CHAPTER 5

SHRI SHAHU MAHARAJ OF KOLHAPUR AND

THE NON-BRAHMIN MOVEMENT
In the history of the Non-Brahmin Movement, after Mahatma Jotiba Phule, follows the glorious role of His Highness Shri Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur. His rule at Kolhapur (a native state in the erstwhile Bombay presidency) though brief, contributed tremendously to the cause of Non-Brahmin Movement in particular and social upliftment in general. His Highness devoted much of his time to the Non-Brahmin cause. It was his firm conviction that unless all Indians, men and women, were educated, India would never be a free, united and strong nation. He was a prince under the protection of the British, but his expression of loyalty and gratitude to the British rulers was without prejudice to his concept of 'Swaraj' or Independence. He recognised education as the greatest boon of the British rule in India. Though a prince of a small kingdom, he dreamt of an educated free India and a strong casteless society. His Highness Shri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur had a set of determined aims and ideals, which he cherished till his death. Thoughts and activities of His Highness Shri Shahu Maharaj in connection with the Non-Brahmin Movement are a neglected chapter in the history of the Non-Brahmin Movement. His Highness's contribution to the rise of Non-Brahmin Movement is neglected largely due
to the fact that His Highness lacked the tools of publicity and, besides, His Highness himself was "averse as he was less known either in India or in England than many other Princes." ¹

There is naturally, a dearth of material on H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj. Prof. A.B. Latthe's contribution is, however, significant even to this day. Shivaji University has instituted a special Lecture Series known as "Shahu Lecture Series". Besides this, B.B. Jadhav has brought out a collection of H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj's speeches, under the title "Rajashri Shahu Maharajane Bhashane" (in Marathi, 1971). But for a research student of course, they are of little help save for a few references. The Kolhapur Record Office has collected and preserved the Shahu Files (Shahu Daftar) containing a good lot of correspondence, publications etc. With the help of these primary and valuable source much light can be thrown on the contribution made by H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj to the Non-Brahmin Movement. It also reveals as to how he was in constant touch with the various Non-Brahmin leaders, Non-Brahmin organisations and Native Princes in South India and elsewhere.

¹ A.B. Latthe; Memoirs of His Highness Shri Shahu Chhatrapati Maharaj of Kolhapur, Vol.I, Times of India, Bombay, 1924, Preface, p.VII.
H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj and His Social Thought

Shri Shahu of Kolhapur was very much influenced by Jotiba Phule. Some of the main trends of thoughts left behind by Jotiba Phule were:

a) All men are children of one God who is thus their parent.

b) As a child does not require an intermediary to approach the mother or to please the father, there is no necessity of an intermediary such as a preception to enable the devotee to offer his prayers to God.

c) Any one accepting these principles was qualified to be a member of the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' and spreading education among the Non-Brahmins.

These were the main thoughts of Jotiba Phule which particularly influenced H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj, even though he was secular in his acts and deeds. "H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj made inquiries", what Mr. Latthe aptly terms, "in the spirit of an Akbar, into various reform movements of Hinduism, the 'Satya Shodhak' in the Deccan, Brahminism, Theosophy and the Arya Samaj, in search of the system which would satisfy the spiritual as well as the social needs of the Non-Brahmins."  

---

2 Satya Shodhak Samaj, Third Anniversary Report, see for details - p.155.

3 A.B. Latthe, op. cit., Vol. I, Bombay, 1924, p.VII.
Shri Shahu, like Jotiba Phule, had a thorny path as a revolutionary social reformer. He had to face many problems as a social reformer. To treat any human being as untouchable is a grotesque travesty of religion. Yet millions of them have been treated so for centuries. Those neglected people are now taking revenge on the community which had ill-treated them. Eradication of untouchability and the uplift of the depressed classes by means of education had been the main plank of these social reformers. The much needed vitality was imparted to the movement by the supreme efforts made by Mahatma Jotiba Phule to start with. Shri Shahu's thoughts were also influenced by the then existing social conditions. "The activities or the service rendered by H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj in furtherance of the Non-Brahmin cause and the upliftment of the down-trodden section of the society are not only to be explained, but they have to be assessed in the light of the time and environment in which H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj fought the social odds of the Hindu society." Perhaps no native ruler in this country has left behind such a record of a socio-political revolution. If at all there was a war, it was against the evil of

4 P.B. Salunke, Raja Shri Shahu Maharaj Lecture Series, Lecture No. 1, Shivaji University, p. 4.
oaste system in the Indian society. Shri Shahu did not have the ideals of a philosopher, but they were formulated by a close observation of the lives of the masses. Shri Shahu was very much perturbed by the "strong religious and educational hold which Brahmins had in His Native state of Kolhapur. Brahmin Bureaucracy was a great menace to his administration." The impact of English education, gave rise to the development of a new, liberal social thought throughout India. But the social thought developed in Maharashtra was unique and influenced whole of Southern India. "H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaja was alert to the heavy influence of Brahmins throughout Deccan." No Presidency, or no Native State remained uninfluenced by these social thoughts which emerged so strongly in Maharashtra, especially in Kolhapur. "The impact of English education resulted in two different schools of thought, and the main bone of contention was, one of accepting the Westernisation or rejecting western education and its social thought. The school which accepted western pattern brought-forth the new ideas of social reforms in Indian society, and those

6 Ibid.
who rejected, revolted against the British rule." 7 This conflict spread throughout the length and breadth of South India. This was known as extremist politics. "The leader of the first school of thought was Jotiba Phule, and after his death in 1890, the movement was getting weaker, but this was taken up by R.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur." 8

Shri Shahu's thoughts in connection with the Brahmin bureaucracy can be best examined by going through the letter which he wrote to Col. Wodehouse, in which he throws much light on the dominance of the Brahmin, and the need of 'Satya Shodhak Samaj', "to break this Brahmin despotism, and equally he felt that the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' was suffering under certain limitations. He started the work of 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' chiefly to show the black side of the brutal priestly bureaucracy which, under the garb of religion, goes so far as even to teach that a Brahmin can enjoy any body's wife without the least idea of sin in his mind. The Puranas (Mythologies) contain this dreadful and shameful doctrine. But the Non-Brahmins cannot openly

8 Ibid.
denounce even against this. They have not got the strength of character to do so." Shri Shahu in this letter also points out as to how the Editor of the 'Deccan Ryot', who advocated the cause of the Non-Brahmins, finds it difficult to get a place in Poona to set up his press. To overcome the limitations of the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj', "the Brahmin bureaucrats say that the Presidency class alone, only by reason of their birth, should have all the power, religious as well as political, while Arya Samajists say that any man qualified by his work to wield such power should have that power." The Brahmins, of course do not accept this at all. "So the Brahmin extremists and those of the Arya Samaj will never be one. I for one, says the Editor of the Deccan Ryot, do not like any extremist, but if a choice is to be made, I prefer an Arya Samaj extremist to a Brahmin one. When we want to perform any religious ceremony, the exclusive doctrines of the Brahmin bureaucracy come in the way which a follower of the Arya Samaj teaches his own religious principles and performs all religious ceremonies according to the Vedas irrespective of caste." Shri Shahu Maharaj since his boyhood had

9 Shahu to Col. Wodehouse, 19th February, 1919, Appendix 13.

10 Ibid.
cherished objectives to over-rule and break the Brahmin bureaucracy. And this anti-Brahminism assumed a violent form and resulted in the riots which occurred at Kolhapur. The reasons for this attitude of Shri Shahu Maharaj are many. For e.g., when Shri Shahu Maharaj ascended the throne in 1894, the throne was under the Brahminical influence. His reign came under heavy attacks from the Brahmin fanatics. In November, 1900, the Kolhapur Municipality passed certain resolutions reserving certain Ghat (bathing places) on the Panchaganga river for Brahmins for taking the Ekadashi bath. This is also known as (Vedokta ceremony). Non-Brahmin classes defied this resolution. Meanwhile, the Maharaj noticed that when he used to visit the Ghat at Panchaganga river, the priest was blessing him with Mantras without taking bath on the grounds that H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj and Shivaji were "Shudras" and not Kshatriyas.

"In 1901, during Navaratri Puja it was claimed by the orthodox Brahmins that Ambabai - (the principal deity of Kolhapur city) was polluted by the touch of Narayan Bhat (sevkar) who had performed the Vedic rite in

---

connection with the Maratha boys' 'Shravani' in the Shravan month in which the sacred thread is worshipped."\(^{12}\)

In August 1901, Bal Gangadhar Tilak visited Kolhapur on some business, and he also delivered a speech in Kolhapur. Poona city had trailed its guns towards Shri Shahu. "H.H.Shri Shahu Maharaj and Tilak could not see eye to eye."\(^{13}\) In his speech in Kolhapur, delivered on 20th August, 1901, he stated "Although I have no private concern of any sort with Kolhapur, still I have become very closely connected with you, the inhabitants of Karvir (Kolhapur city), owing to some circumstances of public nature."\(^{14}\) Tilak an extremist was both a nationalist and a traditionalist. In his speech in Kolhapur he was indirectly trying to interfere with Shri Shahu's reforms by extolling Shivaji the Great for attacking the masses on the one hand


\(^{13}\) Salunke, P.B., *Shri Shahu Lecture Series*, Lecture II, p.36, Shivaji University.

\(^{14}\) See Appendix 38, published in: In the High Court of Justice King's Bench Division. Between (Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Plaintiff) Sir Valentine Chirol and Macmillan Vol.II, Translations or copies of Article Editorial Notes, etc. in 'Kesari', 'Maratha', 'Rashtramat' and 'Kal', Bombay, 1917.
and terrorizing them against reform-oriented efforts of Shri Shahu on the other. The so called "some circumstances of public nature" in Shri Tilak's speech described earlier imply, perse Shahu's activities in particular and the uplift of masses through them in general.

Many such incidents forced H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj to plunge into the Non-Brahmin Movement. H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj was continuously facing the problems created by the Brahminical influence in his administration. "The Maharaj distrusted his officials. He became accessible to the poor while on Shikar. He contacted the masses without formalities and realised that the bureaucratic administration established by the political Agent was not serving the people at all." ¹⁵ Before assuming full powers, the Maharaj made extensive tour of the Kolhapur state to acquaint himself with the people and problems of his own state. ¹⁶ Shri Shahu though influenced by Jotiba Phule's thoughts had kept himself aloof from any movement such as the 'Satya Shodhak Movement' and this was largely because the "Brahmin bureaucracy had such a strong hold, both

---------
¹⁶ Ibid., p.2.
religiously and educationally, over the Non-Brahmins that not even a few educated Non-Brahmins had the strength of character to go against them," and besides "H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj was essentially an orthodox, religious man in various ways." Shri Shahu was in search of a religion or a system designed to serve the need of the society, which would help as a creed as well as a rule of social and individual life.

During the period 1894-1913 Shri Shahu was busy with his own administrative problems and carrying on various reforms. But the events such as the Vedoka ceremony, and the hurdles laid in his way of reforms by the leadership of Tilak and by the extremists, involved him deeply in strengthening the Non-Brahmin Movement. "Under any circumstances the clever Brahmin had their own approaches," in creating problems for the classes who were rising against the age-old system. Besides, during this period, Brahmins were a mobile community, and they moved from

17 Shahu's letter to Wodehouse, Appendix 13.
19 Salunke, P.B., op. cit., p.17.
20 Karve, I., Kinship Organisation in India, Bombay, 1953, p.63.
place to place when required. It is perhaps because of their mobile nature that they have always prevented the religious, political, or social movements which aimed at eliminating caste system from becoming successful. In this process of survival through movement they spread and acquired new cultural traits. Once the Brahmins stabilized their position in different regions, they rigidly adhered to the self-imposed rules of caste. If there was any mobility in the caste system it was within a permitted range. Groups moved upward or downward. When they moved upward, their superior status was rarely accepted, but when they were downgraded, every caste accepted their lower status. It was this aspect which made Tilak to write in _Kesari_ dated 22nd September, 1902 asking is it possible to turn a Maratha into a Brahmin through _Vedokta_ ceremony? Tanaji and Shivaaji learnt _Vedas_. Even then would they be Brahmins?²¹ Tilak, condemning Shri Shahu, stated in _Kesari_ once that "even one's own child has to be cut to piece when there is a cross birth."²² The clever and shrewd Brahmins had left no place for any other community

²¹ Salunke, P.B., _op.cit._, Part II, p.16.
²² Letter to Wodehouse, Appendix 13.
or caste to be covered by them. Right since 1873, the beginning of the *Satya Shodhak Movement* the Non-Brahmins started organising themselves, and in response to these, the Brahmins not only influenced the British, but also Brahminized the national movement. All these factors compelled Shri Shahu to develop a Non-Brahmin attitude. Several other incidents took place at Kolhapur. Shri Shahu Maharaj ascended the throne in 1894, and he did not establish a 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' branch as soon as he ascended the throne. Instead, the Kolhapur 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' branch "was established in July 1913."23 During 1894-1913, H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj was not an active participant in the Non-Brahmin Movement or 'Satya Shodhak Samaj'. He had always tried to maintain good and cordial relations with the Brahmins. "H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj tried his best by obliging the Brahmins, and giving them all good treatment, but H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj found that they were all incorrigible"24 in their approach. Ultimately he saw the discontent, and was left with no alternative but to break it by introducing 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' and Arya Samaj.

Shri Shahu had approached "Swami Paramanand of Agra who was to teach Vedas and help the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' and be useful to teach the untouchables." So the Brahminical atrocities were responsible for his Non-Brahmin attitude. Further, Shri Shahu was more cautious and guarded in his approach to the Non-Brahmin Movement, because of the extremists, who started taking an active part in the Home Rule Movement. It had received a great deal of support from Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who joined hands with Dr. Annie Besant's Theosophical Society in Madras. To Shri Shahu, the extremist politics was nothing but Brahmin politics, because of which Shri Shahu wanted not one Samaj, but more Samajas to counteract the Brahmins. He felt that as long as the other castes think that their Hindu religious worship cannot be done without Brahmins, their influence can never be lessened. Hence under these influences, Shri Shahu's character came to be moulded with a deep insight into the past, and he could visualise very clearly the future. It is because of this great quality, he played a great role as a social reformer.

---------

25 Ibid., Appendix 16.
26 Ibid., 10th January, 1918.
"Preachers, reformers of many types have appeared from time to time. Scholars and philosophers of the literate classes, saints, poets and lovers of their fellow men, who sprang from variety of castes. However, it may be doubted, that anything like similar instance is recorded of a ruling prince who worked and suffered during his whole manhood in one long struggle against the deep-rooted evils of a complex social and religious system in order to effect the betterment of the humblest of his fellow men."

His Highness had no mind to enter the movement, but the Brahmins always misused his good offices by which, "the Maharaj made it his mission to work for the amelioration of all classes by emancipating them from the domination of the Caste System." The first task which H.H.Shri Shahu Maharaj had to undertake was to pull the Kolhapur administration out of the depth and darkness which it had reached in the course of years. It was in this background that his social thought was shaped. The environmental factor played a great role in moulding the mind, and, no wonder, he was determined in his mind to launch a relentless struggle in

27 Latthe, A.B., op.cit., Preface, p.IV.
28 Ibid.
support of the Non-Brahmin cause.

II

The work of Shri Shahu Maharaj can be divided into two periods viz., 1894-1913 and 1913-1922. From 1894 to 1913 the rule of Shri Shahu in a protected princely state, limited his activities to his own field, and this period of his rule was under heavy attacks from the Brahminical circles. From 1900 to 1913, besides these attacks, there were many other coincidences in his life. The Maratha-Brahmin relations had been strained ever since the downfall of the Maratha empire, and the rivalry between the two castes is a historical truth. But under the British rule the rivalry was further widened because of the disparities in economic, political and social fields. The role of the British policy of "Divide and Rule" cannot be ignored in this regard. But what became an important factor in H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj's life was the growth of the National Movement with a heavy Brahminical influence. This had a tremendous influence on his mind and, therefore, he took up the Non-Brahmin cause actively supporting all those activities that counteracted the extremists. Shahu's contribution to the spread of the Non-Brahmin Movement throughout India should be considered in the light of the movement
that led to the Montford Reforms. Perhaps the provision regarding communal representation in the 1919 Act was the outcome of this movement.

His Role in the Non-Brahmin Movement

The British had a soft corner for the Native states. The position of the native rulers was "not less than the viceroy or the Lieutenant Governor in the administration of the country." The British were equally interested in training the "Princes of Native states to do something towards raising the whole tone and standard of life of the native princes and thereby to place their own future existence upon more durable foundations." Because of the environment in which the Native Chiefs ruled, they had naturally developed a liberal outlook towards life and their rule. The British policy towards the Native Chiefs, was also influenced by the failures of the Christian Missionaries in India. "The European missionaries have testified to hold the Brahman over the bulk of the Hindus and this had to be broken if Christianity was to make headway in India."  

-------------------


The British could learn that the Brahmins, on whom they had relied primarily in the initial periods, were not loyal, and therefore they thought of helping the cause of Non-Brahmins. This change in their attitude made the British to develop a sympathetic outlook towards the Native states. The British policy towards the Native Rulers can be best illustrated by Lord Curzon's speech and his letter to Lord Hamilton (Appendixes 36 and 37). During the 20th century the British rule was also influenced by the nationalist movement, which was dominated by its "participants coming from higher castes, whose members had been most exposed to western culture in British commercial companies, administrative services and colleges. In terms of social background, there was little to distinguish the early nationalists from the Indians who served the British as partners and subordinates. Both those who agitated for reforms and those who collaborated with the British were drawn from the groups which traditionally enjoyed high status."33

administrators, thought of relying more upon the Native Princes and to win over the Non-Brahmins. They themselves desired to uplift the down-trodden sections of the society while in search of loyal administrators. Under these circumstances, Shri Shahu got the opportunity to manipulate the situation when it was most favourable. The British were equally influenced by the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' in changing their outlook on Indian politics. If it can be stated that the two social reformers viz., Jotiba Phule and H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj played a pro-British role, it would not be wrong to state that the British played an anti-Brahmin role or a pro-reformist role. The British attitude was extremely favourable to the Non-Brahmin Movement, because they had come to realise that Brahminism was a great threat to their stability and continuity in India. There was also a general apprehension that through the various Reform Acts power might get concentrated in the hands of the Brahmins who were already the privileged class. In the Madras presidency there was a similar situation. The British found that "Brahmin lawyers were taking a leading part in the anti-British national agitation and they calculated that they could secure support for the government from among the non-Brahmins by making it appear that their interests
lay with the Government rather than with the Congress."\(^{34}\) Hence Shri Shahu, influenced by such a situation and the background of His Native State, was forced to plunge into the Non-Brahmin Movement. In his letter dated 19th January, 1918 (R.7016 and R.7017), he made it very clear as to how the Brahmin bureaucracy was interfering in his administration. He had to face complex problems and humiliations even to the extent of being called a Shudra himself. No prince could have tolerated such an insinuation and thus it had a great impact on Shahu's life itself. No wonder he had plans to establish an "Independent research institute in Ethnography - on ancient points and methods of classification of the Hindu races." In this connection he applied to the Secretary, Council of Post-graduate teaching in Arts, Calcutta University in November, 1919. He was interested in finding answers to the following questions:

1) Grounds supporting the statement that the caste system in its present form is not sanctioned by the \textit{Shastras}.

2) Evils and hardships arising from the caste system in its present form do not have the sanction of the \textit{Shastras}.

3) Duties of different castes according to Shastras, and the effect of non-observance of these duties.

4) Reasons laid down in the Shastras for the loss of one's caste.

5) If Manu is regarded as an authority in matters of inheritance, adoption etc., why not regard him as an authority in matters of caste also.

5) Objectionable passages from the 'Puranas' etc., that give wrong direction in matters of religion and morality etc.

H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj left no stone unturned in emancipating the Non-Brahmins from the Brahmin despotism. Under attacks from the Brahmins, Shri Shahu realised the Non-Brahmins need a religion of their own to promote the Non-Brahmin cause. He stated: "I want to break it (Brahmin hold) by introducing 'Satya Shodhak' and Arya Samaj. The former has got a solid foundation of Vedas. I am thinking of teaching Vedas to other castes meaning to say, that, that is their religion which the Brahmins don't like at all." He wanted "to work out the aims of Satya Shodhak Samaj' by introducing the other Samajas, who could preach the society, other than the Brahmins," and what

35 Shahu Files, K.R.O.File No.27 (1919) (Appendixes 6A-6B).
36 Shahu Files, K.R.O.File No.18, L.No.7016 and 7017, Appendix 15.
37 Ibid., File No.34, L.No.9, dated 19th February, 1919 Appendix 15.
the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' lacked was a religious base. Hence Shri Shahu had developed a great liking towards the Arya Samaj. Valentine Chirol says:

"Some of the most experienced and enlightened of the ruling chiefs showed much earlier and livelier appreciation of the subversive tendencies of Indian unrest than those responsible for the governance of the British India. Some of them like the H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur and Patiala have been brought face to face with the same violent and even the same criminal methods of agitation as the government of India has had to deal with in provinces under the British administration." 38

Shri Shahu of Kolhapur made great strides in his native state, "more superior to the British India, in the encouragement of education, industrial development and in respect of the separation of the judicial from the executive functions." 39 The influence of Shri Shahu grew to such an extent that Kolhapur became the ideological centre of the Non-Brahmin Movement, which enabled the spread of this ideology throughout South India. Till "the end of his life Shri Shahu Maharaj continued founding and endowing new schools. and, most important of all, hostels now recognized...

38 Valentine Chirol, Indian Unrest, Macmillan, Bombay, 1910, p. 190.

by all educational authorities in India, but in no city throughout the continent has the system been developed to the same extent as in Kolhapur, or with the same success in supplementing the lack of religious teaching in the schools. Even the style of constructing hostels was followed in Madras city itself. For instance, "C. Natesa Mudaliar, a Vellala medical student who was the Secretary of the Madras Dravidian Association, began gathering funds for the establishment of a hostel in Madras city for Non-Brahmin youths who desire to receive their education from the schools and colleges on the lines which Shri Shahu Maharaj had organised. "By 1920 separate hostels had been started in the Maharaj's small capital for no fewer than eleven different sections of the community, including the Indian Christians and the so-called untouchables. In all his reform work, his mission extended itself beyond Kolhapur and not merely to Marathas in the caste sense of the term."

40 Latthe A.B., op.cit., Vol.I, p.VI.
41 Eugene F. Irschick, Politics and Social Conflict in South India, p.45.
42 Latthe A.B., op.cit., Vol.I, p.VI.
Shri Shahu could not also remain aloof from the most vital and urgent social problems from 1913 onwards. Shri Shahu Maharaj came to be known as "A Prince among social reformers and a social reformer among princes. H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur came to be entitled to be heard on all questions relating to the reform of the social fabric of the Indian people." The most vital and urgent social problem in Bombay Presidency or Madras Presidency or in Southern India as a whole was the uplifting of the depressed classes, the untouchables who formed, the masses of the people in India. It was his efforts in this direction that made him concerned not only with his native state (Kolhapur) or the local Brahmans, but also of the Northern and Southern India. It was since 1913 that he started developing contacts outside Kolhapur. These contacts and his influences can be understood when one goes through the "Shahu Daftar". Even a cursory glance through these papers would create curiosity in every reader to go deep into the


44 All India Theistic Conference - For details please see, 'The Modern Review' January, 1916, p.57. "The Indian Theistic Movement (All India Theistic Conference held in Bombay - Presidential address delivered by Hon.Dr.Nil Rathan Sircar, M.A., Dec. 1915)."
modus operandi through which Shri Shahu could achieve the goal. There can be no doubt that it was his dynamic personality and his grim determination to eradicate caste system in the society that made him enjoy a towering position among all Native princes. This can be conclusively ascertained from his vast correspondence with other states in India which helps us in getting a clear picture of the Non-Brahmin Movement influencing many other movements like social, economic, political or religious under his dynamic leadership.

The Shahu Files are in the form of scattered letters. They are not well organised either chronologically or according to an Index. But these letters no doubt give a clear picture of the various activities of H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj.

Shri Shahu, with his determination to save the masses and the indigenous Indian culture, contributed his mite by opening up to them the vista of hope and comfort. To him no form of religion had any life-value, which failed to yield a living inspiration, and social service, more specially the service of the lowly and the over-burdened, the afflicted and the down-trodden, the depressed and the fallen. He thought that religion must provide the depressed
classes with love for humanity and patient life-giving service. "His Highness himself freely mixed with the labour classes and merchants which very few princes did." It was with this outlook, and his grave concern for the depressed classes that he approached the Montford Reforms Commission and advocated for communal representation.

"Joti-Rao Phooley of Poona was the pioneer in modern times of the movement calculated to improve the condition of and to secure social equality to the untouchables and unapproachable classes, next to him came V.R. Shinde, the twentieth century torch-bearer of Phooley spirit, who started a movement by establishing the depressed classes Mission in Bombay." Further when Montford Reforms were to be introduced, even this "Mission had consulted H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj for his advice. This office was also in touch with Gujerat untouchables."

Shri Shahu was not only in touch with, but he was equally generous and sympathetic to all the Non-Brahmin

46 Ghurye G.S., Caste and Race in India, pp.325-26.
associations and caste-meetings and conferences wherever they were held. He never allowed any such conference to go without being presided over by himself. Besides, he was a force that inspired and enthused millions of Non-Brahmins. He had acquainted himself with people of all creeds, colour and castes. The progressive ideas and policy of education, upliftment of the depressed classes, scholarships for Non-Brahmins that he introduced in Kolhapur had a nation-wide impact. The importance he attached to education can be best illustrated from a comment in 'The United India and Indian States' of Delhi. It stated, "the state of Kolhapur recognised the importance of education early enough and year after year, has opened more schools to cope up with the needs. Very recently H.H.Shri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur accorded sanction to the opening of 50 more primary schools in his state. We wish every progressive state advanced the cause of primary education at the same pace."\(^48\) This policy of education was followed by His Highness Rajaram Maharaj, the heir apparent to H.H.Shri Shahu Maharaj. It is also interesting

to note letter No.R.11312 (Appendix 3) wherein he writes to Col. Wodehouse on 19th January, 1920 regarding his attitude towards and interest in the education of the backward classes. He was also approached by various other classes. The letter of K.N. Yadav to him also sheds ample light on his position as a Non-Brahmin leader. The letter was written by the Secretary of the Somavanshi Arya Kshatriya Dnyan Vardhak Samaj, Gwalior. He worked hard for the upliftment of the backward communities of the Deccan by helping them in various ways. The backward communities looked upon him as "an able guide to lead them on to enlightenment. It was felt by them that their humble prayers, listened by the Almighty God, had fructified and H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj was granted to them to lead them." His Highness always "favoured young Non-Brahmins, and encouraged them to further themselves in higher education." Shri Shahu established centres of Non-Brahmin Movement wherever he went. He was thus a moving spirit. By 1920 he presided over various conferences such as the Arya Samaj conference at Bhavanagar, the Kurmi Kshatriya conference at

Cawnpore, Maratha Conference held at Khamgaon, Navasari, Baroda, Delhi, Hubli and other places. He was consulted by princes of many other Native states in India in matters like educational policy, or their attitude towards British politics. It may be added, though a loyal British prince, he never allowed the interests of the Indians to be sacrificed at the altar of British rule. The way he was regarded by other Native states indicates how faithful he was to the cause of India, as well as to the British rulers. As far as his policy in educational matters was concerned, H.H. Yuvaraja of Mysore had deputed Mr. C.R. Reddy, the then Inspector General of Education in Mysore to Kolhapur to study His Highness's progressive state. In both aspects - in social reforms as well as in his approach to the British policy - Shri Shahu enjoyed an unique position both as leader of the masses and a reliable Native prince on whom the British bestowed all Distinctions and Colours possible. "In Travancore, also the Brahmin domination had been a great bane, as in most other parts of India, where the Brahmins had taken care to be exempted as much as possible from punishment," and the Maharaj of Travancore was also

52 Ghurye G.S., Caste and Race in India, p.15.
in close touch with Shri Shahu. His Highness the Maharaj of Travancore appreciated the scheme prepared by Shri Shahu for the proposed Chamber of Princes.53

Montague-Chelmsford Reforms provided an important opportunity to Shri Shahu to establish rapport with almost all the Native states. It was he who infused new life into the agitation, which made even "Montague to say that the best memorandum on the Reforms submitted to him and Chelmsford were that of the Bombay Presidency,"54 and Montford Reforms had to concede the demands put forth by H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that Shri Shahu was very much influenced, inspired and benefited by the valuable guidance of Lord S.M. Fraser who was Shri Shahu's tutor in Dharwar. Lord Fraser was considered by "Shri Shahu Maharaj as his Guru".55 Lord Fraser did not lose his contacts with Shri Shahu who became the ruler of Kolhapur. Lord Fraser had appreciated his pupil's interest in the Non-Brahmin Movement in which Lord Fraser

53 Shahu Files, K.R.O., File No.20, L.No.8, 1919, Appendix 57.


went on guiding him from wherever he went. Lord Fraser's letters to Shahu from Mysore, Hyderabad, Trivandrum and from a number of other places from Southern India bear out this fact. He exhibits his interest in the Non-Brahmin Movement in these letters which were of an educative value to Shri Shahu. Moreover, his reference to the "Deccan Ryot (a Non-Brahmin journal) also indicates his keen interest in the Non-Brahmin cause." It is this relationship between Lord Fraser and Shri Shahu that served as a medium to bring the Non-Brahmin Movement of the entire Southern India into one united effort. It was Lord S.M. Fraser who wrote the preface to A.B. Latthe's 'Memoirs of H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur'. He writes in the preface: "H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj did not confine his efforts to his own territory. Always bearing in mind that the Native States and the British Provinces are interwoven parts of the Indian Empire, he did not allow his rank as a Ruling Prince to deter him from presiding over numerous conferences of the backward and depressed classes in and beyond the Bombay Presidency." The record of his life, however, it is safe to assert, contains material which no historian of the New India, growing up under our eyes, can afford to neglect.  

57 Latthe A.B., op.cit., Preface, pp. XI-XIII.
Letters of Lord Fraser and the Preface to the Memoirs make it amply clear that Fraser's visit to Southern India cannot be isolated from the shift in British politics to spread the Non-Brahmin movement.

Shri Shahu's leadership had made the Non-Brahmin Movement the common cause in both the North and the South. His impact on the Movement in the North and the South as well can be best illustrated from the letters which he had received from Sampatrao Gaikwar, written on 19.3.1919; and from the letter of K.N.Yadav, District Judge, Shuvapuri. In his letter, Sampatrao Gaikwar, refers to him as a 'unifying force', and it has been explained as to how he combined in himself both loyalty and leadership. It seems that he had consented to preside over the Conference of the Kurma Kshatriya Community but he was unable to carry out the promise. Sampatrao Gaikwar said that his absence would be felt very much by the people of the North, which points to his influence over the people in the North. Northern India had always acknowledged Shri Shahu's leadership in the Deccan; and this is borne out by the letter of K.N.Yadav, the District Judge, who felt that the

Karajgar Community should also be blessed by H.H. Shri Shahu. Shri Shahu's presence itself was considered a great impetus to any movement. His own movement was itself a factor that contributed to the rise of various other organisations such as the Somvanshi Arya Kshatriya Dnyan Vardhak Samaj, Gujarati Untouchables and Depressed Classes Mission Society, Kurmi Kshatriya Samaj, Maratha Samajas, Mohammedan Samajas, the Lingayat Samaj in Mysore, and no doubt the South Indian Liberal Federation. Even the Andhra leaders like Sir P.T. Chettiar, a Telugu Beri Chetty; and Dr. T.M. Nair of Madras were in touch with Shri Shahu of Kolhapur. To all these various forces H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj provided the much needed ballast and he united them all in one single movement: "The Non-Brahmin Movement." The Justice Party was established in 1916 as a part and parcel of this movement. From 1913 to 1922, Shri Shahu played a prominent role in organising various organisations for the betterment of the backward and the down-trodden. The Justice Party of Madras got organised because of the impact of the huge awakening caused by Shri Shahu in advocating Communal Representation.