

Mahatma Jyotiba Phule And Communities Development

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Abstract

Introduction: Mahatma Jyotiba Phule is known as the father of Indian social revolution. He is one of the greatest personalities in India. He provided educational services to women, shudras and untouchables. He propagated the truth, morality, self-reliance, rationality among the communities. He demanded compulsory education to all castes, which was previously not there. He protested against the money-lenders for the exploitation of farmers. He had written several articles to aware the people about exploitation by Brahmins. He started 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' and propagated the radicalism. Phule focussed mainly on women, shudras and untouchables and afford them to get education and disseminated the deceit of Sanatana Dharma scriptures. Phule made presentation in front of Hunter Commission for compulsory education for downtrodden communities was historical. Overall, he struggled a lot for the development of the downtrodden communities in Maharashtra. The impact of Phule's struggle for the development of downtrodden communities had provided opportunity to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who in future proved himself the torch barrier of Phule's social revolution.

Methodology: The descriptive research design was used to construct the paper.

Conclusion: Jyotiba was the first Indian leader to start a movement for the removal of the social and economic ills of the lower castes who were starved, stunted and suffering untold privations. He gave vent to their age-long rage and grief. His movement aimed at establishing social equality and securing social justice. He struggled for the dignity of human personality and human rights, as he considered all Indians equal. His movement was thus a part of the social revolution that had been started all over India. Jyotiba started with the education of the lower castes, for it was his belief that life could not be lived satisfactorily without the means to live a full life, and he believed that education was one of the chief means for opening the gateway to a full and satisfying life. The contribution of communities' development by Phule was historical.

Keywords: Mahatma Jyotiba Phule; Communities; Development; Social Movement; Marginalization

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study: The people of India followed and following various cultures within their castes, sects and religions. There is no single unique identity between the castes. The Indian society depends on tradition of their caste culture; this is the unique culture among the castes. In this social system *Sanatana Dharma* (now calling as Hindu) has very much dominated on the Indian society through Varna system. The four Varnas have many castes among themselves. The castes are major dynamic factor in the society and it decides the social system.

Statement of the Research Problem: There are many social movements in India. The social movements especially related to marginalized communities are focused in this section. The Shakyamuni Gautam Buddha (BC. 563-483) and Vardhaman Mahaveer (BCE 599-527) are protested against the Brahmanism and gave Buddhism and Jainism respectively. Samrat Ashok Chakravarti (BC. 268-232) quit the battle, after 'Kalinga' war and disseminated Buddhism all over Central Asia. This was one of the recognizable changes in India. Basavanna (c. 1105-1167), greatest social reformer and champion of *Vachanas* and *Vachana* movement in Karnataka. Kabir (1398-1448) one of the greatest saints and his famous statement 'If by worshipping stones one can find God, I shall worship a mountain' such kinds of propaganda he was made among the people. 'Breast Tax' was a tax imposed on the lower caste and untouchable Hindu women by the Kingdom of Tranvancore. It was prohibited by Tipu Sultan (1750-1799). The Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur (1874-1922) took upon himself the task of combating ignorance and lack of education among the backward castes (BCs) and Dalits. By as early as 1912, he had made primary education compulsory and by 25 July 1917, he had made it free. He was the first Indian ruler to do so. It was Shahu Maharaj who gave reservations first to backward castes (Marathas, Lingayats, etc.) and later on extended it to the Dalits. Nalwadi Krishna Raja Wodeyar IV (1884-1940) gave education and employment reservation to backward castes (BCs, i.e., Lingayats, Vokkaligas, etc.) first and later was extended to Dalits of his kingdom. Narayana Guru (1854-1928) led a reform movement in Kerala, against the injustice in the caste-ridden

society of Kerala, in order to promote spiritual enlightenment and social equality. Erode Venkat Ramasamy Periyar (1879-1973) was an Indian social activist and started the Self-Respect Movement. He is known as the 'Father of the Dravidian Movement'. He did notable work against Brahminical dominance and gender and caste inequality in Tamil Nadu. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) was an Indian jurist, economist, politician and social reformer who inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement and campaigned against social discrimination towards the untouchables (Dalits) and women (above mentioned birth and death years of social reformers are taken from Wikipedia, 2020). Bathul Shyam Sunder (1908-1975) revolted against Hindu caste system and founded Bharatiya Bheem Sena (BBS). An organization to save Dalits against discrimination. Manyavar Kanshiram (1934-2006) has given the 'Chamcha Age' concept. The modern chamcha's are emerged and they are surrender under their exploiter. Therefore, still varieties of chamcha's are working and adjusting with exploitation (Ram, 1982). The *Gulamagiri* presents the dialogue of the superstitious beliefs, varieties of exploitation to backward castes biological as well as psychological (Sujoyath & Phule, 2009). The religious life of India book explains the 52 Mahar rights in Maharashtra, according to that untouchables had to work as scavengers (Robertson, 1938).

Above all incidences shows that discrimination, exploitation and oppression among the backward castes in the Indian society are suffered by religious scriptures. And many reformers tried to find out solution by their own way. Finger counted castes are not suffered and they are the exploiter of the backward castes in the name of religious superiority. Still, one form to another form backward castes are suffering by the religious dominated communities in different forms. Therefore, the present paper focus on the champion of the social reformer Mahatma Jyotiba Phule especially in the context of liberation of the backward castes through education and social reform.

Justification for the Study: The post-independent India has democratic ruling system. It means involvement of every people in ruling system. There is no discrimination in the name of caste, creed, religion, region etc. the contemporary India has better political independence; but it does not have in social, education and economic independence yet. Therefore, still contradictory scenario is reporting on these issues. The bureaucracy, judiciary, media, business and many more are handed by the finger counted castes. For the name's sake social system is not rigid comparing to pre-independent India. But, hides its features; sometimes it is seen in vital situation. In this condition, backward castes champion and emancipator Mahatma Jyotiba Phule thoughts and contributions are neglected. Actually, present situation his thoughts are needed to enlighten the people.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the marginalized communities in India
2. To understand the social movement in India
3. To understand Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and his contribution for communities' development

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Jyotiba was the first leader of modern India to denounce Brahmanism as the curse of India (Keer, 2013). Mahatma Jyotiba Phule was the father of Non-Brahmin Movement in India. He also greatly contributed to the emergence of independent labour, peasant, Dalit and women upliftment movements (Kaggod, 2014). Jyotiba Phule initiated social change in nineteenth century India, especially in Maharashtra through his philosophy. The nineteenth century was an era of social criticism and transformation that focused on nationalism, caste and gender (Malik-Goure, 2020). One aspect of his rationalism can be seen in the Satya Shodhak Samaj with its primary emphasis on "truth-seeking" (Omvedt, 1971). Social movements by social workers for social justice of women, black, disabled and mental health people are focussed in the methods of social work (Thompson, 2002). Different kinds of movements are started in post-independent India, for example environment, tribal, wildlife protection, etc. (Karan, 1994).

'Caste' is a term derived from a Portuguese word, *casta*, meaning breed, lineage, or race. Caste is generally used as an equivalent for the more famous and also the more appropriate Indian word *jati*. G.S. Ghurye lists six outstanding features of caste such as segmented division of society, hierarchy, restrictions on feeding and social inter-course, civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different sections, lack of unrestricted choice of occupation and restrictions on marriage. Caste is a mental phenomenon and superficial. It is a recipe for bloodless revolution (Rajshekar, 2004). In the Indian social system, there is no values of Shudra communities' caste-based occupations in *Sanatana* (Hindu) scriptures (Ilaiah, 2009). The future of the Scheduled Castes is closely interwoven with the future of the caste system. As long as the caste system survives, Scheduled Castes will remain isolated, segregated, discarded and impoverished (Sunder, 1987). Directly or indirectly, that is still shown that, what Bathula Shyam Sunder was told. India is a country of castes. This has definitely made it different from all the other countries in the world. Nations have pluralities based on race, class, religion and gender. India has all of these and additionally castes, which have constructed us as entirely different beings (Ilaiah, Buffalo Nationalism A Critique of Spiritual Fascism, 2012).

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study, which is based on secondary data covering journal articles, books and e-resources, etc.

Operational Definitions

Communities: Group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common is called community. In the present study backward caste groups and women have been considered as Communities.

Discrimination: The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of caste, age, or sex.

Exploitation: The action or fact of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work.

Oppression: Prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or exercise of authority.

Shudra: Shudra is one of the four Varna's of the Hindu social order i.e., Chaturvarna. It is the lowest rank of four Varna.

Untouchable: A member of the lowest caste –Hindu group or a person outside the caste system, contact with whom is traditionally held to defile members of higher castes (Dictionary, 2020).

Backward Castes: The Shudras and Untouchables are the backward castes.

IV. ORIGIN OF INSULT FOR MAHATMA JYOTIBA PHULE

In Rigveda, the nineteenth Hymn of the Tenth Mandala, a Hymn, which is known by famous name Purusha Sukta explains about the Chaturvarna system and 11 & 12 explains that Brahmans/Priests born from creator's mouth, Kshatriyas/Soldiers from shoulder, the Vaishya from thigh and the Shudra from the feet. Further Manu Smriti say Brahman is born to study Veda's etc. A Kshatriyas is born to protect and wage wars. A Kshatriya is both to do Business. And a Shudra is born to serve all the three Varna's. A Shudra is denied from reading writing and even hearing of Veda 'mantra' and should not have wealth because it gives pain to Brahman (Moon, 1946). According to Manu Smriti and various other Smritis. A Shudra and woman of any Varna are denied from social, educational, economic and political rights. In Gautam Dharma Sutra, if a Shudra hears the mantras of Veda his ears should be filled with hot melted iron and if a Shudra utters the Veda mantras his tongue should be cut in twin and if he memorizes the Vedas his body should be slim in two pieces (10, 4.6). Examples of denial of rights to the shudras and women can be seen by going through the history and some examples are given below:

In Ramayana Shambhuka was killed by Rama when ordered by his Brahman teacher because Shambhuka being a Shudra got educated and teaching people which was a sin and punishable offence according to Dharma Shastra's. In Mahabharata, Ekalavya a tribal boy learnt the art of bow and arrow by installing idol of Dronacharya. But when Dronacharya came to know about all this, he asked Ekalavyas right hand thumb as his Guru Dakshina because according to Dharma Shastra's a Shudra has no right to learn warfare (Moon, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches Vol. 3, 2014).

In another incidence Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was denied of carnation ceremony by the Pandits because Shivaji was a Shudra and according to Hindu Shastra a Shudra cannot become King and have Shastric ceremonies (Keluskar, 1921). In 1899 Chatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur got insulted from his court priest who denied to perform Vedic ceremony during a holy bath by Maharaj in a river, considering Maharaj as a Shudra (Keer, 1976). During British rule when Lord Mountbatten, the Viceroy of India visited 'Jagannath Puri Temple' in Orissa along with Dr. Ambedkar who was an Executive Councillors in Viceroy's cabinet than and Dr. Ambedkar was not allowed inside the temple because he was an untouchable (Shastri, 1989).

Another similar incident happened Smt. Indira Gandhi, the than Prime Minister of Independent India was not allow in the 'Jagannath Puri temple in Orissa' (Shastri, 1989). Another similar incident happened recently in 2019 when India was preparing to reach to planet Mars. India's President Shri. Ramnath Kovind was not allowed in Jagannath Puri temple because he is a Dalit by birth (News18, 2018).

These are some examples shown from the ancient to modern period. Religious rigidity in the Sanatana Dharma; which is excluded the backward castes. In Jyotiba Phule life, when Jyotiba was attending his Brahman friend's marriage procession and when the Brahmans came to know about Jyotiba being a Shudra was not supposed to attend marriage of Brahmans and was insulted and kicked out of procession by the Brahmans (Keer, Mahatma Jotirao Phooley Father of the Indian Social Revolution, 2013). In this time, Phule emerged as social reformer and did work to emancipation of the women, shudras and untouchables through education and organization.

Brief Life History of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule

11 April 1827	Jyotiba born to Govindrao and Chimanabai in Pune, Maharashtra
1828	His mother dies
1835	Macaulay's 'minute' in favour of western education was introduced
1835-38	Jyotiba educated in a private Marathi medium in Pantoji's School
1840	Phule married to Savitribai, the daughter of Khandoji Nevase Zagade Patil at Naigaon
1841-47	His Primary English medium education in Missionary School

1848	He humiliated at an upper caste marriage procession and started School for girls of shudra and atishudra
1849	He left parental home with wife because of oath taken to educate the Shudras
1851	He started girls School at Chiplunkar's wada
1852	The Major Candy felicitated Jyotiba Phule for his contribution in the field of education
1855	Phule started a night School
1856	An attempt on Jyotiba's life
1860	He supports remarriage of widows
1863	Established a Home to prevent infanticide
1868	The Death of Jyotiba's father Govindrao
1868	Throws open his private water tank to the untouchables
01 June 1869	Writes 'Chatrapati Shivaji Raje Bhonsale yancha povada'
1873	Writes <i>Gulamgiri</i>
24 Sept 1873	Establishes 'Satya Shodhak Samaj'
19 Oct 1882	He made presentation to Hunter Education Commission
1882	Phule submits report to Hunter Commission
1885	Jyotiba takes lead in restoring Samadhi of Shivaji Maharaj on Raigad Fort
01 Apr 1889	Phule started writing 'Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustak'
28 Nov 1890	Mahatma dies

Source: Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Father of the Indian Social Revolution (Keer, 2013).

The Last Seven Years: People from non-Brahmin castes gathered in large numbers under Jyotiba's banner. One of the important programmes of the Satyashodhak Samaj was to ceremonially perform a religious rite, a marriage function, a house-warming ceremony, without the assistance of a Brahmin priest. Jyotiba was hopeful that his movement would reach the various corners of the country. Jyotiba took an important step towards solving the problems of the untouchables by training activists from the untouchable castes. The *Deenbandhu* continued to highlight their problems in a forthright manner. It was the mouthpiece of the Satya Shodhaks who were devoted to upliftment of the workers. In 11 May 1888, the honorific 'Mahatma' (Great Soul) was conferred on Jyotiba at a huge public function in Mandi, in recognition of his service to the Dalit community. In July 1888, Jyotiba suffered a paralytic stroke and remained bedridden for four months. In January 1890, still struggling with paralysis. On 27 November 1890, Jyotiba's condition worsened. It became clear that the end was near. He sent for his wife and pleaded with her to have courage. He asked Yashwant to pray to God and then himself said a prayer. He was conscious till the end. His face was calm and happy when this greatest of men departed from the world at 2.20 a.m. on 28 November 1890 (Joshi & Agarwal, 1991).

V. MAHATMA JYOTIBA PHULE AND COMMUNITIES' DEVELOPMENT

Educating Women, Sudras and Untouchables: Jyotiba set himself to the task of seeking educational reforms. He was convinced that both the women and the Sudras from the Hindu community should avail themselves of modern education. At the time, even the Brahmins were opposed to educating their women. He started school began functioning in August 1848 at Bhide Wada in Budhwar Peth. This school was open to girls from the untouchable castes such as Mahars, Mangs and Chamars. On 3 July 1851, Jyotiba started a girls' school in Anna Chiplunkar's mansion at Budhwar Peth, where he taught for four hours daily without taking any salary. He opened a second school for girls in Rasta Peth on 17 September 1851 and a third in Vithal Peth on 15 March 1859.

Social Reforms: After founding educational institutions, Jyotiba turned his attention to social reforms by striking at age-old social traditions. The issue of widow remarriage was extremely sensitive and Jyotiba was deeply moved by the plight of Hindu widows, in 1864 he got a widower of the Shenvi caste remarried. He founded an anti-abortion centre where widows could deliver their babies and have them cared for. This was the first institution of its kind. It saved the widows from loneliness and from the killing of their infants. On his father's first death anniversary, he distributed food among the poor and books among students. His wife who was herself childless served the children in the anti-abortion centre with tender affection. Had Jyotiba opted for government service, he would have prospered but he chose public service as he considered it his moral duty towards society. He engaged in private business to support his family. When the government drew up a plan for the construction of the Khadakvasala dam, Jyotiba along with his friend Sakharam Paranjape, acquired the contract for the supply of stone.

Jyotiba himself had no children. In 1873, a Brahmin widow named Kashibai gave birth to a baby boy in the anti-abortion centre. The boy was named Yashwant. Jyotiba's wife, Savitribai, brought up the boy like her own son. Paying no heed to the orthodox dictates of Hindu society, Jyotiba threw open the water tank near his house to untouchables, for whom the municipality had not made any arrangements for providing water.

Opposition to Brahmins and Untouchability: The *povada* that Jyotiba wrote on Shivaji was published in 1869. It runs into forty-five pages. In 1873 he wrote the book, *Gulamgiri* (Slavery). Inspired by Abraham Lincoln, the champion of human freedom, who had abolished slavery in America in 1863, Jyotiba dedicated his

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