in the views of Tilak and Agarkar but at the same time, Agarkar emphasized that we should follow western education and ideas without leaving our Aryan culture.⁷¹ Tilak used symbol of Shivaji for political awareness but Phule used it for social awareness. Thus, for Tilak Aryan society was an ideal society and Pashwai was ideal state.

Phule stated that if Aryans really want to integrate and uplift our country, then first they should give voluntary death by drowning the religion by making differences between the victorious and the defeated. One should annihilate caste distinction by rejecting Veda. Hence, without leaving these artificial distinctions our country cannot be uplifted.⁷²

Bhandarkar and Ranade were influenced by the Aryan culture and depicted the Hindu era as the golden era of India, which was very near to their caste consciousness. Ranade saw ancient Indian period as the golden age.⁷³ Ranade, referring to the progressive society, stated that one of the penalties of arrested civilization was that, while stopping further growth, the seeds of decay and death are

⁷⁰ B G Tialk, *Dattakachi Aavashakta-5*, Lokmanya B G Tilak, 16 may 1893, [SLT] vol-5, Kesari Prakashan, 1976, p.55.

⁷¹ Natu, Deshpande, *Agarkar Vangmaya vol-1*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskruti Mandal, Mumbai, 1999, p.10

⁷² Y D Phadke (ed), *Mahatma Phoole Samgra Vangamaya*, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Aani Sanskrity Mandal, Mumbai.2006.p.330.

⁷³ Bagade Umesh, *Maharashtratil Prabhodhan Aani Varga Jati Prabhutva*, Sugava Prakashan, Pune, 2007, p.225.

sown in the paralyzed social organism.⁷⁴ Ranade did historical analysis through the distinctive study. He has shown that Aryan culture was civilized and non-Aryan culture was uncivilized. Ranade gave emphasis on the liberal society for individual freedom to strengthen the society. Therefore, he wrote that the social surroundings must be liberalised in a such way as to help people to realize their own responsibilities and to strengthen them in their efforts.⁷⁵

Bhandarkar looks towards Vedic society as a progressive and developed society. He has written that social institutions and practices were healthy and rational in the olden times, and they later became corrupt and irrational through some cause or the other.⁷⁶ Thus Ranade and Bhandarkar depicted glorious picture of Vedic society for social reforms which was degraded by non-Aryan races.

The reformers were mostly influenced by deism, but their image of God and interpretation of nature, was different from Ranade's and Bhandarkar's Brahamnical God. Phule's creator was different from Hindu culture on the grounds of humanitarian consideration. For Phule, non-Aryan anti-Varna Caste culture is the ideal culture of Bali's ideal state based on a caste-less society. Thus, nationalist reformers had some ideological differences. They considered the Vedic society to be the golden era in Indian history and they fought for its revival. They could not look beyond the Hindu traditional frame work. However, the non-Brahmin ideology developed as an alternative culture.

⁷⁴ Ranade Mahadeva Govind, *Religious and Social Reform-A Collection of Essays and Speeches*, Compiled by Kolasker M B, Bombay, 1902, p.26.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.168.

⁷⁶ Bhandarkar, R. G., *Collected Works of Sir R. G. Bandarkar, 4 Vols*, Ed by The Late Narayan Bapuji Utgikar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune , 1928-1933. p.512.

CHAPTER-V
CONCLUSION

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In this caste discourse, the caste system is examined from various points of view. There is a direct or indirect involvement of the Maharashtrian people in the caste discourse consequently it has left a deep imprint on their mind. Because of the analytical caste study, the people got various aspects to comprehend the caste system. The castes, which dominated and suppressed the subordinate and downtrodden strata of the society since the time immemorial, have been exposed by this analytical study of the caste system. As a result, the lower social strata became conscious of their basic human rights of which they were deprived since ages. The most significant influence is that of Non-Brahmin movement, the voiceless castes (untouchable's castes) got the voice against the dominant culture. And that is the phenomena which laid the democratic values of this ideological discourse in Maharashtra. At the same time, the followers of the nationalist ideology started to fight against British government to establish the home rule in India.

It is obvious that the reformers of the nineteenth century were not articulating their views merely as sociologists or anthropologists. Rather they observed and analysed the society in which they were living from realistic perspective. Therefore, their analytical study became of a great significance because it allowed them to foresee the futuristic social reforms. Despite the broad discourse on the caste system, the caste factor does not cease to play the pivotal role even in the twenty first century in which the caste discourse provides the ideological strength in different walks of modern life.

It is a well-established fact, as Bhandarkar also pointed out, that the caste system is an obstacle in nation building, and there was no caste system during the Vedic period. The caste system emerged later on with the advent of different races and clans in the Indian society, which subsequently gave rise to the caste system in India. According to him, the original Aryan society was divided in three Varna, where social mobility used to be reckoned with based on individual capacity, which is nothing but eulogizing the Varna system.

Bhandarkar holds the inter caste marriages responsible for the increase in numbers of castes. On the contrary, the inter caste marriage has been very instrumental in destabilizing the very foundation of the caste system. By prohibiting the inter caste marriage he does not allow the caste system to melt and fonder. As well as, he looked towards the occupation and untouchability as reasons of the emergence of new castes. The Anti-varna caste tradition, the Buddhism and Bhakti movement were not acceptable to Bhandarkar and analysing the caste from the economical and political point of view that serve as a source of inspiration to the nationalism. Although, having commonality of ideas on the origin of Varna system like Phule.

For a nationalist such as Tilak, the struggle between the Aryan and non-Aryan was the origin of the caste system. He consistently insisted on maintaining the caste characteristics perpetuating caste differences. Therefore, like Bhandarkar he was also against the inter caste marriage between the lower and upper castes but acquiesced the inter caste marriage between the Brahmin variants. This approach does not contribute in any way to annihilate the caste system. Like Bhandarkar, to him an ideal form of the society was Vedic society in which one Varna was not supposed to interfere with other Varna and where social mobility was possible. And this ideal Vedic society which constitutes the source of inspiration for the nationalism propounded and advocated by Tilak. By reviving the Vedic society, Tilak seems to construct a new Indian society under one banner: Hindu religion. Tilak staunchly believed in caste differences as natural differences therefore he insisted on maintaining the caste system rather than demolishing it.

Tilak intended to restore the Aryan Vedic society by putting forward the Brahmanical form of culture i.e. varna-caste system, to cement the Nationalism. So the cultural festivals such as Ganesh Festival and celebration of the birth anniversary of Shivaji Maharaj are the telling examples of Tilak's manner of strengthening the Indian nationalism which is based on the appropriation of Hindu deity to generate national consciousness among masses. His notion of the national progress is confined to the progress of Brahmins. Therefore, it is the responsibility of Brahmins to lead the society. This approach demonstrates explicitly Tilak's belief in Brahmin domination. This conceptualising idea of nationalism is analogous to that of Lokhitwadi. The same

kind of logic is evident in the patriarchal system where woman is subordinate to man in the sphere of religion and remaining so is her religious duty (*Stridharma*).

There were two approaches to go about with the social reforms: from top to bottom and from bottom to top. The nationalist reformers such as Tilak, Bhandarkar, and Ranade etc adopted the top-to-bottom approach, and the bottom-to-top approach was adopted and practised by the non-Brahmanical reformer like Phule. These two approaches are still prevalent even today when efforts are made to pursue social and political goals.

Phule has highlighted the fact that the Aryan and non-Aryan struggle is the origin of exploitative institution i.e. caste system and blame the Arya-Brahmin for sustaining the caste disparities in Indian society by projecting his role in Shudras and Ati-Shudras exploitation. Phule has squarely blamed Brahmins and suggested education as the only greater instrument to emancipate Shudras and Ati-Shudras from mental slavery.

Phule has pointed out that the very cause of this mental slavery lies in the consciousness of the people of Indian society that is fragmented. In the caste system people remain fragmented, and so it was imperative for Phule to bind Shudras and Ati-Shudras' consciousness into new identity that is Kshatriya. In the process of identity formation, Phule utilised the method of myth of Bali's kingdom, a symbol of casteless and democratic state, to dig out history of Shudras and Ati-Shudras, which was new perception to recognize their history in order to bind all non-Brahmins in one consciousness by giving them a new identity.

The traditional anti-caste movement like Varkari Sampradaya and western liberal notions exercised a tremendous impact on Phule but he did not apply traditional anti-caste ideas and methods to bring out change in the life of lower caste people. He knew that bhakti movement's struggle was under the fold of Hindu religion and innocent people might be caught in the same trap. Therefore, Phule revolted against Hindu religion by divorcing himself from culture and religion, which created new discourse in the public sphere of Indian society, unshackled the lower

castes by establishing alternative religion with new set of culture, and denied any kind of role of Brahmin in it.

A nation cannot be called a nation without equalizing the people of lower caste in every sphere of life. Hence, Phule emphasised more on the Annihilation of the caste system to remake the Bali's ideal society.

The idea of political freedom, according to nationalists, was to annihilate the caste system without making conscious efforts on it. This idea got successes after the independence, where individual got political rights based on equality but one had to face the inequality in social and economic sphere of life. Even in the twenty first century, the caste factor continues to play a prominent role. Instead of depending on the nationalist ideas having the caste poison, which is nothing but the cultural nationalism backed by the Hinduism, it would be better to look forward in order to explore new avenues with new ideas to create nationalism. To make India as nation, one has to form the common nationalism with one identity, which can be acceptable and applicable to all people of India. For this process, people must identify themselves based on citizenship values having equality, liberty, and fraternity called Indian, to from one Nation rather to stick to their caste, culture, religious identity.

In Maharashtra, the dominant culture in history was giving shape to the nationalism with so-called new modern values, which was nothing but an attempt to modernize the old tradition. The nationalism was knocking at the door with new ideas failed to shake the social structure of Indian society and was unable to provide revolutionary values to modern India. This was because of all moderate and ultra nationalist leaders who were attempting to revive and glorify the nationalism based on Vedic society and its culture, which gave indirect authority to varna-caste system.

Most of the nationalist leaders hailed from the newly educated middle class who took pride in Vedic society and after which they tried to spread the caste consciousness. Therefore, the nationalism, which emerged in Maharashtra, sought to defend the interests of this middle class, which is defined as the class philosophy by

Yashwant Suman.¹ Although it was the class philosophy but it was based on the common ground formed by the caste-class nexus, because the defenders of the class philosophy belonged to a particular caste.

There was a common understanding among the nationalists leader to annihilate the caste system for the social unification. They were of the view that the caste system is an institution very detrimental to the nation building because it generates caste conflicts and mutual hatred among castes. That is why the reformers like Agarkar and Bhandarkar insisted on demolishing the caste system, but they could not provide a concrete programme to do so.

To install democracy in India, the programme of annihilation of the caste system became futuristic project for lower castes people but the upper castes were reluctant to perpetuate the democratic ideas due to their caste interest. Therefore, it was difficult to see the seeds of anti-caste ideology in their camp but it effectively emerged among the non-Brahmin communities to annihilate the caste system, which was and is the pre-condition for justice, what they were wishing for.² Nationalist leaders talked about the caste cleavage to construct the nationalism, which latter on became inspiration to their nationalism.

Nationalist leaders denied the role of Buddhism as an anti-caste ideology and held Mohammedans invasions and other clans responsible for the downfall and backwardness of Indian society. On the contrary, Phule developed a critical and rational understanding of Buddhism and Jainism, and put forward a view that Mohammedans were the emancipators of Shudras due their anti-caste attitude.

The manner in which the nationalist leaders sought to bring reforms was based on the religious texts that were constraining in their spirit. Because the religious texts were supportive of the Varna caste structure, they could not develop a single anti-text polemic.

¹ Yashwant Suman, *Maharashtratil Jatisanstha Vishayak Vichar*, Pratima Prakashan, Pune, 1988. p.11.

² *Ibid.* p.12.

In colonial Maharashtra, the newly Brahmin middle class emerged under the influence of western ideas, despite the western influence, their caste approach was founded on the Brahminical traditional methodology. These newly middle classes wanted to materialise the idea of class upliftment by viewing the modern western class structure. Due to their caste hierarchies, broadly speaking other castes could not change their occupations that they inherited in accordance with their castes. This caste mentality did not allow them to transform their caste into class. Consequently, we witness a strange phenomenon emerging in Indian society which is a fusion of caste and class.

Since Brahmin intellectuals did not participate in any kind of labour work in the old caste system nor did they take initiative in new industrial activities, they could produce only meaningless and unproductive discussions over the western thinkers like Thomas Paine and J S Mill.³ Because of this absence of concrete contribution, they could not run mass movement for their social betterment.

With the process of colonization, the modernity was introduced in Indian society which questioned and challenged the traditional and inhuman Brahminical values which were embedded in the institution like family. In order to adopt a progressive outlook, Brahmins were the first to appropriate the modernity and looked into their problems regarding the child marriage, women education and widowhood. Because the above-mentioned problems were identified by the nationalist reformers and they were well aware about the mal practices taking place in their castes. Thus, they shouldered the responsibility of eliminating the evils embedded in their caste but broadly speaking they did not go beyond their caste. They treated separately the problems of women in their caste independent of the caste system and not as a product of it. According to Dr. Umesh Bagade the progressive status of women were considered as a hallmark of the developed and progressive society just like the western class society. Therefore, the Indian nationalists demonstrated this progressive approach in the domain of women's problems. When the nationalist reformers raised the women's issues, they did not talk about women of all castes. Their approach was

³ Umesh Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabhodhan Aani Varga Jati Prabhutva*, Sugava Prakashan, Pune, 2007, p.382.

not all-inclusive. We notice their palpable silence regarding the women's problems in Shudras and Ati-Shudras.

The flexibility of the caste can be understood by examining the crucial role that it played and continues to play in the India society. It is so flexible that it takes different shapes and adapts itself to the ever-changing conditions. One can notice its flexibility and adaptability in the modern era when one speak of the global society based on science and technology. Although the caste is taking new shapes and dimensions, it could not give to itself a precise class character seen in the western society. Therefore, it is now urgency to redefine the path of Marxist in the context of caste instead of class. The class approach could be applied in the Indian society only after the annihilation of the caste where there would be one common platform for all the castes, who are suffering from the ill diseases of superiority and inferiority having the religion as a base that the Marxist has failed to take a note of.

The ideologies, which emerged in ninetieth century, are playing their role in present situation in different political fronts and organisations, as well as anti-caste ideology is also fighting against social exploitation. At the present circumstances, the expectations of the common masses could not be fulfilled by the nationalist ideology those who are suffering and being exploited from such ill mentality. The different political parties were perpetuating the agenda of nationalist and anti-caste ideology and created more hope among people towards their exploitation. But nationalist ideology still in twentieth century could not provide strong anti-caste program, therefore, there is a need to take support of non-Brahmin anti-caste ideology to emancipate Shudras and Ati-Shudras. Now the question arises, whether this anti-caste ideology is instigating the people to erase it or leading towards rigid phenomena of caste identity. To find out this relevant and unsolved question's answer, one has to understand the nature of caste psychology, location and communicative approach between and among the castes, which is crucial and imperative demand to bring the social change in the era of twentieth century.

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