

Idea of Emancipation and Discourse on Caste in Colonial Western India (Maharashtra)

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Résumé

L'idée d'émancipation et les discours sur les castes dans l'Inde occidentale coloniale (Maharashtra), dernière partie du XIX^{ème} siècle.

De vifs débats sur les castes eurent lieu à la fin du 19^{ème} siècle Maharashtra entre les nationalistes, les mouvements des castes inférieures, les missionnaires britanniques, les orientalistes et les idéologues. Aussi, cette période dans le Maharashtra peut être caractérisée comme un âge d'ouverture des masses aux idées de démocratie, de liberté, d'égalité et de fraternité. La caste a toujours été au centre de la politique moderne indienne même si cette structure du pouvoir remonte à l'Inde médiévale. La caste fut exploitée en tant que principe central dans la distribution du pouvoir et des ressources matérielles durant la période coloniale. Mais dans le même temps, le colonialisme créa un espace démocratique et moderne; néanmoins cet espace fut monopolisé par les castes supérieures. La lutte nationaliste contre le pouvoir impérial avait alors pour but d'établir l'hégémonie de classe. Les mouvements des non-brahmanes et des basses castes, actifs pendant la période coloniale, avaient deux objectifs : une plus grande mobilité de caste-classe et l'éradication du système de caste. Celui-ci joua un rôle important dans la détermination du contenu de la mobilisation politique et l'institutionnalisation de la démocratie moderne. La dynamique de caste et de classe reste la caractéristique de la complexité de la politique indienne.

Le système de caste et le patriarcat brahmanique ont toujours travaillé de concert dans le maintien du système de caste et de la distribution inégale des ressources. Comme la mobilité ascendante des castes renforce également le patriarcat brahmanique, les élites des castes supérieures dans les Etats féodaux arriérés protégèrent les traditions patriarcales. Les nouvelles élites qui bénéficièrent d'une mobilité de classe, acquirent et maintinrent leur statut social à travers la stricte protection des normes du patriarcat de caste. Ainsi les débats sur le système de castes au XIX^{ème} siècle entre les nationalistes, le mouvement des castes inférieures et les Britanniques méritent l'attention afin de comprendre l'exploitation actuelle de classe/caste et l'hégémonie sur les sections marginalisées de la société.

Abstract

Vibrant caste discourse took place in late 19th century Maharashtra between Nationalist, low caste movement and British Missionary, orientalist and ideologist. Therefore, this period in Maharashtra could be characterized as an age of initiation of the masses to the ideas of democracy, liberty, equality, fraternity. Caste has always

been central to modern Indian politics. Even the power structure of mediaeval India was based on caste. Caste also operated as the central principle in the distribution of power and material resources in the colonial period. In India colonialism has created a democratic and modernist space; nevertheless this space was also predominantly captured by upper-caste groups. The nationalist struggle against the imperial power was aimed at establishing the caste-class hegemony. Non-Brahmin and low-caste movements were active during the colonial era, broadly pursuing two aims : achieving upward caste-class mobility and annihilation of caste. The caste system played a significant role in determining the content and direction of the processes of political socialization, political mobilization and institutionalization within the framework of modern democracy. The dynamics of caste and class were at the root of the complexity of Indian politics in its functioning.

Caste and Brahminical patriarchy have consistently worked together in maintaining caste-based status and uneven distribution of material resources. As upward caste mobility also strengthens Brahminical patriarchy, the caste elites in the backward feudal states have nurtured caste mobs to protect patriarchal traditions. The new caste elites, while achieving class mobility, have maintained their social status by stringent protection of the norms of caste patriarchy. Thus the 19th century debate on caste between Nationalist, low-caste movement and British becomes significant to know present caste-class exploitation and its hegemony over the marginalized section.

‘Caste system’ is an unique and 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 system that views a person not as an individual but as a functioning part of an interdependent system and thus it maintains perpetually basing on its central plank of ‘varna-dharma’ or duty, assigned to one by birth¹. 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 hierarchical structure of the caste system. In the Colonial India, caste system accepted modernity in traditional form and traditions 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 in 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 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*, *Rutasanhar*, *Bhagwad Geeta*, *Manusmriti*, 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 Brahmnical 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 Brahmnical 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 Brahmins. They called these as traditions and other religions like Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism in the Hindu religion 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.

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. 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. The working of 'Paramahansa Sabha' and 'Brahmo *Samaj*' inspired these groups. Ranade and Bhandarkar led the social reform movement through the Prarthana *Samaj*.

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. 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 in modern time. 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 organization in the Bombay Presidency, and the shaping of the nationalist movement towards the end of the century".¹⁰ In 1875, in its organizational 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*.¹¹

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 this approach, new educated people started promoting ideas of social reforms.¹² 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.

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 twentieth century. Among them, Sir Denzel Ebbetson, Herbert Risley, Nessfield and Senart were important writers who provided good analytical approach about caste.¹³

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-Shudra*.

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.¹⁴

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 the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The idea embraced the prospects for development in knowledge, in welfare, and in morality.¹⁵

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'.¹⁶ Thomas Paine was a great revolutionary liberalist. Another liberal was John Stuart Mill.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

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.¹⁹ 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.²⁰

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 classes, which 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 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 Maharashtra 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 traditions. 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 traditions, 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.

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 to 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.²¹

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 traditions.²² 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 traditions and liberalism.²³ While everywhere an aggressive individualism was

in discourse, in that epoch Ranade rough conjectured the motives of the welfare state and which he connected to individualism and collectivism ; this shows his prophetic vision.²⁴ 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."²⁵

Agarkar took a rational stand to understand the need of old traditions and critically analyzed Indian traditions and customs. He believed that Mill and Spencer's conceptions could 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 society exists for an individual.²⁶ On the contrary, according to Tilak, society is more important than an individual.²⁷ 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 is 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 ideology²⁸, despite of having been enriched by ideas adopted from Mill and Spencer. 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.²⁹

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.

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 region³⁰. Indian reformers had great examples of Western nationalism.

Ranade critically analyzed the condition of religion, society, politics, economy and education for nation building. 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."³¹ 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 of the *Samaj* movement, both of our own and of the *Arya* and *Brahmo 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.³² 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."³³ 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."³⁴ 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.³⁵ 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 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.³⁶ The same statement was made by M G Ranade at Pune in front of the Gaikward, the king of Baroda state.³⁷ 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.³⁸ 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.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰

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.⁴¹ This is a significant criteria set 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 education, self-respect and altruism.⁴² 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.⁴³ 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.⁴⁴

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.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶

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.⁴⁷ 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 is 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."⁴⁸ 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 were 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 be able to take benefit from democracy and nationalism then some other people would benefit in their name, which would be a danger to the basic values of democracy.⁴⁹ 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 the nation building process but none of them struggled to destroy 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.⁵⁰

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 cannot 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.⁵¹ Phule knew that British government would collapse ; therefore, it is a great opportunity for *Shudras* to emancipate themselves in British rule.

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 eradicate caste system and its related problems.

To build a nation 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.⁵² Phule did attack on "untouchability", especially caste mentality, which prohibits social communications. In this way the nation building process is set 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.⁵³

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.⁵⁴ 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, the middle classes, mostly owners of small trade and industries, initially supported this liberal ideology. Feudal system was detrimental to them. On the basis of individual freedom, faith in knowledge, equal opportunity and open competition they attacked the old owners and their ideology.⁵⁵ 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 classes were not willing to accept recent emerging values of liberalism, because liberalism was not conducive to their traditions and customs. These newly educated classes entered into professional jobs. Their social status remained attached to their traditions bound conventions despite their becoming Doctors, lawyers, journalists and writers. Tilak and Savarkar's ultra nationalism rather than the Ranade's liberalism impressed them⁵⁶. Although they did not actively participate in Tilak's struggle, due to their moderate nature (caste nature).⁵⁷

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

In Europe, liberalism was a revolutionary theory of the newly emerging middle classes. 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.⁵⁸ 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 the social system neither it provided a strong ideology for struggle. Therefore, Indian liberal ideology was always far away from struggle.⁵⁹

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 *Ati-Shudras*.⁶⁰ 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 could 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.⁶¹

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."⁶²

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."⁶³ 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 states that "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 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."⁶⁴

To liberate people from *Brahmin* exploitation, Phule asked that we have to send our *Shudra* and *Ati-Shudra* children to school and should start to teach them true knowledge. After educating and realizing the truth, one day a virtuous 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. 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 social status was a major issue in nineteenth century social reforms. Mostly reformers came out to resolve this problem because western notions about women influenced newly educated middle classes. 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 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 emancipation from *Veda* and *Smriti* text.⁶⁵ Thus, Tilak also knew that in the *Vedas* there is no validation for women freedom.

When Tilak talks about women's emancipation, in his point of view their underdevelopment is due to their 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.⁶⁶ Here he is following old religious concept about women in the *Brahmin* religion. In patriarchy, women are not looked as an individual human being, they 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.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ Here Tilak gives God's support to women's responsibility. He says God has distributed the responsibilities of man and 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 favor of *stridharma* and Hindu *dharma*.⁶⁹ Here Tilak uses the word *stridharma*. In this concept, women are bound by so many restrictions, and according to *stridharma* 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 conditions of *Shudras* and woman are the same; both are the victims of this social system. The interesting thing is that in all his literature, he wrote about the entire humankind, which he calls in *Marathi* '*ekandar manav stripurushachya hitartha kele*'⁷⁰ (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 treat women in similar inferior manner. While writing 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 promotes concepts such as 'women's character' or 'women's nature'. Through them, it wants to present women as 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.⁷¹ Through this interpretation, he challenged the Brahminical texts and their cultural and patriarchal domination.

Phule was a non-*Brahmin* social reformer fighting against Brahminical social domination, but he 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 pratibandhak guruh*' 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 men⁷² due to their capacity to bear a child and to always suffer for their families. For him, they play 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 a second or a 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. According to Phule, 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 women's problems. According to him, 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.⁷³ Bhandarkar also raised the problems of widow women in terms of human rights.

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 were 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*.⁷⁴ Tilak suggested Ramabai that she should leave her name Pandita and use Reverend title.⁷⁵ Phule was the first person that analyzed Ramabai's work.⁷⁶ 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 stronger, 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 wrote 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 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.⁷⁷ 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 thrive 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 condition in the textual framework and focused on later *Vedic* period that shows how Indian civilization declined and for that he blamed Buddhism and non-Aryan culture, Shak, Hun and Jats for women's lowered conditions.⁷⁸ 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."⁷⁹ 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.⁸⁰ 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."⁸¹ He writes that most of the restrictions about women came in existence through the non-Aryan races. He adds that polyandry has always been a normal institution of the non-Aryan races.⁸²

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, one has to distribute the instruments of happiness amongst the society or if it is a combined property, then society should be held. Without this, society never gets happiness.⁸³ 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.⁸⁴ 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.⁸⁵

Bhandarkar and Ranade were influenced by the Aryan culture and depicted the Hindu period as the golden era of India, which was very near to their caste consciousness. Ranade saw ancient Indian period as the golden age.⁸⁶ 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 sown in the paralyzed social organism.⁸⁷ Ranade did historical analysis through the distinctive study. He shows 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 liberalized in such a way as to help people to realize their own responsibilities and to strengthen them in their efforts.⁸⁸

Bhandarkar looks towards *Vedic* society as a progressive and developed society. He writes that social institutions and practices were healthy and rational in the olden times, and they later became corrupt and irrational through some causes.⁸⁹ Thus Ranade and Bhandarkar depict

glorious *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 Brahminical God. Phule's Creator was different from that of 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 framework. However, the non-Brahmin ideology developed as an alternative culture.

Conclusion

The castes, which dominated and suppressed the subordinate and downtrodden strata of the society since immemorial time, are the main focus of this analytical study. 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, the untouchable 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 nationalists 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 analyzed 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 as 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. Prohibiting the inter caste marriage, does not allow the castes to melt. He looked towards the occupation and the untouchability as reasons of the emergence of new castes. The Anti-Varna caste traditions, the Buddhism and Bhakti movement were not acceptable to Bhandarkar, analyzing 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 is *Vedic* society in which one Varna is not supposed to interfere with other Varna and in which social mobility is possible. Tilak propounded this ideal *Vedic* society constitutes the source of inspiration for the nationalism. 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 conceptualizing 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*).

Phule highlighted the fact that the Aryan and non-Aryan struggle is the origin of exploitative institution i.e. caste system and blames 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 utilized 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 knew the limitations of the *Varkari Sampradaya*. 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 emphasized more on the extinction of the caste system to remake the Bali's ideal society.

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 traditions. The nationalism knocked at the door with new ideas but it 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 classes, which 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 of philosophy by Yashwant Suman.⁹⁰ 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 program to do so.

To install egalitarian value in India, the program of eradication of the caste system became necessary 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.⁹¹ 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.

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 materialize 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.

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

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