Chapter Seven

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Shri V.T. Patil carried on his public activities in Kolhapur during the period from 1930-1970. This means that half the period of his activities was in pre-independent India & half the period of his activities was in free India. He was a product of the period in which social values and self sacrificing was the indivisual character and commitment to the cause of nation. These values were preached and practiced by both the political leaders and the social workers all over the country generally. Shri Chh. Shahu of Kolhapur adhered to these values both in his political and Social life and uncompromisingly and daringly tried to propagate both in his Princely state as well as out side of his state.¹

Social equality, betterment of the workers both agricultural and industrial, education of the masses and liberation of the people from the orthodox Brahmin priest was the aim of Chh. Shahu and he struggled to preach this in his whole life. Shri. Shahu died in 1922 and Kaka entered the public life in 1930 after getting the law degree. Therefore, his position when he entered the public life was like a man standing on the sea shore watching the waves of the sea.²

Even earlier to Chh. Shahu’s championing for mass awakening
there was fairly a good amount of political awakening, born out of economic problems, among the educated men of higher social order in Kolhapur. To check the extra levies in the form of taxes raised by the ruler of Kolhapur in 1885-86 there emerged an organization called Lokpratinidhi Sabha which was formed by educated people like doctors, pleaders and Jamindars. Their main demand was the increase of elected representatives in the princely state Assembly and the election of the president of the Assembly instead of nominee. The most remarkable feature of this Sabha was, it was founded in 1985, the year in which Indian National Congress was also founded. It could not remain effective after the rise of Chh. Shahu from the beginning of 20th century due to its reactionary social policy. However the fact remains that Kolhapur educated class was quite conscious in political and economic matters, even in the closing years of the 19th century. Kaka and other educated men of Kolhapur had all this legacy behind them, when they started their public life in post Shahu era.

While practicing law Kaka did not remain aloof from politics. Even when he was an advocate he was the chairman of Kolhapur Municipality and also the chairman of Ilakha Panchayat of Kolhapur. He did all this under the Princely patronage of Kolhapur. However, he did not seem to have come under the influence of any Congress leader either of state level or of national
level. Therefore, like most of the non-Brahmin leaders of his time he also remained away from the Congress movement. The reason was that he was very much influenced by the educational idea of Mahatma Phule & Shahu Maharaj, whose ideal was the education of the masses who had remained for ages together without it was the prime duty of an enlightened man. Kaka believed in democracy but to him the mass education was the foundation of democracy.

His support to democracy was indicated in his staunch opposition to the dictatorship of Hitler. His opposition to him was that dictatorship was wrong. Dictator has never succeeded in the past. Therefore, Hitler must also fail. This conviction indicates that the elements of democracy were strong in his thinking. He supported the Royal house of Kolhapur only because it was enlightened rule that preached the masses that they must awake and struggle to end all sorts of slavery particularly social & religious which was perpetuated too long.  

It may also be noticed that he never opposed the congress movement nor did he spoke against it any time. After merger he whole heartedly supported the congress party and became M. L. A. and M. P. on the congress party ticket. Politics is not his profession, he entered politics for some times because he thought that the politics is another means to serve the people in social & educational fields. His honesty of purpose kept him even in
politics as a simple & saintly like man, and this kept him away from political tactics and groupism in politics, even when his adversaries played the tactical game against him. Even in the institution like Bidri factory which came into existence because of his efforts he was kept out of the Board-Directors there. But Kaka remains a giant man in the field of education where he founded a variety of educational institutions in many disciplines.

Nature has blessed Kolhapur with devoted sons in the field of education and Co-operative movement. Kolhapur remains the van-guard in the field of economic activities in the country. It is due to the courage, conviction, industry and purposeful efforts of some of great sons of Kolhapur like Tatyasaheb Mohite, Tatyasaheb Kore, Madan Mohan Lohiya, Ratnappa Kumbhar & Dr. V. T. Patil and such others, who made tremendous efforts to exploit natural resources like the fertile land, perennial source of water supply by the host of rivers that pass through Kolhapur district. Kolhapur has name particularly in the agro based industries. Today Kolhapur is one of the leading districts in Maharashtra in the field of industrialization, education, roads and transport. The process of modernization here operates much effectively with speed and leaders like V. T. Patil are mainly responsible for this. All this is very graphically discussed in the chapter of his contribution to the field of co-operative movement.
After 1902 Kolhapur became a center of radical social reform under the leadership of Chh. Shahu. After Vedokta controversy Shahu launched his movement against caste practices and particularly against the practice of Untouchability. Shahu both in his state & outside of his state moved wherever invited and strongly advocated casteless society as an ideal for future India. No system of government can work well if caste system remains. Under the caste system birth determines the worth of man. Thus he carried on a crusade against caste system and the practice of untouchability. 

This aspect of Shahu’s movement for radical social reform remained the powerful legacy not only for future generation in the country but Kolhapur cherishes even today this legacy as the most powerful lasting contribution of Kolhapur to the nation. The educated enlightened generation of Young men that came on socio-political scene of Kolhapur immediately after the death of Chh. Shahu particularly from the non Brahmins were tremendously inspired by Shahu’s struggle for social emancipation.

Shahu died in 1922 and Kaka began his legal practice in 1930. there by coming to the public life in Kolhapur. This means Kaka witnessed the activities that challenged the age old socio religious begotry by Chh. Shahu when Kaka was a student.

Kaka therefore, temperamentally became the supporter of all this
social agitation. Kaka also therefore, launched his movement for mass education for poor peasants and workers in Gargoti, with a view that the education is a means to liberate them. In fact this was Shahu's ideal under which Shahu had launched his movement for free and compulsory primary education for the masses. Kaka also launched a movement of education for women who had suffered under Brahmin orthodoxy as they were declared by Manu as unqualified for education. As against this Kaka opened Tararani Vidyapeeth in Kolhapur where education in all the branches right free K. G. to P. G. is imparted.10

Kaka whenever he found time associated himself with the conferences and demands of the un-touchables in Kolhapur and supported their conference of social reform e.g. Khadaklat Mahar conference in 1933. (near by Nipani). Kaka was the chairman of this conference. untouchable population was sizable in this village. Their demand was that they should get the Chhatrapati's sheri land, that was quite big in size in the village Khadaklat and was laying barren unutilized, for their cultivation as tenants. Kaka had cordial relation with Chattrpati Rajaram. He pleaded their case and untouchables of Khadaklat got the sheri land for cultivation.11

English East India company established its rule over the country by the close of the 2nd decade of the 19th century. Their rule marched ahead.
towards establishing the rule of law uniformity of administration and uniform pattern of education throughout the country. These three aspects of their rule were the first experiments and were never the part of pre-British Indians political, administrative and educational system. British system mentioned above started influencing the minds of Indians particularly the upper caste people who were the first to turn towards English education. Therefore, the upper caste people in India were to understand the weaknesses of their tradition and also economically exploiting purposes of the rule of East India company. 12

In Western Europe the press writing had already developed even before the beginning of French revolution in 1789. It is the press that had attacked the ruling dynasty of France. Similarly the press did play a role in England in liberalizing and democratizing the English rule in Great Britain. Karl Marks who stayed in England in the letter half of the 19th century edited a paper through out his life. Therefore, English rule in India which was of traders introduced this tradition and the Bombay chronicle started by the merchants and supported by the Government came into being in Bombay as early as the year 1826. Indian educated men also thought of awakening Indians against the weaknesses of Indian society through newspaper and the result of this was that Balshastri Jambhekar started the first Marathi newspaper called ‘Darpan’ in
The East India Company's rule ended in 1858 after the mutiny and the British Parliament took over the reigns of India. The University of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta were establish in 1957 to impart higher education in English language to the Indians. This system set aside the regional languages and introduced one pattern of education at secondary as well as collegiate education which enabled the educated Indians to move from one place to another place throughout the country for their jobs. For example this system enabled Dr. Radhakrishnan of Madras to become the professor of philosophy in Calcutta University and the Vice – Chancellor of Banaras University. This is just an example to indicate what happened in the letter half of the 19th and in the early years of 20th century. 

Thus upper caste men who were the leaders in English education were the men who founded Indian National Congress in 1885 in Bombay. They were mostly the merchants and traders coming from upper caste. They used to meet annually in the anniversary meetings of the Congress and pass resolutions suggesting corrections whatever they thought fit to reform the administration in India. All their proceedings for more than hundred years are in English language only. Thus up to the year 1917 Indian political scene was dominated by upper caste men particularly the Brahmans and Banias.
Except Mahatma Phule non-Brahmin leader played no important role in awakening the masses in 19th century. Mahatma Phule very vehemently fought against the age old tyranny of the Brahmin orthodoxy which stood in the way of the education of the non-Brahmins. His friends Shri Lokhande was the first labour leader in India and he started news paper 'DnyanPrakash' which spread the message of Mahatma Phule. This is the only non-Brahmin paper which was started in 19th century. In 1911, under the leadership of Chh. Shahu, Kolhapur revived the Satyashodhak movement of Mahatma Phule. After the August declaration 1917 under the patronage of Shahu the non Brahmin leaders of Maharashtra founded a political party called non-Brahmin party coming together at Nipani. Nipani now is in Belgaum district. Chh. Shahu was the moving spirit behind it. It now felt the need of news paper to combat the attack of the Brahmin news papers on non-Brahmins. Thus the Vijay Maratha of Shinde and 'Jagruk' of Kothari were the result of this need. Thus in the 2nd phase when Montagu the Secretary of State for India in England made his August declaration promising the self governing rule in India in installment the non Brahmin leaders awoke Politically to have their say in the governance of the country. In Madras D.M.K. then called as 'Justice Party' and the news paper called 'Justice' were born in the middle of the year 1917. This is the 2nd phase of British rule as for as the awakening of Indians for
self rule was concerned, and the non-Brahmins came to the political field in this 2nd phase. 16

In Maharashtra non-Brahmin movement as a reaction to Brahmanical orthodoxy was making its headway ever since the days of Mahatma Phule’s Satyashodhak movement. It emerged quite powerful both as social as well as political movement in Maharashtra under the patronage of Chh. Shahu of Kolhapur in 1911 and Kolhapur became the center of non-Brahmin Socio-Political movement. The movement in Kolhapur needed a powerful newspaper to combat the Brahmanical Politics in Maharashtra. Shahu therefore, encouraged one shri Shripatrao Shinde who was in police service to quit the job & start a newspaper. Shri Shinde resigned from a job of Police inspector & started a newspaper called ‘Vijayi Maratha’ in Kolhapur. Shri Kothari of Pune who was also a non-Brahmin leader started a newspaper called ‘Jagruk’ in Pune & these Papers began attacking the caste system the practice of un-touchability & the Brahminical Politics in Maharashtra in particular and in India in general. Thus though quite late the non-Brahmins like the Brahmins understood the importance of newspaper as a weapon to educate the masses and counter attack the arguments of the Brahminical papers. 17

Kaka who was one of the highly educated intellectual among the non-Brahmins in Kolhapur also did not lag behind in understanding the
importance of newspaper as a means to educate the non-Brahmins in political and social matters. Therefore, along with some of his associates he founded a newspaper in Kolhapur under the title 'Pudhari'. It was a weekly in the beginning but soon it was made a daily newspaper. Its ownership was vested in the beginning in the whole society but somehow it did not work. Kaka was its editor. There was a man equally interested in running the newspaper & looking the management of this newspaper and that was Shri G.G. Jadhav. Shri G.G. Jadhav was very honest man and was genuinely interested in the cause of non-Brahmins. It is to the credit of Kaka's forthrightness & vision that inspite of the opposition from some members working for 'Pudhari', he took a decision to hand over the paper to Shri G.G. Jadhav. Thus Shri. G. G. Jadhav became the owner of the paper 'Pudhari' and it is to his credit that he made this non-Brahmin newspaper a leading paper in Maharashtra. The paper is right from the beginning wedded to the ideology of Mahatma Phule, Chh. Shahu and Dr. Ambedkar. Shri Jadhav's son Pratapsinh Jadhav who is now the editor of this paper has added new vigour and vitality to this paper and has made it more popular than what it was earlier. 18

Thus Kaka's contribution covered almost all major field's of social work in Kolhapur. Kaka as a cultured man was still far more shining figure than his other aspect of life. He had no issues but he never felt the pinch
of this aspect of his family life. Fortunately for him he had a very serene type of wife who also never felt anything unhappy over non-having the issues. On the contrary she regarded children in women schools which her husband had started as her children and donated her entire property which her husband Shri V.T. Patil had made in her name. She donated her entire property including her house utensils & ornament to the Tararani Vidyapeeth which was running educational institutions for women. She urged Kaka (her husband) many time to go for his 2nd marriage to have children. Kaka did not accept this idea and in the spirit of Ancient Hindu philosophy of withdrawal he told her that he had no such selfish attachment now. Kaka never interfered in the decisions of his wife. When his brother-law married a girl from other caste and his father-in-law was opposed to it Kaka’s wife supported her brother & even the first delivery of her brother in law’s wife took place in Kakas house. Both Kaka and his wife had no objection to intercaste marriages. Why to distinguish between man and man merely because of his birth in particular caste was their view.
Notes & References


7. Daily Satyawadi, Kolhapur. 6th may, 1946.


11. Dr. V.T. Patil Jeevan Parichay, Published by Tararani Vidyapeeth, Kolhapur, P.3.


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