

## 11. Contribution of Lokhitwadi to the Modernization of Maharashtra

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The East India Company established its rule in the Western India by defeating the last Peshwa Bajirao II in 1818. This was the beginning of modern Maharashtra as the new rule was based on secular and rational thinking. It was not merely military defeat of the Peshwas, but the Western Culture, superior in every field of life had defeated the stagnant Indian culture.<sup>1</sup> The rule of Peshwas is the most hated due to its closed nature and social rigidity even today and would remain in future also in Maharashtra people. The new rule was important from the point of view that it was going to educate indigenous people at least to meet the need of its administration. The education was to be imparted among people of India. But the case was different; the British Rule was colonial in nature and so always given importance to further its colonial interests. So the educational policy adopted by the British colonial Government was deliberately developed to educate upper caste elite people like the Brahmins. This was because the Brahmins exercised a total control over the rest of the lower castes, shudras, and untouchables, dalits and women by denying them the right to education.

On this background the British Government adopted the policy of appeasement of the Brahmins by favouring them in education and in the administrative set up. So in practice, the newly established British rule brought no sudden golden age of lower caste education.<sup>2</sup> But the new government definitely created a space and possibility for the educational development of the shudras, women and dalits by creating free and favourable atmosphere. On the other side Christian Protestant Missionaries played an important role in educating shudras and dalits though with the aims of proselytization, they especially concentrated on the Dalits, the most exploited strata of the Hindu society, so as to fulfill their aims. Thus the English Education was introduced to Indians by the British Government and the missionaries with different aims of administrative needs and proselytization respectively. So the establishment of the British regime in Maharashtra in 1818 was a very important phenomenon in the history of modern Maharashtra.

the God, and rejected ritualism by suggesting that service to mankind is the service to God.<sup>10</sup> His attraction of materialist progress of industrialist and capitalist society is evident from his thoughts, and when stated that the aim of a man should bring material prosperity by working vigorously.<sup>11</sup>

He propounded the economic nationalism and the Parliament for Hindustan, in the middle of the nineteenth century, when people were still under the impact of autocracy.<sup>12</sup> He was the creator of the national consciousness in India. In the opinion of Acharya Jawadekar Lokhitwadi Gopal Hari Deshmukh was the first person to place before Marathi readers, such views about democracy and revolution and his views on India's Independence were more progressive than the contemporary Bengali counterparts.<sup>13</sup>

Lokhitwadi Gopal Hari Deshmukh advocated equality and justice and at the same time distinctly demonstrated the quest for true awareness for injustice towards the oppressed sections and to foster socio-religious reforms. He had not only discussed the social and religious conditions of India, but also noticed the economic and political issues as well. He expressed the gratitude for political thinking and ideology of the British and also was hopeful that India would regain her freedom. According to G. B. Sardar, the objection that his ideology was pro-British was not true, he believed that everything happened in the world was as per the will of the God and so the British Rule in India was according to the God' plan, and the British administration was superior to the old rules in India and within the British Rule, the modernization of India would happen and Indians would learn to administer independently.<sup>14</sup>

Lokhitwadi believed that the Brahmins being leaders of the Hindu society were to go for modernization. He advocated the marriages between different sub-castes of the Brahmin according to economic condition, but not the inter-caste marriages. He rejected the concept of inter-caste marriage and did not allow the Brahmins to marry with a member of any other caste.<sup>15</sup> He appealed the Brahmins strongly for widow remarriage by pointing out that remarriages of widow would help to maintain morality among the Brahmins. Thus he advocated reforms for controlling morality within the Brahmin caste only.<sup>16</sup>

Lokhitwadi advocated reinstalling the Varna system but he did not want to discard the caste system, not even to destroy caste differences based on birth, rather he wanted to remove the severity in the feeling of hating other caste, the concepts of high-low castes and untouchability.<sup>17</sup> Lokhitwadi was impressed by the western ideas and culture and more by the materialist progress



achieved by the western culture by establishing industrial capitalism in Europe. He was deeply concerned about the progress of Hindu society in general and the Brahmin caste in particular. Therefore he was advocating the Brahmins to get educated on western lines with accepting the English Education.

According to Prof. Rege M. P., Lokhitwadi had stressed on the morality based on the rationalism to bring out the socio-religious reforms in the Hindu society and also stressed on its need in the middle of the nineteenth century; to remove the evil practices, which had become the strong obstacle in inculcating reforms, would have been seen as the socio-religious reforms. Lokhitwadi while advocating social reforms has stressed on the morality based on the rationalism, but at the same time his concept of morality based on rationalism lacked the important aspect of justice to all.<sup>18</sup> His reforms were meant for the Brahmin caste only.

According to Prof. Umesh Bagade, Lokhitwadi accepted the orientalist ideology of praising ancient Indian history and the Hinduism. He advocated the concept of Hindu Nationalism based on the pride of ancient Hinduism by glorifying the Brahmins of the ancient times. He made the advent of the Muslim responsible for the deterioration of the Hindus. He states that the coming of the Muslim powers in India made Hindus as their slaves and there was a great loss of patriotism, knowledge, bravery and luxury among the Hindus.<sup>19</sup>

He advocated the reforms on the basis of the religious books initially, but later on under the impact of rationalism he advocated to reject the *Shastras*. His rationalism was even rejecting religious books if they do not allow the better practices for healthy social behaviour. At the same time he did not have courage to face the orthodox Brahmins, it was evident when his name was printed on the invitation card of the widow remarriage and he could not attend it when Mujumdar of Baroda, the father-in-law of his daughter had threatened him not to attend that widow remarriage.<sup>20</sup> He had condemned the *Warkari* sect by stating that it includes the low-caste people, women, old, peasant etc. and proclaimed that the Brahmins and their knowledge was of high level.<sup>21</sup>

Lokhitwadi accepted the ideology of Arya Samaj regarding the purification of Hinduism, which was according to him, adulterated due to practices of Islam. Both Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Lokhitwadi had assumed the Hindu identity as national identity and so religious fanaticism is located in their ideologies as a result of the pride of the Hinduism.<sup>22</sup> Thus both failed to create a secular ideology for the vast and varied country like India. Lokhitwadi was not



The English Education introduced by the new rule here was open to all irrespective of caste, creed, and gender. It brought modern ideas and concepts like liberty, equality, justice, humanity, democracy etc. which were very different in nature in the Indian religious atmosphere. These new concepts of humanity shackled the beliefs of newly educated Indians though mostly were Brahmins and they had to think over the social conditions of the Hindu society and conditions of women at least. The English Education plays a vital role in bringing about overall social changes in the society including social change. It has a potential to generate rationalism among the educated people. It was secular, and based on scientific knowledge develops a rational and questioning mind in the educated people, which is very important for getting out of age old superstitious mentality and think rationally. Thus it proved to be a crucial factor in transformation of medieval Maharashtra into modern Maharashtra. It brought new western ideas of humanity, modern institutions and thoughts in India. With the establishment of the British Rule, the Christian missionaries played a vital role in educating most oppressed strata of the society – Dalits and Women. The Christian missionaries started various schools for them and for the first time shudras; dalits and women were introduced with the English Education. The missionaries began their work of proselytization, and began to reform the evils of Indian society by serving for the downtrodden, exploited section of the Hindu society. Their crucial work in the fields of health and education paved the way for new trend of social reforms in Maharashtra.

The materialistic and technical reforms were introduced in India by the Western culture. It also brought a new just administration and judicial system based on liberalism and the new codes based on personal dignity and liberty, were introduced here. It also introduced the press media for the communication, educational institutes based on secularism, charitable institutes, which brought about the transformation in the mental and cultural values of the Indians. The western ideas, modern education, arts, western literature were introduced in the educational syllabi and this brought a tremendous transformation in the minds of the newly educated Indians.

The modern concepts like liberty, equality, fraternity, justice, liberalism etc. impressed the native youth and ultimately gave rise to social reformism in Maharashtra. Finally a nationwide movement for socio-religious reforms was started with the establishment of many socio-religious reform institutes and newspapers, periodicals etc.<sup>3</sup> This was possible due to the modern nature of the British Government, which was a part of superior Western culture. The Western culture developed the rational knowledge based on experience and logic and also



developed the morality in the field of education, whereas Indian culture was lagging behind in developing rational education and knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

The Nineteenth Century Maharashtra was marked by the transformation in almost all the fields of the life and thus was a landmark in the history of Maharashtra, modernity had entered in all fields, and many drastic changes in socio-economic life of people had begun to appear. The administrative changes introduced under new rule in the fields of revenue, judiciary, military, police etc. and thus the strong administrative set up was created. Communication system was improved by introducing telegraph and postal services, Railways and roads were built to improve transportation, new educational system was introduced, the western knowledge and culture was spread by introducing the use of printing press.<sup>5</sup> These facilities were introduced not for the development the country, which has become their colony, but to meet the need of the British colonialism. After all the reforms in almost every field of life could not benefit only the rulers, but it also resulted in the awakening of the Indian minds and also in beginning of socio-reform movements by the social reformers.

Gopal Hari Deshmukh is popularly known as 'Lokhitwadi', a sponsor of popular welfare, was committed to modernity and to create society based on modern values. He accused the orthodox Brahmins for not supporting the socio-religious reforms. In his '*Shatapatre*', a bunch of hundred letters published in '*Prabhakar*', a weekly newspaper, he bitterly criticised the folly and ignorance and hypocrisy of the Brahmins.<sup>6</sup> The Brahmins were leading the Hindu society and so the condition of the Brahmin caste is regarded by him as the representation of the whole Hindu society and therefore he devoted aggressively to reform the condition of the Brahmin caste. He also desired the Brahmins would establish industrial capitalism in India.<sup>7</sup>

He condemned the caste system, child marriages, superstitious rituals, women's degradation, inequality and ignorance towards scientific knowledge and material progress. While criticising the social system, he pointed out that Hindu society remained internally divided on account of three factors- caste differences, degraded position of women and child marriages.<sup>8</sup> He advocated believing in the Vedas rather than in *Puranas* or the customs prevailing at that time and rejected the false stories in the *Puranas* with the help of rationalism.<sup>9</sup> He accused the Brahmins for sponsoring superstitious ritualism as the greed to earn money and suggested to accept western modern knowledge so as to achieve materialistic prosperity. Lokhitwadi had accepted Emanuel Kant's stand on empiricism and rationalism and advocated the existence of

10. Priyolkar A. K., (Ed.), (1967), Lokhitwadikrut Nibandhsangraha, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, p. 48.
11. Bagade Umesh, opp. Cited, p. 174.
12. Dixit Raja, (2009), Ekonisavya Shatkatil Maharashtra: Madhyamvargacha Uday, Diamond Publication, Pune, p. 77.
13. Kshire Vasant, opp. cited, p. 150.
14. Sardar G. B., (1981), Mahatma Phule Vyaktitva Ani Vichar, Granthali Prakashan, Mumbai, p. 38.
15. Sumant Yashwant, Punde Dattatraya, (ed.), (1988), Maharashtraatil Jatisanshtavishyak Vichar, Pratima Prakashan, Pune, p. 16.
16. Bagade Umesh, (2006), Maharashtraatil Prabodhan Ani Wargjatiprabhutva (Resurgence and Class, Caste Dominance in Maharashtra), Sugava Publication, Pune, p. 179.
17. Ibid, 181.
18. Rege M. P., (2002), Vivek Va Nyaya: Adhunik Maharashtraatil Prabodhanparva, Pratima Prakashan, Pune, p. 99.
19. Bagade Umesh, (2006), Maharashtraatil Prabodhan Ani Wargjatiprabhutva (Resurgence and Class, Caste Dominance in Maharashtra), Sugava Publication, Pune, p. 182.
20. Parikh Govardhan, Parikh Indumati, (1988), Lokhitwadi Samagra Wngamaya, Vol. 1, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Sanskruti Mandal, Mumbai, p. 12.
21. Priyolkar A. K., (ed.), (1967), Lokhitwadikrut Nibandhsangraha, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, p. 437.
22. Bagade Umesh, (2006), Maharashtraatil Prabodhan Ani Wargjatiprabhutva (Resurgence and Class, Caste Dominance in Maharashtra), Sugava Publication, Pune, p. 190.