CHAPTER – V

ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF SATYASHODHAK SAMAJ AND TRODDEN (low caste) PROTEST MOVEMENT IN MAHARASHTRA

This chapter deals with the origin ideas and membership of the Satya Shodhak Samaj which founded by Phule and his friends caste fellows and business colleagues in 1873. It also deals with course of low caste protest movements under the guidelines of Satya Shodhak Samaj. We will begin to look at the role that these ideas were to play from 1873, the year in which Phule, his friends, caste-fellows and business colleagues founded the Satyashodak Samaj the (Truth-seekers society)- origin of this society the membership that it attracted in the early years of its existence, and Phule’s low caste protest movement through Satyashodhak Samaj.

Phule dreamed about ‘Balistan’. Phule termed this condition as a rule of creator or as a rule of truth. In the same line Karl Marx expected classless in equal society in Europe continent.

Phule vision was universal same as Marx’s, but he was not satisfied with delivering ideology itself, he tried to execute the same in practice. He was limited to his goal that to fight against Brahmanical domination and upliftment of the downtrodden i.e. women, Shudras and Ati-Shudras. Phule knew how difficult that task was. So he thought that this is possible through collective action and an organised movement. In this respect he expected the active co-operation from his colleagues friends the lower caste students who have completed their studies. In this regard Phule organised a meeting at Pune on 23rd September, 1873 where ‘Satya Shodhak Samaj’ (Truth seekers society) was founded. The aims and objectives mentioned as follows:
1. The Satyashodhak Samaj is founded by some wise Shudra men to the Shudra people from long sustained slavery executed by Brahmans such as Bhats, Joshi priests and others.

2. The Satyashodhak Samaj aimed to spread education among the Shudras to make them aware of their rights and to get them out of influence of the sacred books that were made by the Brahmans for their own survival.

3. The ideology of Satyashodhak Samaj, based on Phule’s ideological frame work which urged to unite all Shudra, Ati-Shudra masses, Satyashodhak ideology rejected all kinds of Brahman domination and exploitation on the basis of religion and all religious sources of inequality. This was the most radical content of the Satya Shodhak ideology, which was the heart of non-Brahman movement.

4. Revolting against Brahmanical culture, Satyashodhak ideology dreamed to establish ideal society based on some principles as follows:

   1. Faith on one God (creator)

   2. Rejection of any kind of intermediary between God and Man.

   3. Rejection of caste system and the basic four folded Varna division of society and believing on that man’s supremacy is determined by his qualities and not by his caste or.

   4. Faith on equality, freedom and brotherhood
Samaj was a non-political body which against the objectives was to make amends for the neglect of Natural Rights of human beings especially of the Shudras and Ati-Shudras over the past centuries. It sought to restore their rights and also to take remedial action for their misery. In fact it insisted the members to worship only our creator and honour the pure rights that have been given by the creator to all human beings by rejecting the belief that some men are born inferior and by refusing to treat any one as inferior. Each member also required to give education to his children, so that they may understand their rights. Further the Samaj insisted that education is essential especially English education which play an vital role not only for providing occupational skills but also for the intellectual emancipation of the low castes. Educational propaganda figured prominently in the agenda of action plan of Satyashodhak Samaj Phule proposed the programme and appealed the Samaj that worship our own supreme God (creator) and avoid the role of the Brahman priest in performing the socio-religious ceremonies thereby dispensing the hegemonic ideology of the Brahmans and establishing the Shudras and Ati-Shudras as a new moral community.

Membership of Satyashodhak Samaj was open to all castes, sects and religions. Any one who accepted its ideology and acted accordingly by taking oath could be a member of Satyashodhak Samaj. Ideology of Samaj attracted irrespective of caste and religion i.e. persons including Brahmans and Muslims.

In this regard Rosalind O. Hanlon pointed out that “about 700 families from Kunbi, Mali, Potter, Carpenter and other Shudra had launched a movement to make themselves independent in religious matters from Brahmans. These families were refusing to call Brahmans to perform the ceremonies which was customary and were
giving to their own caste fellows the food which would otherwise have been offered to the priest\textsuperscript{5}.

P.S. Patil further observed that 114 members out of 225 in the first year of the \textit{Satyashodhak Samaj} varying from different castes and religions i.e. lawyers, merchants, peasants, agricultural labourers, \textit{Malies, Rajputs, Sonars, Kasars, Gavals,} untouchables and Muslims including Brahmans and Govt. official were participated in the \textit{Satyashodhak Samaj}. non-Brahman castes were predominant, and \textit{Malies} were the leading members who were financial supporters of it. Further some Marathi and Telugu \textit{Mali} families who engaged in building contracts were well to do families came forward to support the activities of the same\textsuperscript{6}.

Phule, Krishnarao Bhalekar, Narayan Lokhande, Gyanoba Sasane, Ramayya Ayyavaru, Rajanna, Lingu, were the leading \textit{Malis} of the \textit{samaj}. They found the \textit{Samaj} and its ideology was very attractive for several different reasons. First, and most obviously, they experienced the sense of congruity almost always felt by a newly urbanised and upwardly mobile group. In secular terms, they occupied a positon of affluence and local respectively, but their low ritual status as \textit{Shudras}, remained unchanged. This sense of disparity was hightened by the publicity that was given to the actual contents of Hindu religious texts, especially those that specified the very low ritual staus of \textit{Shudras}, such as Manu's Laws. Such discrepancies were by no means unusual in Hindu society, as individual castes flourished and declined. An adjustment of ritual position was usually possible in some form of Sanskritisation. Yet the intellectual climate in Pune and Bombay was characteristied by a public hostility to older Brahman models of behaviour, and by intense debate about individual and social values. This meant that some
means of expressing a greater social respectability, as an alternative to Sanskritisation, would find a ready response.

Another factor in the attractiveness of Satyashodhak ideas for these groups derived from their close personal experience of the advantage enjoyed by Brahmans in the local institutions of British administration. As contractors and professional men dealing very frequently with local government institutions, they came into close contact with Brahman officials and administrators. This would have magnified both their conviction of the economic and social advantages enjoyed by Brahmans, and their feeling of an undue dependence on them. Besides them, the Malis and other lower castes seemed woefully lacking in the ability to secure such rewards. The most likely way to acquire this ability lay in organization, not just of the Malis, but of all lower castes. This reflected the convictions of a connection between the religious and the administrative and occupational power of Brahmans that came to stand at the very heart of Satyashodhak ideology. Members of the society were convinced that only a very broadly-based movement would be able to persuade the British government that it did itself, and society as a whole a great disservice in directing so many educational and occupational advantages towards Brahmans. Such a body would be able to claim with conviction that these benefits should be directed towards the great bulk of Maharashtra’s cultivating and labouring castes, the real substance of her society, and the representatives of her history and culture.

Both of these concerns came together in giving great appeal to Phule’s Kshatriya ideology, set out in the works that were adopted as Satyashodhak texts. For these early supporters of the Samaj, the idea that their ‘real’ identity was that of the dispossessed Kshatriyas
of ancient India served the social and religious purpose that might otherwise have been met by the claim to a higher conventional ritual status, and by a change in social practices towards a Brahmanic model of behaviour. There was also a strong political dimension to the assertion of Kshatriya status. Pratapsingh Bhonsale's insistence on his status as a Kshatriya was nothing less than a claim to the position of secular authority that belonged to a kingly ruler. It represented an assertion of his own leadership of Hindu society against what he saw as a Chitpavan Brahman effort simultaneously to usurp his secular authority, and to undermine its religious legitimation by consigning the Bhonsle to the ranks of the Shudras.

In asserting an original Kshatriya status for all lower castes, now with help by conventional Brahmanic religion, Phule and his urban following in the 1870s made the deliberate link with this political dimension of traditional Maratha claims to a Kshatriya ritual status. Lacking the obvious genealogical basis for their arguments that Pratapsingh possessed, they made their claim in the context of the larger argument that the virtues of the warrior and the cultivator had been the central force in the shaping of Maharashtra's traditions and culture. To their representatives in nineteenth century society belonged the position of social and political leadership that Brahmans had assumed, and upon which the latter had consolidated their hold under British rule. These representatives were the Peasant and urban lower castes, the true Kshatriyas of 19th century Maharashtra.

This immediately prompts the question as to what connection the lives of merchants and contractors, urbanised and relatively affluent, could have possessed with these elements in Maharashtra's traditional society and culture to give the identification with the warrior and the cultivator and real meaning. Yet there were two vital links.
First as *Malis*, they did belong to the large body of Maharashtra's cultivator castes with which these traditional occupations were associated and the period of their urbanization was relative short. Secondly, the very nature of their occupations as merchants and contractors meant that they maintained their contact both with the urban environment in which their awareness of injustice was sharpened, and with these aspects of traditional culture in rural society. The essential duality of the early support of the *Satyashodhak Samaj* is beautifully illustrated in an anecdote about Phule told by his friends and business colleague, Gyanoba Sasane. Sasane had accompanied Phule to inspect his orchards outside Pune. When all the workers had stopped for their mid-day meal, Phule got up and started to drive the well-bucket himself singing as he did so. The labourers laughed to see him, where upon Phule turned to explain. He was just a cultivator in his bones, he said. What was more, all plain cultivators sang at their work. It was only those who did not toil with their hands that had the leisure to sit with musical instruments. The real cultivator had to make his music as he worked.

During 1873 to 1890 a large number of rural masses nearby Pune and Bombay attracted towards the activities of *Samaj*. The progress of the *Samaj* is as follows. Membership of *Satya Shodhak Samaj* was 225, 232 and 316 in 1874 and 1876 respectively. From 1873 to till his death, Phule was the central figure in *Satyashodhak Samaj*. Phule's immediate circle comprising the leaders like Krishnarao Bholekar, Narayana Lokhande, Ramayya Ayyavaru, Rajanna Lingu. Dr. Vishram Ghole, Ramseth Uravane, Narayana Nagarkar, Dr. Santuji Lad and others also held considerable influence over the *Samaj*.
The first three Annual Reports of the Samaj were published. On the eve of the second Annual Conference dated 24th September, 1875, Phule handed over his responsibility as the President of Satyashodhak Samaj to Dr. Vishram Ghole, but Dr. Ghole could not hold this position more than two years.

To spread the ideology of Satyashodhak Samaj, Krishnarao Bhalekar started a newspaper ‘Deenabandhu’ in 1877 which Phule opposed in the beginning because of the ignorant, illiterate Shudras, Ati-Shudras masses were not in a position to purchase a newspaper and read it. Bhalekar edited and published the ‘Deenabandhu’ for three years from 1877 to 1880. After that Narayana Lokhande continued to edit the newspaper in Bombay up to 1897.

Among the leaders of the Samaj there was a considerable division of labour. Phule was holding intellectual leadership. Bhalekar, Ghole Uravane, Nagarkar, Ganapatrao Patil, Nawalkar were propagating ideas of Samaj in Pune and nearby villages, Narayana Lokhande, Kalekar and Lad spread the work of Satyashodhak Samaj, among the industrial workers, vegetable sellers and other backward castes, uneducated section of the population in Bombay. Gopalbuva Valangkar, a Mahar by caste, was a good public speaker and writer, Valangkar was involved in mobilizing untouchable castes and Phule helped him in his work.

From its inception, the Samaj devoted a very large part of its energy to the proselytisation of the lower caste communities in Pune and the surrounding villages. Members toured, lectured and distributed tracts, giving ‘Upadesh’ or advice. The Samaj first report praised the efforts of Krishnarao Bhalekar, Revaji Sirole and others of the village of Bhamburade. Having become members themselves, they had established a branch in the village and, with the help of
poetry and music, had given advice to the villagers and won over new members. In the village Hadapsar many had become members, and the business of imparting advice was proceeding very satisfactory.

Early in 1874 some of the leaders of the Telugu Mali community in Bombay had invited Phule to address them, and had formed a branch of the society. Ramayya Venkaiah Ayyavaru, Narsimharao Sayabu Vadhnala Jaya Ellappa lingu and Vyanker Baloji Kalevar were leading the efforts in Bombay. In the village of Bhilar in Satara Distirct Govindaraao Bapuji, the Patil of the village established branch of Samaj.

The action formula that arranged in the ideology of Satyashodhak Samaj, which intended to attain its goal had three important aspects: First, the expression of opposition, second, the expression of identity and unity, and third, constrictive action towards the upliftment of the Shudra and Ati-Shudras.

Satyashodhak Samaj, on the guidelines of Phule, opposed and rejected the sacred texts, caste system the mythical tradition and all sorts of religious bases of social inequality. Opposition and rejection was based on cause analysis and rational understandings. It was intended to make aware the Shudra, Ati-Shudra masses of the game of the high castes and to make them free from social slavery.

Phule separated native culture from the Culture of Brahman elite. Further, he challenged the Brahman elite culture. Gail Omvedt observed that ‘Phule was not speaking as a lien to Indian Society. He does not take a stand outside the Indian society, but rather one outside the cultural system which had for so long dominated that society. Form the point of view of equality, the entire caste system
and authoritarian family structure was to be condemned. From the point of view of rationality the whole system of superstition and religious tradition was to be overthrown, the whole corpus of religious writings tripped of authority 12.

The major expression of opposition and rejection of Brahman elite culture was advocated in Phule's literature and in the literary works published by his colleagues. Phule's 'Gulamgiri' 'Shetekaryancha - Asud', Tukaram Tatya Panduales 'Jotibhed Viveksar', Baba Padmaji's "Jotibhed Nirinay". Dadoba Misal's "Jitibhedavar Sambhasham" and other books are important in understanding their opposition to the cultural system that was made and enforced by the Brahman for their selfish interests. The opposition on ideological level was required to express in the term of action. Such type of action was forwarded by Satyashodhak Samaj in its early phase. Some of the action followed in this phase can be mentioned as follows.

1. To oppose the priest as a middleman and as exploiter between man and God and as man in religious rituals and ceremonies. The Samaj also insisted simple and less expensive marriages, opposed child marriages, supported widow remarriages and inter-caste marriages. Although the frequency of such type of action was very low in its earlier Phase but it started a new innovative form of opposition.

2. The Satyashodhak Samaj opposed the exploitat on of the peasant masses by Shetjis (moneylenders) and 'Bhatjis' (Brahman priests). Phule in is 'Shetekaryancha Asud' (cultivators whipcord) elaborated that how the Shetjis and Bhatjis joined hands each other to exploit the peasant masses.
In this regard in 1885, peasants in Junner district agitated against the Brahman landlords and money lenders demanding minimum rate of interest and ‘Kowf’ rate of land\textsuperscript{13}.

To settle the above problem Phule took lead to discuss the same with Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad, Government officials and also with the local landlords.

At the same time Phule was very critic towards the emergency of Sarvajanik Sabha in 1870 and Indian National congress in 1885 was opposed by Phule and Satyashodhak Samaj because of Brahman domination in the organization and as well as their negligence of issues of low caste people.

Further, in order to extend their influence, some cunning Brahman officials encourage mischievous and loud mouthed Brahmans in the localities to come forward and set up important sounding societies in different places, and secretly apply their influence to the local Shudra cultivators, Grass Sellers and Wood-Cutters, Contractors, Pensioner, Managers and get them to become members of their societies.

The Sarvajanik Sabha targeted to be the main channel of communication between the Government and the people. The Sabha also took lead in organising a Swadeshi Movement in Deccan and urged for unity of all Hindus.

Phule tried to undermine the position of the Sarvajanik Sabha by pointing out its predominantly Brahman composition and the other tactics for the maintenance of the political and ideological hegemony of Brahman social group that he had already described\textsuperscript{14}.

Denouncing Sarvajanic sabha as an organisation of few Brahmans Bhalekar started ‘Deenabandu Sarvajanic sabha’ which is
quite contrary organisation to *Sarvajanic Sabha*. So this organisation considered the demands and issues of *Shubha, Ati-Shudra* masses. Harish Chandra Navalkar was its secretary. The *Deenabandhu Sarvajanik* sabha held its first meeting in November, 1884. Rather than religious issues it decided to concentrate on educational and practical reforms. The *Sabha* was very active throughout 1880's.

In its meeting held in 1889 at Pune, one of its members Tarkunde described the four resolutions on which the meeting decided.\textsuperscript{15}

1. If 99 out of every 100 people in the population have never heard of the National Congress, it can not be a National Congress, meaning chosen by the nation and respected by the nation.

2. The nation has not elected this National Congress and does not regard it as such, therefore, its decisions cannot be said to be approved by the country at large.

3. This National Congress is just composed of a handful of upper caste and educated people. Therefore it should not represent as the decision of the whole nation.

4. The Government should begin to introduce compulsory education for all.

Phule also opposed newly emerging extremist nationalism in Maharashtra. In Maharashtra the line was represented by Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar, Lokamnay Tilak and others. The ideology of Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar, Lokamnay Tilak and others and their nationalist activities and religious revivalism could not go beyond Brahman caste. In this regard Phule elaborated his view on National Congress that there were variety of diversities on various grounds.
such as caste, religious etc. So in view of the above, how can one think about nation. The Brahmans have formed the National Congress adopting falsely limitation of the French revolution for their own benefits. So the Shudra, Ati-Shudras will keep distance from them.

On the other hand, Phule cultivated relations with the British Government hoping to seek some benefits from it to the Shudras, Ati-Shudras. He felt that only under the British rule the Shudra, Ati-Shudras got some chances for their upliftment in terms of education and employment in British Govt. He was aware of the fact that the British should have to quite one day or other, therefore wanted to speed up the process of social liberation of the Shudra, Ati-Shudras.

Satyashodhak Samaj in it's first phase attempted to formulate new identity for all Shudra, Ati-Shudras, negating their earlier identity. It was essential step to attain its goals. It was also a part of their strategy. While opposing Brahman elite tradition, Phule glorified the native tradition by providing myths and symbols such as God Khandoba, King Bali, Chatrapathi Shivaji, who were considered as the protectors of Shudra's interest. Further, Phule glorified the ancient past, native tradition with atleast two intentions; First, he wanted to integrate the downtrodden castes by providing common identify, based on common practices, beliefs and symbols, secondly Phule argued that Shudra, Ati-Shudras of the present day were displaced and deprived descendants of the 'Kshatriyas'. In tracing Kshatriya status to Shudra, Ati-Shudras, Phule was aiming to increase the potential and highten social aspirations of the Shudras. It was a strategic step to boost out the confidence and to reduce their sense of backwardness.
As for as means of propagation of Satyashodhak ideology was concerned, the literacy works of Phule and his colleagues, meetings and speeches in the villages were important\textsuperscript{16}. Bhalekar’s ‘Deenabandhu’ a news paper also helped in this concern. Special propagating tours were arranged. For example ‘Narayan Lokhande toured Vidarba province in 1886 for spreading the branches of Satyashodak Sama.

Satyashodhak Samaj movement becomes a movement because it aimed at social reconstruction. It’s ideology was certainly changed oriented, demanding to attain goals of equality, humanity and freedom. To seek those ends upliftment of the downtrodden was required. So Satyashodhak Samaj forwarded it’s action plan with same view. The first report of the Samaj reveals that right from its beginning, it tried in this direction.

In its constructive action plan the education of women, Shudra and Ati-Shudra in this regard the Samaj attempted to open new schools to the low caste people. Providing scholarships to Shudra students was another attempt to encourage their education.

Despite of these activities the leaders like Phule and Bhalekar emphasised free and compulsory primary education to all. In support of this Phule submitted a memorandum to Hunter Commission in 1882 criticising the existing education system which is not available to all.

Phule revealed experience in education matters is principally confined to Pune and the surrounding villages. About 25 years ago, the missionaries, had established a female school at Pune but no indigenous school for girls existed at the time. “I, therefore was induced in the year 1851, to establish such a school, and in which I
and my wife worked together for many years". In 1853 this school has been handed over to the management of a committee of educated natives. Under their auspices management two more schools were opened in different parts of the town. A year after the institution of the female schools, Phule also established an indigenous mixed school for the lower classes especially to the Mahars and Mangs. Two more schools for these castes were subsequently added. Sir Erskine Perry, the President of the Educational Board, and Mr. Lumsdain, the then Secretary to Government visited the female schools established by Phule and were much pleased with the movement set on foot, and presented with a pair of shawls to Phule. Phule continued to work in those schools for nearly 9 to 10 years. Later these female schools were handed over to the Educational Department under the Management of Mrs. Mitchell.

“One of the most glaring tendencies of Government system of high class education has been the virtual monopoly of all the Brahmans. If the welfare of the ryot is at heart, if it is the duty of Government to check a host of abuses, it behaves them to narrow this monopoly day by day so as to allow a sprinkling of the other castes to get into the public services. Perhaps some might be inclined to say that it is not feasible in the present state of education. Our only reply is that if Government look a little less after higher education which is able to take care of itself and more towards the education of the masses there would be no difficult in training up a body men every way qualified and perhaps far better in morals and manners.

Phule was dissatisfied with the educational policies of the British Government as it.
a) Weighed heavily in favour of Brahmans at the cost of the masses.

b) Was highly theoretical having no relevance to the practical life.

c) Was not suitable to the masses and their rural environment?

d) Lacked trained teachers and training facilities

e) Promoted defective scholarships

f) Hindered the recruitment of non-Brahman teachers and

g) Prescribed text-books full of falsehood.

All these policies resulted in the neglect of the education of the Shudras. The increasing expenditure of the Government on education did not increase the number of the educated Shudras. This was because a large portion of this amount was spent on higher education and not on primary education.

Phule felt that the Government policy was unjust on economic grounds also. The greater portion of the revenues of the Indian Empire came from agriculture i.e. from the ryot's labour from the sweat of his brow. Moreover it does not come from the the surplus profit of from the capital, not from luxuries but from the poorest necessities. It is the product of 'sin and tears of common or low caste people. Hence it was a greater violence of justice to neglect the education of the masses and spend disproportionately on the higher education or the education of the higher castes. In this regard Sir George Campbell, the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, that this policy of giving priority to the education of the higher classes was
highly mischievous and pernicious to the interest of the Government also.

Phule attacked the Government system of scholarships at it gave undue encouragement to those classes only who already have acquired a taste for education to the detriment of the masses.

Phule suggested an alternative system of reserving certain number of scholarships to such people amongst whom education has made no progress. The prevalent principle of competition in forwarding scholarships, he felt, tended to obstruct spread of education among low caste people. Phule was also critical of the nature of education, the courses, the syllabi of higher education from the point of view of the utility in practical life except in public services. It is because of this, he says, that all those educated seek Government jobs. This increases unemployment. This is the situations when education is limited to a small class. What will be the situation if the education is made universal and brought within the reach of all. The number of unemployed will still increase So he suggested that suitable changes in the courses of studies be made so as to make the education capable of preparing students for independent career.

He expected education to liberate the minds of the children from superstitions and dogma. But the text books contained material which fostered it. Phule reminded the Government of its duty to see that nothing wrong was taught.

As a measure for making higher education accessible to the masses he recommended the introduction of the system of private studies. According to him this had two merits. Firstly it will defuse knowledge widely particularly among those of the rural areas who
cannot afford to study at colleges. Secondly it will not cause any additional burden to the public purse on account of higher education.

Phule was dissatisfied with the condition of primary education in the country. The reasons for his dissatisfaction were.

a) Existing indigenous pattern of schools was defective.

b) Number of Government and aided schools was very inadequate.

c) The course were defective.

d) Almost all the teachers were Brahmans and

e) They were neither learned in the real sense for adequately trained.

Phule deplored that the number of Government Primary Schools were very inadequate and that all the teachers in these schools were Brahmans. Their attainment in education and learning was low and only a few of them had any training. They were not suitable to teach the boys of the cultivators. They lacked honesty and commitment for the spread of education. They maintained an aloofness and a distance from the pupils owing to their religious prejudices. They opposed any chance in the content of education particularly efforts to make the courses more practical as that would make them unfit as teachers.

Phule makes a number of useful suggestions for the improvement of the school education in the rural areas as well as in the towns and cities which shows tremendous insight and deep understanding of the problems of school education in India. His suggestions in this connection include such items as revising the
courses in the training colleges and starting an adequate number of
the same, reforming the methods of selection an adequate number of
the same, reforming the methods of selection of the trainees, higher
and attractive salaries to the teachers in order to attract men of talent
to this profession, revising the courses of studies in the primary
schools adding to it elementary knowledge of agriculture and lessons
in moral duties and sanitation and some useful arts attaching model
farms to the school etc. He also suggested to make primary
education compulsory up to a certain age limit\textsuperscript{22}.

His suggestion of making primary education compulsory was in
consonance with his concern for the diffusion of knowledge among
the masses. But he felt that making education compulsory alone
would not help. The appalling ignorance, superstitions and poverty of
the toiling masses would come in the way of the education of the
poor. He therefore, suggested reservations in scholarships,
awarding of degrees to them at comparatively lower standards of
attainment, appointing them as\textit{ Patils} after passing VI standard and
appointment in various offices like\textit{ Mamlatdars} on priority basis etc\textsuperscript{23}.

The Government concentrated more on the promotion of higher
education and spent large sums on it. In 1882 there were 6 colleges
in the Bombay Presidency, with an over all enrolment of 305
students. Out of these 305 the Brahmans were 241, anis 51, and
Kshatriyas 13. The average percentage of the Brahman students in
the Bombay college in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century was 43 and that of parsis 23,
Gujrathi and trading class 7, Goaness Christians 6 and no other
single community averaged as much as 3 percent\textsuperscript{24}.

The lower education, particularly the Primary education was
neglected. The number of Vernacular schools in year 1876-77 for
instance in the whole of the presidency was 4008 with an enrolment
of 210, 370m pupils. Most of these schools were in the towns or big villages. For instance in the city of Ahmednagar alone there were 36 such schools. These schools were attended by the children of Brahmans and the wealthier class. But they were 'very rarely frequented by the children of the cultivators or the other labouring classes. Among the reasons listed by Robert Shortrede for this were the high rate of fees in these schools and the overwhelming number of Brahman teachers among whom 'there is a inclination not to communicate knowledge to any but these of their own castes'. The Brahman teachers were careful to foster the prejudices of the people by persuading them that they had no concern with reading and writing and reminding that their children are required to tend the cattle in the fields instead of being sent to schools. As a result, the Brahmans maintained the monopoly of subordinate services in government departments. Rebert shortrede made a pertinent comment: 'The exertion of European offices cannot be expected effectively to check abuses which have been practised from time immemorial and for which opportunities can never be wanting while the great body of the people are ignorant of almost everything conducive to their welfare, particularly being unable to read and write they are unable to understand their own affairs in relation to Government towards them and thus become an easy prey to their designing countrymen in public situations. Again this background Phule was quite justified in his criticism of the Government's educational policy and the suggestions made by him were general valid and important.

Mr. W.S. Apte, Supervisor of New English School, in his witness before Hunter Commission, demanded that the responsibility of primary and middle school education be left with the private
agencies. Phule did not agree with this view. He feared this would mean passing of education under Brahman control, which will affect the advance of education among the lower castes. Mr. Kunte's remarks justified this fear. Mr. Kunte testifying before the Hunter Commission had said that the demand for the admission of Mahars to the schools was not voiced by the Mahars themselves and that it was contrary to the practice and impracticable. It was a movement created by emotional British Officers and impractical native reformers. Such statements by the eminent Brahman educationists justified the fear expressed by Phule that Brahmans did not want to teach the Shudras and that they would never honestly perform the duty when entrusted with the responsibility of education.

Mention should be made of phule's criticism of syllabi and curriculum. He suggested that the courses in the village schools should be more practical, that agriculture be included in this curriculum and that model farms be attached to each school. This throws light on the insight of Phule had with respect to the problem of education. He wanted that education should not be looked upon as an instrument of creating competent clerks and loyal servicemen but should be seen in the wider perspective of varied human activity and should have relevance with the environment. Most of the educationists today, support this view.

In a meeting organised by Deenabandhu Sarvajanik sabha, Bolekar, Ganapatrao Patil, and Harischandra Navalkar emphasized on free and compulsory education. In this concern a petition signed by one lakh persons, was sent to the parliament.

In the early activities of the Samaj, sole importance was given to education of lower castes, Rosalind O.Hanlon pointed out three reasons for giving importance to the education programme.
• First, it provided the occupational skills, from basic literacy to fluent English, that the lower castes needed for getting employment in administration and the professions.

• Second, a Western secular education seemed to offer intellectual emancipation from many of the doctrines of Brahman Hinduism, from the relief in divine or magical powers.

• Finally, education would help to bring about a reformatin in popular manner, they (the leaders) viewed education will dilute the influence of harmful social customs like child marriage, heavy expenditure on wedding and he reluctance to educate women. It also seen as the means of liberation of evil practices including drinking habitual, debt, laziness etc.  

Along with education the Satyashodhak urged for a constructive action plan by the Government for the improvement in agriculture. For example the construction of tanks, bunds and dams, the specific programme of animal breading, special education to peasants regarding new techniques of agriculture etc. They also opposed ‘trickle down’ process of development.

One of the important programmes of the Satyashodhak Samaj was to ceremonially perform a religious rite, a marriage function, a house-warming ceremony without the assistance of a Brahman priest.

Vankru Balaji Kalevar used to give Dhakshana to Brahmans at the eve of Ganapathi Utsava which is very popular in Maharashtra. After becoming members of Satyashodhaka Samaj who influenced and inculcated by Samaj stopped giving Dhakshana to the Brahmans and diverted the same to handicapped and livelyhoodless poor people. In the same manner Sri Jaya Yellappa Lingu who used to
offer the ‘Sad Ratho Bojanam’ to the Brahmans at the eve of Devali festival. But when he became a member of Samaj stopped that and diverted the expenditure of that meal to the students who were the sons and daughters of the Samaj and who secured highest marks in matriculation examination was given gold medals.  

Not only non-Brahmans but Brahmans were also benefited with the philosophy and efforts of Phule. For instance when Phule addressed and appealed to Navis (Barber), that they should not attend the ritual of removing the hairs of women who lost their husband. For such womens, Phule opened a widow homes for upper caste women in Pune. Not only this all the social evils which were practised by the Brahmans has condemned by Phule.

One of the important programme of the Satyashodhak Samaj was opposing the presence of Brahman on eve of marriage function, a house warming ceremony. Balaji Kusaji Patil performed his son’s wedding without a Brahman priest in accordance with the rules of the Satyashodhak Samaj in Junar village. The Brahmans were not recognised the marriage and invalid since a Brahman priest was not present. In the village of Otur, in Pune district a meeting of Brahmans from surrounding villages was held. They passed a revolution to the effect that performing a marriage without a Brahman priest impinged on their rights; hence they filed a case against Balaji Patil. The judge, Mahadev Govind Ranade, passed the verdict that it was wrong to perform a marriage ceremony without a Brahman priest, especially the village priest, and even if the priest had not been invited to the wedding, he should be given the ‘Dakshina’. The verdict was eventually challenged successfully by Jotriao Phule who stood up for Balaji Patil. Although the verdict had gone against Patil in the lower court, the higher court ruled in favour of Patil.
Phule wrote a long account on one of the two wedding in the Pune, which was published in the "Satyadhipika" newspaper.

Phule's young friend, Gyanoba Sasane then aged about 22 years who joined Samaj was influenced by Phule's philosophy and wish to marry Kasibai aged 14 years and daughter of Narayan Rao Vithoba Shinde of Parvati Village near Pune without Brahman priest. But parents and elders of the village of Sasane i.e. Hadapsar resisted and insisted the traditional wedding. But Sasane was not accepted the advice of his parents and elders of the village. Then however, some of the conservatives in the Mali caste came out to Sasane's village of Hadapsar and roused some of the villagers against this proposal assault upon their ancestral religion. They gathered outside Sasane's house in the night shouting threats and abuse. Sasane was greatly shaken by this, and went to Phule to tell him that he had changed his mind. Phule urged him to take courage and assured him that they were living under the protection of British Justice. With this Sasane returned of his village with courage. The opposition within the Mali caste continued. These opponents employed agents to visit Mali families of Hadapsar village which was the native of Sasane to warn them that if they joined the Samaj they would have no choice to continue in the Mali caste. When Phule realised the extent of the opposition, he wrote to his fellow SatyaShodhak viz., Rajanna Lingn, a Telgu Mali and well known Pune lawyer. Lingu persuaded Gangaram Bhau Mhaske a prominent public figure in Pune, and a well wisher of the Samaj to arrange police protection for Sasane. The marriage went ahead according to plan without Brahman priest. As a gesture of protest against the violation of Hindu belief the conservative Mali caste people arranged a marriage of two years old girl at the same time32.
The *Satyashodhak Samaj* continued to perform marriages without engaging a Brahman priest. Gunaji Bapu Patil of Talwane village in *Junnar* Taluk performed a marriage in his house without Brahman priest. A barber's wedding was similarly performed, in Taligaon village. For this the Barber family was socially boycotted by the Brahmans of the village, the Barber went to Phule and explained the situation. Then Phule advised to the Barber that he should boycott the serving them and the Barber did the same which created a rift between the Berber and the Brahman community.

Phule served on the committee of the Pune municipality during 1876-82 where members were nominated by the Bombay government. As a commissioner of Pune Municipality he maintained a practical concern with the welfare of the lower castes. He pressed for proper roads to be laid in the old part of Pune city. He was the only one of the thirty-six members of the municipality to vote against a proposition to spend money on decorating the city on the event of visit of Lord Lytton in 1880, argued that instead of spending such money on visit of lord Lytton, its better to spend on the education of poor citizens. He also resisted the Bombay government's decision to open new liquor shops in Pune on the grounds that this would exacerbate the problem of drunkenness in the city. Jotirao took a serious view of the widespread consumption of alcohol on 18th July he wrote a strongly worded letter to Plunket, President of Pune Municipality acting committee.

The municipality has spent vast amount of money on appointing staff and running the health department with the aim of maintaining public health. Pune city was not familiar with the sight of liquor shops. But now liquor shops are seen even in crowded areas, thus sowing the seeds to decline in public morals. This nullifies the
Municipality's aim to maintain public health. With the opening of liquor shops, alcoholism has gripped the city. He suggested that the Municipalities should impose a tax on liquor shops in proportion to the damage they do. Further he says that no municipality has done so.

In the same period, Phule's business interests was flourished. He established himself in Pune as an efficient successful contractor, supplying building materials for a number of large construction projects under taken by the Bombay government the KhadaKavasala dam, the Yerawada Bridge, and the tunnel at Katraj Ghat on the Pune – Satara road. Phule employed hundreds of labourers in these projects, which turned out to be extremely profitable. This is the opportunity of demonstrating his concern towards the caste people. Gyanoba Sasane, whom, Phule employed as a superior on labourers at Khadakavasala and Yeravada constructions, where he opened a night school which was attended not less than 2,000 labourers. When the projects were completed, he gave a feast to all the labourers. During the feast Sasane addressed, the labourers that offering the feast to toiling and sweated labours is much greater virtue than to give feast to Brahman. Sasane also described how, during the great famine of 1877, when Phule was carrying out work of mining for stone at Golhe, he and other Mali contractors opened a famine relief camp for children, the sick and disabled at Dhanakavadi.

From 1882, Phule and his colleagues attempted to extend the activities of the Satyashodhaka Samaj to the rural areas in the Pune, Ahmednagar, and Thana Collectorates and beyond. This move of Phule brought the polemicist into a more sustained and direct contact with the communities of Kunbi cultivators.
In pre-British days, Bajirao-II had adopted a host of arbitrary and wrong practices regarding the land tax or revenue. The office of *Mamlatdar* was no longer conferred upon administrators of experience. Instead it was put to annual auction among the courtiers and favourites of the *Peshwa*. It practically ruined agriculture. The British Government decided to change the system.

During the British period vast changes in the field of agriculture, particularly in the land tenure and revenue system were effected and these changes produced devastating effect on the masses in the countryside.

The British Government generally evolved two systems of land tenure: the *Zamindari* system and the *Rayatwari* system. The *Zamindari* system had two variations viz. Permanent *Zamindari* system and temporary *Zamindari* system. The permanent *Zamindari* system prevailed in Bengali, Bihar and in some parts of north Madras and covered about 20% of British Indian territories. The temporary *Zamindari* settlement covered the major parts of united provinces, central zones of Bengal and Bombay, the Central Provinces, the Punjab and constituted about 30% of British territory in India.\(^{36}\)

The *Rayatwari* system, after being introduced first in Madras in 1802 by Sir Thoms Munro, was subsequently extended to Provinces like Bombay, Sind, Berar, Assam and some other areas and constituted 51% of British Indian territory.

Basic to these changes was the ‘Ricardian Theory’ that the state was the supreme landlord and could after the whole land system or the share of the profit etc. at will and according to expediency.\(^{37}\) In the pre-British period, the land belonged to the village community and was never regarded as the property of the
king or the state. The king or the state was only entitled to a fixed revenue at the rates falling between one-sixth to one-fourth of the products. During British era, the state became the supreme landlord and the Zamindaras and the ryots derived their rights of holding or occupancy from the state, liable to rejection for failure of payment of state demands or the compliance of other rules imposed on them. Particularly the position of cultivators with respect to land became that of 'tenant at will' their right to cultivate the land depending upon the sweet will of the Zamindars of the state as the case might be. The Rayatwari tenure is characterized by the following features.

a) State ownership of all lands including the waste lands.

b) The holder of land is a mere occupant having 'the right to use, bequeath, transfers and relinquish the occupancy of the holding'.

c) The payment of revenue is the condition for land holding.

d) The revenue is regarded as 'rent' and not as tax as a tax would imply private ownership of land.

e) Every landholder is individually responsible for the payment of revenue.

f) Fixed assessment for a period of 20 to 30 years and periodic revision under survey settlement.

In the Pre-British period their responsibility for the payment of revenue was jointly imposed on the cultivator or ryots. Individual responsibility of the holder to pay the land revenue was a new practice. It caused complete disruption of the cohesion of the village community.

The new system was based upon the principle of measuring every field separately and assessing it at a sum fixed for a ter, of
thirty years, the amount of assessment being determined by the quality of the soil and the crop. This plan was first introduced in the case of Indapur taluka of Pune district and has since been gradually extended over the greater part of the preidency\textsuperscript{39}.

The assessment authorities regarded revenue as rent and regarded it as a main source of taxation to meet the Government expenditure. The chief concern of the East India Company administrators was to ensure a steady flow of large revenue from the land. So they increased the demand on land revenue at each successive assessment.

This policy of the Government along with the new legal system and the judicial procedure with its bias in favour of the moneylending business community and the urban elite of education, its policy of free trade, leaving indigenous cottage industry to decay for want of protection, its export policy specially with respect to food grains and other raw materials, all these inflicted untold miseries on the rural population. The changes in the land system and the overall economic administrative and judicial policies of the British created a new alignment of power in the rural society. The merchant moneylenders - the 'Shetjis' and the Indian under officers in the British bureaucracy also the elites of education like the pleaders etc. The 'Bhatijis' joined hands together to exploit the poor and illiterate cultivator. The result was complete disruption of agriculture, growing indebtedness of the cultivators from which even the big farmers were not immune\textsuperscript{40}, and passing of land ownership from the cultivators to the moneylenders or urban elites leading to unparalleled plight of the rural masses. The peasant's revolt of 1875, popularly and officially known as "Deccan Riots" of 1875 was violent reaction against the expatiations by these two classes\textsuperscript{41}. 
The speeches and activities of the liberal reformers of the nineteenth century Maharashtra betray either ignorance or simply apathy towards the masses. With the exception of Sarvajanik sabha, the social reform organizations of Maharashtra have shown utter disregard to the predicament of the masses. In 1873 the sabha appointed one sub committee to study the agrarian problems. It conducted survey during famine and more representation to the Government on the question of the Deccan Riots.\(^{42}\)

But the class approach of its support structure - the Brahman elites - guided and shaped its aims and objectives. Its objectives was to extend the permanent settlement of land revenue over as much territory as possible of the Bombay Presidency so as to facilitate the emergence of a class of landlords 'recruited from the professional classes and higher classes. The able Brahmans of the Deccan. The quarterly journal of Pune Sarvajanik Sabha clearly stated that, 'only a minority of people monopolize the elements of strength. They are socially and religiously on the front rank, they possess intelligence and power of combination. The majority are unlettered, improvident, ignorant disunited, thriftless and poor in means. No political manipulation can hold the balance between these two classes.\(^{43}\) The aim of the leaders of the Sabha was not to stop the alienation of holdings from the peasants rather they wanted to make smoother and quicker - the 'natural process of union of capital and land. They thought that Democracy must be allowed to grow naturally. It would take generations for the peasantry to rise to equality with Brahman and Banias if the natural process was allowed to work without interference. They wanted the natural process to be allowed to take its course.
Phule had identified himself with the *Shudras* and *Ati-Shudras* who were employed mostly in agriculture either as owners of small bit of land or as landless labourers. He chose to become their spokesman. He had a deep knowledge of the myriad and complex problems of agriculture and the peasants. He deplored the fact that the British Government on the one hand provided security and safeguards to the property right of the merchants and moneylenders while on the other hand the working millions were not guaranteed against exploitation. He asked what kind of law and order it was. Here in fact he has questioned the validity of the British concepts of law and order and rule of law and described them as simply a matter of decorum and a mere formality without any content of justice.

He was critical of British policy regarding agriculture. According to him the pressure on land increased owing to non availability of employment opportunities in other fields to the cultivators, destruction of indigenous cottage industries due to the policy of free trade, static Government control of waste land and forests, increase in population etc.

The losses of power of the Princes and Kings, those who were employed under them had been rendered jobless and compelled to go back to their village to work in the farms. The number of such people thrown out of job was about 2.5 millions or even more, which increased the pressure on land.\(^{44}\)

The Government records also confirm that the British take over had rendered most of the ex-servicemen jobless and that they were forced to return to their villages to work on the farms. According to Government estimate about 25 to 30 thousand horse had served under the Peshwa\(^ {45}\). These combined with the infantry and other military and non military officers who worked under the old regime
and the families they supported may bring the figure close to the estimate of Phule.

Another factor responsible for the increase of pressure on land. In this regard Phule said that the introduction of free trade. The machine made goods replaced the hand-made goods and the indigenous industry suffered heavily. The artisans employed in this industry are thrown into a very desperate condition. Formerly they employed some, of the rural youths in their industries as unskilled workers but as they themselves started starving they are incapable of providing jobs to rural youth.

That the British policy of trade and industry gave a decisive blow to the rural economy of this country has been reiterated by a host of Indian as well as Western economists.

Government policy regarding the forests and the waste land was also causing pressure on land. Formerly the poor peasants subsidised their incomes by cutting firewood from the forests. They also lived upon wild fruits in the slack days. They maintained one or two cows and sheeps using the waste lands as pastures. But when the Government has annexed these lands totally and brought them under its control, the poor peasants had no access to them.

Phule says, that in increase in population was one of the factor responsible for the increase of pressure on land. Due to small population and lesser fragmentation of field, the holding of farmers used to be big and economically viable. Because of increase in population and fragmentation of land holdings the field could not be given rest. So they are losing their fertility year by year making the farmers poorer.
Good livestock is regarded as the backbone of the agriculture. Phule complained that due to the slaughter of hundreds of healthy animals like cows and bullocks for the purpose of eating and cooking the livestock of the farmers was contracting. He also pointed out another harmful effect of the Government, forest policy. Due to strict control on forests and pasture lands, the livestock of the farmers was deprived of free natural grazing lands, and were thus underfed. As a result generation after generation they are growing weaker.

Phule was a great critic of the Government land revenue policy. At each assessment after 30 years the revenue increased indiscriminately. Phule said, that Government assessment was out of proportion and could not be justified rationally. It was also not uniform throughout. While pointing out at the reasons of such capricious and unjust assessment. Phule said, that the laziness of the British Officers in the revenue Department on the one hand and the hatred of the lower Brahman officers towards the cultivator of Shudras, and their love of money on the other are the chief reasons for wrong and heavy assessments. British officers avoided duty and indulged in luxury relying solely on the advice of the Brahman officers who were invariably corrupt.

In good and bad reasons alike, the cultivators were invariably required to pay the revenue. The pressure by revenue department was such that the poor farmers had to rush to the usurious village moneylenders who were generally Marwaris or Brahmans. Knowing the need of the cultivator, they charged heavy rates of interest on the loans. The rates charged were so heavy and the documents prepared so false that the poor peasants could never repay the whole amount in one instalment. So at every payment fresh documents were prepared. This cycle of false documents continued and the
peasant was never absolved of the debt completely. Ultimately a suit was filed by the moneylenders in the Court. The village Kulkarni created dissensions among the Shudra cultivators and involved both sides in litigation, thus creating for himself a sources for exploitation. He also acted in the capacity of a moneylender, got false documents of loans signed by the cultivator and filed suits in the courts for the recovery of the amount.

The money lenders invariably took the land in lease as a security for the loans advanced. A land once leased never returned back to the cultivator because for one thing the judicial procedure and the legal system weighed heavily against the cultivators and secondly the business moneymooning community had a powerful lobby in the courts as well as in all of the administrative apparatus.

Phule criticised the functioning of the British Courts of law and the Revenue offices. All the law courts were staffed with Brahmans right from clerks to Judges. The pleaders were mostly Brahmans. The Brahman moneylender had easy access to these caste mates. Even the Marwari moneylender had friendly or business type relations with these pleaders and the Brahman officers in the court. The pleaders humiliated their Shudra clients and exploited them by demanding more money for minor things. The officers in the court helped both Brahman and Marwari moneylenders by manipulating the witness papers and other documents in the court. In the courts the illiterate Shudras witness was harassed and humiliated by the pleaders. The clerks also helped the money lenders by avoiding to record some parts of the statement of the witness or by writing in a confusing manner. Sometimes they replaced the original witness papers by false ones to satisfy the party paying a bribe. At the village level witnesses favouring cultivators were threatened by the KulKarni. He also helped the moneylender in
preparing false witness. Despite all this is some unfavourable witness presented himself in the court, the pleaders put him to inconvenience by postponing the dates on false grounds, thus causing unbearable monetary loss to the cultivators\textsuperscript{55}.

Phule said that even the (Brahman) judges humiliated the illiterate cultivators in the courts by using disgraceful language. Sometimes on the grounds of sickness or for such other reasons they called the witnesses at home and asked them to register their statement there. The witness papers were not signed by the persons registering witness. So they could be changed at will. With this privilege, asked Phule was it not possible for the judges also to give arbitrary decisions.\textsuperscript{56}

Phule criticised the tribunal system also. Such tribunals generally consisted of retired judges who did not have any source of income and were therefore prone to accept bribes from the parties. So on wonder if tribunal decisions were generally given in favour of rich moneylenders as against poor cultivators.

Thus Phule felt that the wrong procedures and ways of functioning of the courts were responsible for the denial of justice to the cultivators.

Phule challenged the validity of the British Principle of recruitment to such high posts as judges, all those who crammed the law books, passed the law examinations. The British Government appointed such law graduates to the high posts of judges simply on the basis of their degrees, without confirming their social integrity, honesty etc. Brahmans after entering such offices did not either forget or give up their caste affinity and caste links. In such situation justice was impossible. What Phule wanted to suggest is that in such
a rigidly stratified society as that of India, where mutual hatred among castes and religious groups was very strong such criteria as degrees etc. did not appear sound. The social background was bound to affect badly the sense of equality. In its absence the knowledge of law could be misused for denying justice instead of delivering it. So he felt that social integrity and sense of justice of the persons must from an important criterion and must be thoroughly tested before appointing him to such high posts as judges, collectors or revenue officers.

Phule felt that the heavy assessments by the Government on the one hand and the userious moneylenders supported by the corrupt departments and law courts, to whom the peasant had invariably to approach in the absence of alternative credit facility, on the other, are responsible for the vast and perpetual indebtedness of the cultivators. Commenting on the report by some of the British officers and Indian individuals and sabhas, regarding the causes of rural indebtedness, which according to them was due to lack of thriftiness, love of extravagance etc. of the cultivators, Phule said, that it was based upon wrong and mischievous witness of the Brahman officers and was contrary to the fact. So he opposed relating the question of indebtedness with extravagant habits of the farmers.

That the heavy and steadily increasing Government demand on land (Land revenue) in the British period was one of the main reasons for the disruption of agriculture and growing rural indebtedness is now generally accepted. But the British Government hesitated to accept it and tried to ascribe it to lack of prudence and thirty habits among the cultivators or to the population upsurge. In this regard Phule has criticised this attitude. The subordinate British officers, however had
started realizing that it was the heavy revenue demand that led, for the most part of the peasant's indebtedness. For instance in 1879 W. Hunter wrote that in Bombay Presidency the land revenue did not leave the cultivators sufficient food to last his family for a year\textsuperscript{58}.

These officers also started realizing the pernicious and disgraceful role of the moneylenders were playing in the rural economy. Sir Daniel Hamilton rightly pointed out that the *Mahajan* (village moneylender) with his bit of silvertied in his silken noose strangles the life of the people and that until the noose is loosened and slipped round the *Mahajan's* neck India will not breath or live.

The new system of land tenure under the *Rayatwari* system making the individual cultivator responsible for the payment on his farm and turning the land into a saleable mortgageable commodity and new legal system with its court procedures etc. Together had accelerated the process of land alienation which agitated the mind of Phule.

**NUMBER OF CIVIL SUITS ABOUT LAND POONA AND AHMEDNAGAR 1851-1865**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>1851</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1865</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahmednagar</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puna</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>632</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The result was huge transfer of land from the peasants to merchants, usurers, moneylenders and others.

The British Officers had started realizing that their legal system was defective and that it helped the money class to exploit the illiterate peasantry. Mr. Taylor, the Collector of Ahmednagar stated in his report that the aid given by the British courts was all on the side of the *Marwari*
who alone knows how to turn that aid to his advantage. He further wrote
the position of the litigation is not simply of debtor and creditor; it is the
fraudulent Marwari, backed by civil courts versus the helpless ryot
signing on bond without even a true knowledge of its contents and
powerless to oppose any decree that may be passed. Sir G. Wingate
also said that 'should the present course of affairs continues it must
arrive at that greater part of the realised property of community will be
transferred to a small moneylender class which will become
disproportionately wealthy by the impoverishment of the rest of the
people. No greater misfortune can be fall any nation than this, by which
many are made miserable in order that the few may be prosperous.
A.O. Hume, Secretary to the Government of India noted, 'Our system of
civil justice is such that no poor man has much chance in the long run,
the earthen pot is broken by the golden one. They also seem to have
realized the pernicious effect of the Brahman domination in almost all
branches of the bureaucracy.

At last, however, the Government admitted the fact that 'the law
does not provide protection to the poor and illiterate peasants' and
sought to protect the cultivators of the Deccan from the moneylenders
by restraining the latter. Hence, the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act
(1879) was passed. The object of this act was simply restraining the
moneylenders from ejecting the peasants from their lands. But the act
gave no protection against undue enhancement, and no security against
excessive assessments in violation of the principles laid down in 1856
and 1864. This led to the contraction of rural credit which again had its
bad effect on the agriculture.

Phule criticised the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act of 1879 as
futile. In his opinion such measures as this could neither prevent
indebtedness nor the alienation of land. He said, that the moneylenders
had started demanding a complete 'Sale deed' of land as a security for the loan forwarded instead of the 'lease of land'. This has made the alienation of land more certain and easier. The poverty was caused because of the natural factors, lack of Government attention to developmental works in agriculture and was aggravated by the heavy revenue demands. So he suggested the Government to cut down its expenditure by stopping construction of posh buildings in cities, payment of heavy salaries and pensions to the British officers, as an initial step and then to reduce the burden of revenue.

British policy of exporting foodgrains and other raw materials had disastrous effect on the economy of the country. The increasing export of foodgrains to England from India as a whole.

This policy of exporting foodgrains was so obstinately pursued by the Government of India that they turned down the proposal of Sir George Campbell, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal to stop the export of rice from this province, a part of which was then in the grip of a terrible famine. The cumulative result of all this was a disastrous cycle of famines throughout the country. The death of grains in the country and Government's lack of interest in transporting it from the places where it maybe available to where it was needed resulted in increasing number of deaths in the successive famines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Famine deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1825-1850</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-1875</td>
<td>5,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-1900</td>
<td>15,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: R.C.Majumdar.,(ed) British Paramountcy and Indian Renaisance. 2nd Edn., Bombay, 19709.
The famine of 1876-77 was felt throughout the Deccan and Maratha country.

Phule criticised the export of policy of the Government very bitterly. He said that 'foodgrains, cotton and leather are exported to Britain indiscriminately without taking the local demand into consideration. The result is that the indigenous industries starve for want of raw materials and population straves for want of food grains.

On the problem of relationship between landlords and tenant peasants. Phule consistently stood by the side of the latter. In Junnar area the landlord moneylenders extracted the heaviest rent from their tenants. Phule organised the poor tenants in the cultivation of lands belonging to landlord moneylenders. He himself undertook the responsibility to represent the case to the Government. As a result, the Government put a ceiling on the amount of rent to be collected from the tenants.

The situation of tenant peasants in Konkan was the worst. There the survey was not, till late, introduced. The land was held by petty landlords called 'Khots' whose rights as against the Government had not till then been finally determined. These Khots possessed vast land tracks. Actual cultivators on these lands were simply the tenants at will. They were called 'ardhelis'. Some tenants were regarded superior to these and were called 'Dharakeri'. Conditions of both the these were not much different. These Khots came in the fields at the time of harvest and took away a major portion of the produce not leaving enough even for the minimum requirements of the tenants. They treated them as slaves and bonded labour. They extracted from each of them one day free service per week. The 'ardheli' tenants were generally indebted to the Khots and many of them were consequently 'little better than object slaves'.
British courts, too played a very disappointing role. They were very unpopular among the cultivators as the *Khots* had taken advantage of it. Marriot, the Collector of North Konkan, wrote to M. Elphinstone on 19-11-1818 that the introduction of judges courts and the regulations had disastrous results.

Phule stood unwaveringly by the tenant share croppers and criticised the *Khots* for exploiting them. Some of the British officers and travelers wrote to the Government about the situation and requested Government to intervene to relieve the tenants. The Government conducted an enquiry into the matter. But the *Khots* either convinced or threatened the poor tenants to record witness in their favour. Phule deplored this as the result of the excessive poverty and ignorance of the peasants. B.G. Tilak has supported *Khots* against tenants. This shows how Phule's orientation was different from that of contemporary nationalist leaders.

With this orientation and perception of the agricultural problems, Phule comes out with a host of suggestions for the development of agriculture and rural economy in general and amelioration of the conditions of the peasants and tenants cultivators in particular.

Phule also gave specific suggestions for the improvement of agriculture:

- To teach new methods of cultivation and the use of machines and chemical fertilizers for that purpose.
- To stop killing healthy cows and bullocks in order to avoid shortage of livestock of the cultivators also affecting the supply of natural fertilizers.
• To construct bundings on each farm to stop soil erosion as also to allow the water to run down the earth and from there to percolate into the soil. This would also check the phenomena of momentary floods damaging fields and dry rivers throughout the year.

• To construct dams across small streams and rivers so that the constant flow of water down the stream would be guaranteed.

• To locate underground water and then to show these spots in the maps of the villages to help the farmers dig wells at proper places.

• To encourage the farmers to dig wells by giving prizes etc. for such works.

• To allow the farmers to take the rich and fertile under water soil from the rivers and lakes to use it for the fields.

• To allow the farmers to use Government acquired forests as pastoral lands freely yet to prohibit cutting trees for fire wood.

• To improve good species of animals like sheep and goat and develop them here for the use of farmers.

• To assign the duty of guarding and protecting the farms either to the police or to the military if the Government is afraid to allow the cultivators to keep arms.

• To arrange exhibition of agricultural products and contests of plough driving every year in the month of Shravan and award certificates and prizes.

• To send the children of the cultivators to Europe to attend agricultural schools and technical courses there if they passed minor examination pertaining to agricultural works and technique of goldsmiths, carpentry etc.
• To suggest the Government to reduce the salaries of higher officers and increase those of the lower and unskilled labourers gradually.

General suggestions made by Phule to the Government which had a bearing upon the socio-economic life of the village area:

• To make laws prohibiting the Shudras from marrying more than one women and also prohibiting them from marrying their children at a tender age.

• The Brahmans should get jobs in proportion to their percentage to total population. Rest of the posts be filled in by recruiting from British and Muslims.

• To educate the Shudras by providing concessions, more facilities and other incentives.

• To make the office of Patil competitive and non hereditary. It should be given to those of the Shudras who have passed the 6th standard. The educated Patil would check the disruptive role of the Kulkarni in the village life. This, in turn, would reduce the number of false suits in courts of law.

• To keep strict watch on weights and measures as well as adulteration.

• To keep strict watch on dancing women and prostitutes and prohibit singing immoral songs and punish them if they violate the rules.

Phule said the ryots were adversely affected for want of irrigation facilities to their farms. Hundreds of them are still suffering great hardships for lack of the said facilities (it is a universal truth that) the farmers in countries where such irrigation facilities are not available to
them are greatly handicapped (in their agricultural operation). As they have to depend entirely on agriculture for their sustenance, providing such irrigation facilities is the only way to free them from the curse of poverty. Most people are aware of the fact that ample irrigation facilities are provided to their farmers by the English (British) Government in their own country (England), resulting in an all round improvement in the economic condition of their farming community. H.E.H. The Nizam of Hyderabad has constructed canals in some areas of his princely State, with the result that the farmers in those areas are quite well-off (economically). As such irrigation facilities were not available to the farmers in our land, agriculture, their main-stay, suffered heavily. And as a result, the common peasant who was entirely dependent on his farm for his sustenance, was the worst sufferer in the past. Irrigation is the life and soul of agriculture. So water is truly a life giving gift to the peasant. In the absence of such a gift or facility, he inevitably goes to the wall. Give this facility to the tiller of the soil, agriculture will be a duly economically beneficial proposition to him, howsoever rugged, fallow, or gravelly (stony) his farms may be. It is no exaggeration to say that given an abundant supply of water to his farm, be it ever so rocky or fallow or rugged, the peasant will be able to grow many fruit trees and a variety of crops on his farm, even out of season (i.e. not restricted only to the rainy season). Take a tiny illustration. The lands round about the site where the Governor's palatial residence is situated i.e. at Aundh, were till recently thought to be unproductive, being barren, rocky and fallow-see what a miraculous transformation has taken place at the self-same spot now. The whole campus is full orchards, flowering shrubs as also of a wealth of other shrubs, herbs, trees etc. It has now been converted into a delightful vast garden, nay a veritable Paradise (It has to be seen to be believed). It would be difficult (nay, impossible) to find any other comparable garden even in black, alluvial soil in the vicinity of Pune.
The creation of such a fine garden on so poor (rugged, unproductive) a soil (land) is truly wonderful. A little reflection will tell us the reason. Abundant, water has been supplied to his otherwise barren plot of land, through pipes from the nearby river. Hard labour put in by the harbourers is also responsible for this transformation, but that is not the chief cause. Abundant supply of water is the key to this transformation. This clearly proves how essential it is to supply water to the farmers for their agricultural operations, through an efficient system of irrigation (water, indeed is truly life giving). The farmers rightly believe that a plentiful supply of water is the key to their prosperity. (It is their true wealth). An assured supply of water ensures all happiness and luxury to them. If the rains fail them one year, it spell disaster for them. They are improverished and they, along with all the members of their families, fall on evil days. Some of them have to leave their homes and migrate to other areas. Some are reduced to penury and are forced to beg (food) from door to door. Some are driven to suicide. Further Phule said “I shall now deal with the reasons responsible for this wretched condition of the (Indian) farmers”.

The operation of the law of Nature - that if one area gets an abundant rain-fall, some other area is afflicted with drought. It is never uniform all over the country. That is why the farmers are faced with acute spells of drought every ten or fifteen years, resulting in the failure of crops. Then the farmers falls back upon the corn (grain) stored from the previous year’s harvest. But that stock is barely sufficient to feed all the members of his family for six months at the most. When that is consumed, he has no money to buy even the seeds for the next sowing season. The adversity of the farmers is the golden opportunity for the Brahman and the Marwari moneylenders to fleece the poor farmers.
They rejoice at the predicament of the poor, indigent farmers, with whom they ingratiate themselves with honeyed words. Some Brahman money lenders repair to his house and ask him solicitously ‘Hallo, dear Patill You seem to be deeply distressed. May I know the reason? At which the poor farmers replies, “Sir, how can I explain my plight to you? We had drought last year (which resulted in the failure of crops). So I was forced to fall back on the slender stock of grain which I had saved the year before that (two years back). Now I am totally ‘broke’ and the sowing season is about to begin. I am at a loss to know to tide over this crisis’. At this, the Brahman money lender assures him promptly. “Do not worry at all on any count, I shall gladly lend you ten or twelve rupees). Go and purchase the seeds and sow them in your farm”. The poor Shudra farmers is easily taken by the Brahman money-lender’s sweet words And, moreover, he is overwhelmed by his generous officer, coming from one who is total stranger to him, and who has taken the trouble to come all the way to his (ramshackle) house to help him in his hour of dire need (with a loan often to twelve rupees). The evil machination of the greedy moneylender (to lend him the money and) to deprive him of his house and his other chattels - does not cross his simple mind at all. But he is happy at the prospect of timely help in his dire need, and begs the money-lenders to advance him the said loan of Rupees ten or twelve. The (wily Brahman) money lender says to him, “That’s O.K. Please come back to me tomorrow with a revenue stamp paper (bond) and do not forget to bring with you some of your relatives as also the members of you family. Rest assured” I shall help you in your hour of need. I hope you won’t mind me asking you to come to me with a stamp paper tomorrow. Please do not misunderstand me at all. I trust you completely. I am not one to doubt your credentials. Both of us belong to the same village, do we not? Both of us profess the same religion (Hinduism). I would not dream of deceiving you. You should
have implicit faith in my goodness. If my intentions about you were dishonest, would I have come, of my own accord all the way to your house, Patil offered to help you in all possible ways in your present predicament with a loan. Never! He would play his innocent mind with smooth, deceitful words, the better to persuade him to execute the bond expeditiously. The unsuspecting farmers would, then return to the Brahman money-lender's house the next day with the required bond paper. The money lender would, then get the Kulkarni to incorporate various unjust conditions in that bond, the Kulkarni being secretly in league with the Brahman money-lenders. He would then, ask the poor Shudra farmer and the members of his family or his relatives to affix their thumb impressions on the said bond. He would then, deduct Rupees two or three as the Kulkarni's fees for writing the said bond and would give Rupees nine or ten by way of a loan. In due course of time, the farmers would repay the amount of the loan, but the wily money lender would charge him interest on the interest of the original loan, and a little later, a further interest on the aggregate amount (through the original loan was already cleared by the farmer). Just then the farmer's son was getting married. So the money-lenders would advance a further petty loan to the farmers and would force the farmer to execute a fresh bond to him for the new petty loan. The farmer was in no position to clear the debt. So the money lender would add the amount of interest to the original loan and get the farmers to execute a fresh bond. This malpractice continued for three to four years. During this period the amount of the original loan of Rs.10/- to Rs.12/- had swollen to Rs.200/- or Rs.250/- The money lender would, then file a suit against the poor farmer for repayment of an amount of Rs.300/- to Rs.325/- would get an order passed against cultivator in the court, and just at harvest time, would insist on executing an order of confiscation (attachment) of his land for non repayment of the loan.74
A lack the day! It is absolutely impossible to express in words the (harrowing) sight that meets one's eyes there. The poor, helpless and indigent farmer has toiled and moiled day and night, along with all the members of his family. On his farm, throughout the year, bearing semi-clad, the privation of hunger, in the burning heat of the sun, in pouring rain, and biting cold. Now just when he is looking forward to the fruits of his labour (reaping a good harvest) when the money-lender, along with his clerk and peon, appears before the farmer (in his countryyard). Just imagine the feelings of the poor farmer. No wonder if the money-lender appears to the farmers and the members of his family as a veritable god of death (Yama) wreaking death and destruction all around in all his terrifying manifestation, with the clerk and the peon as his faithful, unfailing executioners, come there to strike them all dead. The terrified children's cries rend the air. The frightened womenfolk in the house begin to weep piteously and the crest fallen and helpless farmers beats his breast and bursts into uncontrollable sobs. No wonder if they feel that a great catastrophe has befallen them. They pray to God, in their utter helplessness, "Dear Lord! We pray unto you that such a misfortune should never befall even our bitterest foe at any time".

When the agents of the money-lender drag out his meagre stock of corn and his other belongings in the countryard the helpless farmer falls at the cruel money-lender's feet again and again, and humbly supplicates him to take pity on him but to no purpose. The farmer's wife also beseeches him (the money lender) most piteously, "Respected Sir! We have already repaid the amount of the principal along with the interest long back. But you have charged us interest on the interest of the principal loan which already repaid. We are most willing to repay even that amount (which unjustly charged to our account). We would be most thankful to you if you could allow us some more time of grace to
clear the debt. Else, all of us will be put to a great hardship, we shall be beggared, and worst of all, these tiny children of ours, barely two or three years old will starve to death. You can see for yourself, Sir, that, these our children are semi-naked (as we cannot afford to given them clothing) and we find it difficult to feed them properly. If you take away our meagre stock of grains, they will be greatly inconvenienced. To whom can they appeal for succour Respected Sir, you appear to us to be the embodiment of compassion, forgiveness and peace. You are indeed, the friend and champion of the helpless, and that is why you are called 'an earth-god'. So, I appeal to you most earnestly and humbly (with folded hands and on bended knees) to take pity on our helpless children, and allow us to retain a portion of the food grains that you are forcibly taking away from us now. It would be most unseemly and unbecoming of you to reject my request, out of hand, summarily". Having heard this entreaty of the farmer's wife, the moneylender was greatly incensed, and with bloodshot eyes, he said to her "O foolish woman, how dare you, a *Shudra*, teach me (pontificate to me) about this? Do you mean to say that I should write off the debt and should not try to recover it from your husband reconciling myself to such a situation?" The poor woman could not challenge his words but had to keep quiet helplessly. The other members of the farmer's family also would beseech him humbly in that behalf. But the stony hearted moneylender would not heed these entreaties, but would proceed to accomplish his wicked design by carrying way all his belongings (pots and pans, food grains etc.). He would then sell them to someone and would deduct the amount thus realised from the original debt. The remaining portion of the debt would continue to stand in the farmer's name, as before. The same old procedure of charging interest on the interest as also the remaining principal would continued to harass the farmers as before for four or five years to his great discomfiture for the
loan of Rs.8 to 10. He would lose his farm, his cattle, his well and the irrigated field therein, resulting in his total impoverishment. So great was his harassment and mental torture that he would be driven even to suicide. These Brahman money lenders had the temerity to destroy the poor farmers totally, even after recovering the full amount of the debt (principal) along with the interest thereon. If they could inflict such an injustice on the poor farmers under the benevolent rule of the English Government. This can just imagine how they must have harassed the helpless peasant, during the Peshwas rule, if he took a loan of a few rupees from a Brahman money lender when the rains failed that year75.

During the Peshwas rule it was not necessary (for the Brahman money-lenders and other Brahman officers) to file suits against defaulting parties in the Government courts, as the powers of the Government were exercised by the Brahman officers at their own sweet will (arbitrarily). The money lenders were free to be labour the tenants (debtors) and to deprive them to their possession (food grains and other belongings) by brute force. They would sell his cattle in the market, would torture the members of his family, resulting, sometimes, in their deaths. These cruel persecutors (Brahman money lenders) would place heavy stones on the debtors’ heads or backs, and would then, make them stand in the hot burning sun, sometimes chillies were burnt under their faces so that the obnoxious fumes from the pungent chillies would enter his eyes and nostrils. Sometimes they would apply pincers to his genitals, or would tie their hands and feet, pass a wooden rod through the tied hands, and would continue to be labour them mercilessly. The Brahman officers in the revenue department would also torture them in diverse ways, as mentioned above, while collecting the land assessment from them76.
Phule took great pains to project precisely the details of material life, and of a range of social and economic concern, with which a rural audience could identify. 'The cultivator's whip coard regarding the state of agriculture and the cultivators in those days. He personalised his account presenting it in the words of an imaginary cultivators be set with the difficulties of acute poverty and indebtedness. Phule introduced him as he leaves the Collector's tent, which is pitched in comfort in a shady mango grove on the bank of a river, biting his lips in anger and frustration after the Collector has been too absorbed in his tea and his mid-day meal to give proper consideration to his request for an easier arrangement for the payment of his land cess. It is worth nothing that Phule attributed to him the sort of complete social absesment and inhuman material deprivation that he used to describe the condition of the untouchable castes. The cultivators were certainly very hard up, having run out of temporary expedients for meeting the demands of creditors and revenue officials, and this long drawn out impoverishment had left its mark on his house, family and livestock. But it is clear that he had once been a man of moderate substance as cultivators went, and that his determination and self-respect were only now beginning to show signs of wearing out. This emphasis reflected the slight shift away from a unity for the lower castes derived from a common historical experience and made explicit in the inclusion of untouchable castes, and towards a solidarity set within a narrower conception of the community of the oppressed; and deriving from shared social experiences.

If we visit the cultivators home where he has his meal and lies down to sleep in vain, however, as his mind starts to fill with thoughts of all his difficulties. These had started when, unlike the other villagers, he had failed to bribe the Brahman officials who charge of the revenue assessment, and of the later had recovered his lands at a greatly
increased cess. In the very same year, three was a shortage of rain and all his crops suffered; at the same time his father had died. The expense of his father's funeral had meant that he had to borrow from the Brahman moneylender enough to pay that year's cess, and his lands had been pledged against the debt. The moneylender had charged him such a rate of interest that he had seen unable to meet the payments, and the Brahman had for enclosed on the debt. It was hopeless for the cultivators to fight the case in court, since the moneylender, the revenue officials, the Collector's staff, the court officials and the head of the local police were all related to one another, or were caste fellows as Brahmans. The following here he had managed by selling the jewellery of the women in the house, and since then he had borrowed every year from the 'Marwadi', the moneylender in the village, who had also brought cases against him hat had lingered in the local courts for years, despite the money spent on bribes to extricate them. He had even resorted to selling his married daughter's jewellery, so that her father-in-law would no longer have her in the house. His mind then turns to the immediate needs of his small holding, the new leather bucket required for the irrigated land to prevent further dehydration of the sugar crop, the ruin of the maize crop because it was to harvested on time. The weakness of the livestock from lack of food, the embarrassment of the family at going about in clothes too tattered to cover them. In his mind, he turns over the alternative that are left if, he sold the bullocks, there would be no way of ploughing next year. It was impossible for him to take up a trade because he could not read or write. If they sold up and let their land, he had no skill that would enable him to earn a living else where, the acute poverty of the cultivator, whose labour supplied all the material needs of society, were contrasted vividly with the relatively leisured and prosperous lives of Brahmans in the employ of the British Government. Phule described the meagre diet of the
cultivator; the cold leftovers in the morning livened up with a little chutney, the 'Bhakaris' with well-try lentil Dalin the afternoon, and the broken grain of maize of Jondhali in the evening. When even these failed, the cultivator filled himself up with green mangoes, figs, and tamarind or whatever came to hand in the field as he went out to pick up the plough. Phule followed this with a description of a rich Brahman wedding feast with its special pavilion let up by electric lights, its extravagant array of rich dishes and the distribution of 'Dakshina' to Brahmans afterwards. He appealed to the women in his audience, contrasting their own oil alongside their husbands in the field with the life of ease that Brahman women led.

The Brahman women sleep on late in the morning, get up at leisure and do their hair; sweep and wash their houses and do a bit of cooking and washing and than sit around all day listening to old religious tales and puranas being read to them.

Phule was more stringent in his criticism of the British government in its setting up of a top-heavy administrative superstructure, composed both of European and of Brahman officials, the one incomplete and the other corrupt; who enjoyed comfortable salaries and pensions which had to be paid for by the labour of the cultivators. Unless the Governor general makes a recommendation to the Government at home that in all the Government departments judiciary, forest-Police and Education to reduce the pay and pensions of all who get more than one hundred rupees, then the cultivator will never get enough bread to fill himself and clothes to cover his body, and will never raise himself out of debt. The cultivator and his wife and children labour in the fields day and night, but after the land cess and the local funds, each person in the family is left with less than three rupees; while the very ordinary Indian and
European government officials can not manage on fifteen rupees a month for his miscellaneous expenses and his drink.\(^79\)

Despite these shortcomings, Phule called for a more active role to reduce British administration. In changing the very structure of rural society, the children of the cultivators should be given a proper education in agricultural techniques. The office of the 'Patil' should no longer be hereditary, but should be conferred upon whichever candidate could show himself most proficient in using the plough, the harrow and the hoe, and in the personal virtues of honestly and reliability. In the resulting competition, cultivators would be only too eager to send their children to school, and with overall levels of education raising, the influence of both priest and 'Kulkarni' in the village would be diminished.\(^80\)

In May, 1884, Satyashodhak leaders organised a number of mass meetings in the town of Junnar and surrounding villages. These meetings set up off a widespread boycott, both economic and rituals, of the local Brahmans, and a similar movement against money lenders. There were accompanied by calls for right share of education and government employment for the lower castes, and a sharp increase in tension between village and Brahmans. A letter in the Dynanodaya of 24th July, 1884 described the Satyashodhak campaign. Some years previously, the Brahman of Junnar had increased their prices for performing ceremonies, and so efforts were being made to resist their exaction. In May Jotirao Phule and Narayanarao Lokande, the editor of the "Din Bhandu" held two or three grant meetings in the district. Several thousands Marathas, Malis, Sonars, Shimpis and other Hindus gathered to listen, Bhau Kondaji Patil's younger brother, Govinda Bhau witnessed these Junnar campaigns. Under Patil's leadership, Phules aid, all young cultivators must join together and impose a boycott
on the local Brahmans while the latter held on to their ideas of superior religious purity. The servicing castes should refuse to visit them, labourers should let their fields lie fallow, and the Malis should withhold supplies of fruit and vegetables. Similar action should be taken again tyrannical money lenders, especially where there were Brahmans.

Govind Bhaupatil described the effect of the Satyashodhak Campaign. The villagers boycotted the Brahmans, carrying out their own religious rites, and refusing to till the fields of Brahmans landlords for a period of three years. Brahman priest, who had previously charged anything upto Rs.20/- became prepared to conduct ceremonies for a few annas. Brahman landlord brought down their rents to where they were just sufficient to pay the land tax. Moneylenders fields lay fallow. The inhabitants of about forty villages in Junnar who have agreed amongst to have marriages and other religious ceremonies performed without the aid of Brahman priest and had already performed 300 such marriages without priest.

The Brahman teachers and government officials retaliated in kind. The teachers refused to teach the village children, and so Patil and Phule petitioned the Director of Phule Institution to appoint a non-Brahman teacher in every school and Patil set up a school for the children in his native town, of Otur, staffed entirely non-Brahmans. Some Brahman officials made up a court case against him, and succeeded in getting him imprisoned for a month, after which the case against him was quashed.

People from non-Brahman castes gathered in large numbers under Phule's banner. Phule was hopeful that his movement would reach the various corners of the country. In 1884 he met Sayajirao Gaikwad who had recently ascended the throne of Baroda and was concerned about public welfare Phule was very favourably inclined
towards the young ruler. Phule had given lectures on his reforms in some important places in Baroda, he had read chapter from the Shektaryacha Asud before the ruler. His lectures had a great impact on Sayajirao who immediately put a stop to the practice of serving ‘Khichidi’ (rice and lentil) to Brahmans.

In April, 1885 on Gudhi Padwa day, the leaders of the Satyashodhak Samaj took out a huge procession in Pune. A large crowd of activists and eminent persons took part in the procession, waving green and yellow flags. A band played at the head of the procession while the Mahara played musical instruments and song sangs at the rear. Behind the Mahars were leather drum and wind-instrument players followed by a troupe of dhol (drum) and trumpet players. Among those who joined the procession were Jotirao Phule, Ramayya Venkayya Ayyavaru, Mahadeve Govind Ranade, Krishnarao Bhalekar, Dr. Sadoba Gavade and H.L. Navalkar etc. The procession which started at four in the afternoon from the Vitoba temple reached Dr. Sadoba Gavade’s house at nine in the evening. Speeches were made by Jotirao, Ranade, Ayyavaru and others.84

In the monsoon of 1885 Sayajirao Gaikwad stayed in Pune for two months. Jotirao organised a big function in his honour, in which speeches were given by Mahadev Govind Ranade, Dr. Bhandarkar and Jotirao Phule himself. The paper ‘Dhanprakash’ lauded Ranade’s speech but criticised Jotirao’s. In response to ‘Dhanprakash’s criticism, Jotirao wrote a booklet called ‘Ishra’ (warning) refusing the points raised by Ranade, Highlighting the sufferings of the farmers during the reign of Bajirao-II Jotirao said that God took way Bajiroa’s crown and gave the Shudra and the Ati-Shudra masses an infinitely just, benevolent, virtuous, peaceful administrations in the form of British rulers. Thus it
was natural for the people to pray day and night to God to let the British Government continue for a long time to come.

In the same year he also published a booklet of dialogues called 'Satsar' (Essence of Goodness). The booklet lauded Pandita Ramabai's religious conversion. Jotirao also raised the question that how was it the Brahmans, though small in number, enjoyed supremacy and power over non-Brahmans who were ten times more in number. Then he himself answered with a counter-question that How did a handful of Mohammadans and the British become sovereigns over millions of Hindu. The last part of this booklet was in the form of a conversion, between Jotirao and a Brahman, in a somewhat blunt and bitter tone. Out of the 2000 copies published, Jotirao's friends alone brought 1050 copies of the booklet and distributed them in various villages.

Jotirao published the second issue of 'Satsar' in October, 1885, in which he attempted to prove that how women was deceived by men into thinking that they were being persecuted in every possible way under British rule. He fiercely attacked the unjust, tyrannical and prejudiced views, contained in the Hindu scriptures regarding women and thus gave voice to women's woes.

Jotirao then wrote a booklet called 'Asprushyanchi Kaifeyaf (a case of the untouchables) presenting an imaginary account of a Mahar and a Mang urging Queen Victoria on a tour of India, to visit their locality. They invite her to see for herself if there has been any improvement I their lot during her reign. The Queen agrees to visit. She is told that under the Peshwas regime the untouchables were treated most inhumanly and made to lead a wretched life. In the British regime their life had become more secure but they still could not move about freely. Poverty prevented them from sending their children to school.
The Queen promises that her government would look into their grievances.

Jotirao took an important step towards solving the problem of the untouchables by training activists from the untouchable castes. He taught them to write and give speeches, and guided them in social work. Among these activists, Gopalbal Valangkar, a student of Jotirao, was the most prominent. He was an author, an expert activist and an excellent speaker. He devoted himself to the task of eradicating untouchability. He wrote several scathing articles in the ‘Deenbandhu’ and the ‘sudharak’ Jotirao wrote numerous books of prose and ‘abhangs’ in Marathi in a persuasive style. He called his ‘abhangs’, ‘akhanda’ (endless). He also composed ‘Mangalshtakas’ to be sung at weddings. These songs were included in the Sarvajanik Satyadharma which was the last books of Phule. An interesting feature of these ‘Mangalshtakas’ that the bride and the groom sang them by turns and the guests present blessed the newly weds by reciting one particular verse.

In order to see an example to farmers, Jotirao bought 200 acres of land to each improved (methods of) farming. The farmers did not readily accept new methods and were not even keen to use canal water for irrigation. Jotirao showed them the method of irrigating through canal water a mango grove in the jungle of Manjri, near Pune.

Workers were organised into a team and lessons itself improvement imparting to them under the aegis of the Satyashodhak Samaj. The guiding force was Jotirao. The problem of the workers were really that of the poor masses. The ‘Dinabandhu’ continued to highlight their problems in forthright manner. It was the mouthpiece of the Satyashodhaks who were devoted to upliftment of the workers.
In September, 1885 Jotirao gave a number of lectures at various workers colonies in Bombay. He also attended the annual function of the Satyashodhak Samaj in Thane. The followers, activists and leaders of the Satyashodhak Samaj collected in large number of welcome the leaders. Their enthusiasm was to be sent to believe. It was decided at this annual function that Narayanarao Lokhade, who was the founder of the workers movement was asked to publish a series of books called ‘Satyashodhak Nibandhamala’ (Satyashodhak series of Essays).

In 1885 construction of the new market building was completed in Pune. It was named after the Governor of Bombay, Lord Roy. But traders could not set up shops in the building as they were unable to afford the high rents. Jotirao had opposed the construction of the market at such immense cost. Today, by a strange coincidence, the very Raj market is known as Phule market.

In may, 1888, the honorific ‘Mahatma’ (Great soul was conferred on Jotirao at a huge public function in Mandi, Bombay in recognition of his services to the Dalit community. In July, 1888 Jotirao suffered a paralytic stroke and remained bedridden for four months. Meanwhile, his adopted son Yashwant got married to Radha, daughter of Gynoba Sasane. As per the Satyashodhak Samaj rules, “Mangalashtakas’ were sung by other bridal couple after which they were blessed by the guests.

In January 1890, still struggling with paralysis, Jotirao received a major victory. A certain Balaji Kusaji Patil of Otur village had performed a wedding at home without inviting a Brahman priest. No rites were performed except for the exchange of garlands by the bride and the bridegroom. It was around this time that the chief justice of Supreme Court, Sir Charles Sergeant, passed the verdict that the village priest had no right to the ‘Dakshina’ given in a wedding ceremony.
February 1890 saw another victory for Jotirao’s movement against the forcible tonsure of widow, which papers like “subodhpatrika” and ‘Induprakash’ also roundly condemned. The Barber community also lent its support to the move to end this practice.

On November, 1890, Jotirao’s condition worsened. It became clear that the end was near. He sent for his wife and pleaded with her to have courage. He asked Yashwant to pray God and then himself said a prayer. He was conscious till the end. His face was calm and happy when this greatest of men departed from the world at 2.20 a.m. on 28th November, 1890.

The news of Jotirao’s death has been spread like wild fire by dawn people began to flock to pay their last respect to the departed soul. Hordes of Satyashodhak activists from village around Pune rushed to the city people of all faiths and castes: Hindus, Muslims, Brahmans, Mahars and Mangs even women joined the funeral procession, news paper paid rich tributes.

Mama Paramanand well wisher and close friend of Jotirao persuaded Sayajirao, ruler of Baroda, who provided financial help to Savithribai and Yashwant. In February, 1892 Sayaji Gaikwad donated a thousand rupees to Mama Paramanand Savitribai was given fifty rupees out of this amount every three months, Paramanand also set up a fund to raise a memorial for Jotirao. Barely six years after Jotirao’s death Savitribai and Yashwant died in a plague epidemic in Pune in 1897.
FOOT NOTES


7. Ibid, pp 250-251


10. Ibid, p.24


18. Ibid , p.121.


22. Ibid, pp 174 – 176
34. Ibid, p.31.
36. A.R Desai., Social and Background of Indian Nationalisation Op.Cit P 40
43. Ibid.


47. Ibid,


53. Ibid, pp.209 – 210

54. Ibid, p.207

55. Ibid, p.210

56. Ibid, pp.210 – 211

57. Ibid, pp.243 – 246


64. Ibid, p.264.
68. Ibid, p.133.
71. Ibid, pp. 260-261
73. Ibid,
74. Ibid, pp.59-60
75. Ibid. pp.59-61
76. Ibid, pp. 61-62.
82. Dinbandhu 25th May, 1884, Native News Paper Reports, Week ending 31 May, 1884.
85. Ibid pp 50 – 51
86. Ibid p 52
87. Ibid pp 52 – 53
88. Ibid pp 53 - 54.