CHAPTER 5
BEGINNING OF INTELLECTUAL AWAKENING
AND SOCIAL REFORMS

5.1 Pre-British Era:-

Aryan culture which was pervaded India since early times had its special social system based on four Varna and castes. Its impact was constant in the 20th century. In the post-Vedic period the Varna system was developed as unchangeable. Thus, the caste system was also took a rigid form. Though Varna system and castes were separate they were inter-dependent. Aryan had concurred non-Aryan people and made them slaves. They intersected them in the culture as Das or Shudras. They included some of their traditions, deity (Shiva) and life-styles. However, a layer of discrimination was maintained in their appearances, separateness of their life-styles, different physical features and attitude of being conquered and defeated. The non Aryans were condemned as Shudras (untouchables). They also attempted to destroy the culture of Non Aryan who opposed the Aryan.

Islamic forces attack India during Medieval period. On one hand Muslim sultans made forced conversion of Hindus to Islamic faith, while other backward communities who were forced to live a denied life willingly accepted the new faith. Religious saints who brought religious reforms attempted to declare religious freedom for all communities. On such backdrop, Bhakti movement immerged to give Hindu society its vitality back to Indian society. The Bhakti movement attempted to eradicate casteism, social discrimination, superstitions and traditional mindset and laid stress on the principle of social equality. It was termed as a movement of Bhakti (devotion).

The religious teachers in Bhakti Movement attempted to bring uniformity and integrity in society by working towards eradicating casteism and propagating message of equality. However, their attempt was merely to bring religious freedom. But they did take initiative to break the social discrimination in actual day to day life. They would not be criticized as their main thrust of their lives and teaching was religious and not essentially social. Religious leaders from different communities including Dnyaneshwar, Eknath (Brahmin), Namdeo (Shimpi), Tukaram Maharaj (Mali), Chokhamela (Mahar), Goroba (Kumbhar), Sena (Nahvi), Narhari (Sonar), Kanhopatra (singer) are said to have propagated social equality. But it was merely a religious
kind of freedom and that too was restricted to allow worship the god. It was not the way of creating social justice. Chokhamela was a saint. He had right to sing and dance chanting the divine name in the sand of river Chandrabhaga. But he had no entry into the temple of the deity. People of his caste were denied entry even in the twentieth century.²

5.1.1 Pre-British Social Condition of Berar:-

During the initial period of the nineteenth century Indian social life was perturbed with different social evils, rituals, tradition and customs. The condition of Maharashtra including especially Berar and Vidarbha was not different. People were largely ignorant. They had no education. Naturally, a greater impact of religious rituals, casteism, superstitions etc was prevailed on the society. On such backdrop, evil customs and traditions were given importance leading to the social degradation. During Vedic era, women had greater place in society. Though there are examples of women successfully running the administration of their kingdoms, the condition of women was basically deprived. They received the right of ‘Streedhan’ i.e. possessing her wealth. Though tradition of Sati was not in Vedic customs, it existed in pre Yadav dynasty. The condition of widow was deteriorated.³

During Maurya period Buddhism was immerged. The early Chatur Varna system during Vedic era took form of stubborn casteism. It was deep rooted during Satwahan period. During Gupta era, caste structure was further strengthened and castes were subdivided to sub castes. The number of castes was increased to a great number till the tenth century. But since then a social disintegration was started. Even in the higher Brahmin society, discrimination based on regionalism was started. Like Brahmin, in clans were developed in Kshatriya Varna. During Yadav era, new castes were included. Reference of Kayastha Brahmin occurred in stone and metal inscriptions during Yadav dynasty.⁴

Marathi literature in the twelfth and thirteenth century revealed the existence of different castes and tribes. Social discrimination and untouchability increased manifold during the period of Yadav. The Shudras who were discarded as untouchables had to live at outskirts.⁵ Mang community had to look after the crematorium.

The condition of women was pitiable during the advent of nineteenth century. Due to the male dominated social structures, women were given inferior position. Religion had greater hold on the public mindset. Religion had put women in several kinds of restrictions. Like
untouchables, women were also given contemptuous position in the society. It was thought that the place of women was within the four walls of the house.

The establishment of British regime was the important in point of view of social change. A wider changes set in social life. The stagnant society gradually inclined to accept the changes. Thorough changes were setting in British Era when it was compared with the stagnant society of the Pre British era. It could not be declined that the British regime of responsible for these changes. However, the work of social workers and social reformers was also important. But the inspiration and positive atmosphere for these reforms was undoubtedly provided by the British. The British regime brought a wave of New thoughts. They also introduced physical reforms and established the connection of Indians with the developed world. They gave a new insight to Indian people. Though Indian society had to face adverse impact of regime, it on the other hand also brought the society on threshold of new change. Along with modern changes, the government also gave impetus to social changes. During the regime of the Governor General Lord William Bentinck, the sati custom was legally abolished.

5.2 Background to Intellectual Awakening :-

The impact of the British regime on India was altogether different from the previous regimes India had undergone. The foreigners defeated India several times and some of them also governed the country. But even at such crucial backdrop, the confidence of Indian people was indomitable. Its reason the conviction that their culture was supreme compared to other culture. The foreigners who come to India, in later years settled down here with complete unanimity with Indian values and culture. But the British were different. Europe experienced renaissance and new intellectualism in eighteenth century. A new era of scientific temperament was started. The new intellectualism and research attitude gave a new inspiration to the western societies. The upsurge in science and technology cast its influence on diverse spheres of life such as polity, economics, religions, society culture and military. Indian society had grown static and almost decayed. It was still locked in medieval mindset. The British regime proved a dawn of new age. It cast its undeniable impact of modernism, administration and values on overall social life of India. It altogether changed the picture of the society.

The newly educated youths were under influence of intellectualism, scientific temperament and humanism. Indian leaders attempted to make reforms in Hindu religion with these new thought and values and they attempted to put aside superstitions and idolatry.
The thought of secularism came through the continuous and prolonged mental cogitation. The religion was intellectually adjudged. The intellectually unacceptable portions were cordoned off. At least such kind of efforts was made to eradicate such portion. At least some reasons should be provided for superficially meaningless rules and custom. The untouchability which was the integral part of Hinduism was cast off. Onion, garlic, tomato which was held uneatable was not accepted in their diet. The ritualism also had been gradually on decline. The process of modernization, urbanization, railway and other scientific thinking propelled society to rethink on the age old rotten customs including untouchability.

The new thoughts had cast its comprehensive influence on Indian society. Along with new literature, ancient literature also came in print. It gave impetus to the revival.

5.3.1 Establishment of Brahmo Samaj:-

The foundation of the British regime was first led in Bengal. Therefore, emergence of modern thought captivated the attention of people in Bengal. During early years of the nineteenth century, the religious institutions in Berar had been perturbed with rotten customs and inhumane traditions. The insight of the learned was cobwebbed with the ritualism. Their thoughts and living was subjected to crude bigotry and insularities. It was held that following the inhumane ritual was the true religion. But with the arrival of the British era, a newly educated generation started taking review of the rotten religious practices prevalent in Bengal. The Bengali youths started their work to resurrect Hindu faith from the degenerated religious customs of idolatry, casteism and other rotten customs. Raja Rammohan Roy was the pioneer of these educated youths. In 1828, he founded Brahmo Samaj to propagate his new thoughts.\(^7\)

Raja Rammohan Roy initiated the religious reforms in the early years of the nineteenth century in India. Thus he was given title of Initiator of Modern India. He was the first leader of social and religious change and achieved a position of respect in Indian History. He worked to stop the society from its moral, social and religious downfall.

The major principles of the Brahmo Samaj were as follows:

1) The God is one and is formless. Therefore, the we should pray the formless god.
2) The God is father of us, therefore, the spirit of brotherhood should be there in society.
3) The inner nature of different religions is one. Therefore, there should be religious tolerance between different faiths.
4) Collective meditation should be used to worship the god.
5) Devotion should regard the world as divine.
6) Idolatry should not be practiced in any form.
7) Every individual should behave with ours thinking love, Service etc are the real meaning of religion.

Brahmo Samaj was the propagator of one God. It believed that all religions in World are based on a single tenet. After the death of Raja Rammohan Roy, Devendranath Tagore and Keshavchandra Sen looked after the work of Brahmo Samaj.

The principles of Brahmo Samaj were popular due to the efforts of Raja Rammohan Roy, Devendranath Tagore, Keshavchandra Sen and other leaders. Different branches of the Samaj were established throughout in Bengal. The teaching of the Samaj started reaching to the nook and corner of the country. Keshavchandra Sen visited Mumbai in 1864. He had received a great gift of oratory. His new thoughts, innovative oratory and philosophy had its impact on the educated sections of the society. Taking inspiration from Brahmo Samaj, some educated youths in Maharashtra founded Prathana Samaj.

The enthusiastic workers received inspiration from Brahmo Samaj to put check to the growing conversion of people to Christianity. The Samaj was propagated in Vidarbha and Berar region in 1867. The leaders of Mahar community began to take orders of Brahmo Samaj. Thus they put themselves against the effort of conversion. Due to it, the conversions of Mahar community into Christianity were curtailed down.

Brahmo Samaj was the first institution which had worked to bring religious reforms. The main intention behind the foundation of Brahmo Samaj was to understand the fundamentals of Hinduism, to wash the dust set on its basic principles by eradicating superstitions. Its main thrust was to give intellectual foundations to the religious principles and utilize them for creation of new society. The denial of idolatry and the principle of one god were given emphasis. During the life time of Raja Rammohan Roy, the work of Brahmo Samaj was taken on war footing. But after 10 years of death of Raja Rammohan Roy, its work slowed down. The membership was also declined. On such backdrop, Devendranatha Tagore brought a new lease of life into the Brahmo Samaj. He became a member in 1843. He ascertained the working methodology of the samaj. Under his guidance, the work of Brahmo Samaj was limited to religious reforms. But after Keshavchandra Sen took membership, the Samaj received a new direction. He was a well cultured and had a broad outlook of the universal religion. Along with his movement of religious
revival, he also relentlessly worked to eradicate child marriage, emphasis on women education and widow remarriage.

5.1.2 Establishment of Prathana Samaj:-

The wave of socio-religious reforms initiated by Raja Rammohan Roy in Bengal reached to Mumbai Presidency. The cogitation on Mumbai and the rest of Maharashtra also followed the trail of Bengal. Similarly, emergence of British rule of Berar and consequent spread of English education also had their impact on the socio-religious reforms in Berar.

Like Bengal, the socio-religious reforms were launched in Mumbai Presidency in the first half of the nineteenth century. After the end of power of Maratha power in 1818, the social leadership attempted to guide the society which was immersed in doldrums. Bal Shastri Jambhekar, Dadoba Pandurang Takhadkar, DrAtmaram Pandurang, Lokhitvadai (Gopal Hari Deshmukh), Mahatama Jyotiba Fule etc were on forefront in initiating thorough social reforms.

Elphinstone College the first seat of higher education in Mumbai Presidency was established in 1827. The new generation from the college had broader views. They started studying social condition from a critical point of view. They found modern values more pertaining with the changing times. They were also fed up with the meaningless customs in Indian society. However, a proper balance between the traditions and modernity was maintained as the social workers in Maharashtra had a more assimilative point of view. They wanted to cut aside the social evils and ills incurred in the social set up by instilling new modern values. Maharashtra had a history of social reforms even in 18th century. A silent movement was at work for absolving the convert to other faiths back into Hindu faith. It also worked against the tendency of abduction of girls for trade, prohibition on liquor etc. But since the arrival of the British regime a sense of inferiority prevailed in Indian society. Acharya Balshastri Jambhekar started the work of awakening Indians to their true potentiality through his weekly “Darpan”. He published his historic ‘Shatpatre’ through weekly Prabhakar run by his contemporary Bhau Mahajan. He threw light on the backwardness of the society compared to other societies in the world. He asserted the need of change for the development of the country.

The active work of social reforms began in 1857. Paramhansa Sabha was the first to bring religious reforms. It was founded by Dadaba Pandurang Prabhuti in 1849. The thoughts of the Paramhansa Sabha had a strong influence of Christianity. Though members of the Samaj had convictions on its teaching, they did not have courage to face the social wrath. Therefore, they
continued their work secretly. When its work came fore, large number of its members left the society.

Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadkar’s Paramhansa Sabha was closed down in 1860 in fear of public anger. However there was a class of people having affinity which failed the need of reforms to eradicate rotten customs and traditions. Those thinkers received inspiration from the lecture of Keshavchandra Sen, a senior thinker of Brahmo Samaj, delivered at Mumbai in 1114. They established Prarthana Samaj in 1867.\(^\text{11}\)

Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadkar and his brother Dr. Aatmaram Pandurang took initiative in establishing Prarthana Samaj. Dr. Bhandarkar, Justice Ranade, Chandawarkar, Waman Aabaji Modak were the members. The leaders of Prarthana Samaj had accepted the principles of Paramhansa Sabha. Similarly it accepted the principles of Brahmo samaj as well. Those are given below:

1. God is one and formless. He is the originator of the world.
2. Truth, moral behaviour and devotion are the ways of the devotion of God.
3. Prayer is the purest form of devotion to God. It does not seek mundane pleasures. The prayer aims at self-improvement.
4. Idolatry is a raw way of the devotion to God. It is insulting to the God and self derogatory for men. Similarly the concept of incarnation is wrong.
5. All men are children of the God. They should come together with a fellow feeling and worship the God.

Though, Prarthana Samaj established on the principles of Brahmo Samaj, it opposed the attitude of separation from Hinduism. Though the Samaj opposed idolatry, incarnation and Advaitism, it was proud of Hinduism. They approved the path of devotion shown by saints in Maharashtra. Abhangas of Saint Tukaram were sung at the meetings of Prarthana Samaj.

Prarthana Samaj propagated religious reforms in educated sections of society to some extent. It actually contributed a lot for the spread of education. The Prarthana Samaj ran night schools for the labourers. They also established orphanages. Maharshi Vitthalramji Shinde, a worker of Prarthana Samaj established the Depressed Class Mission. It greatly contributed in the upliftment of the untouchables. Similarly it also works in the areas of Social Reforms.\(^\text{12}\)

Brahmo Samaj was established under the leadership Raja Rammohan Roy in Bengal. Swami Dayanand established Arya Samaj in Punjab. In Maharashtra, especially in Mumbai
Brahmo Samaj’s version in the form of Prarthana Samaj was emerge. A separate class of educated youth emerged from the middle class. Its impact was seen at Mumbai presidency, Berar and Vidarbha.

5.1.3 The impact of Brahmo Samaj and Prarthana and Arya Samaj on Berar:-

In the first half of the nineteenth century, a new life oriented attitude was developed with the new Education and consequent revolution thought. Intellectualism, Humanism, rationalism these modern outlook were given shape. Some of the educated intellectuals started inspecting the prevalent social customs, traditions as against the new examples of the developed world. They understood the intolerable injustice, atrocities and discrimination prevailed in the society. They started taking steps to eradicate the prevalent social evils. Through their initiation an age of social reforms was set in India.

Though reforms in India was started from religion, the final objective of the religious reforms was social empowerment. The social reforms were started with religious reforms as the religion was then the fundamental basis of life. Different inhuman customs like Sati, child marriage, polygamy, child-adult marriage, girl infanticide, atrocities and injustice meted out to widows, casteism, untouchability etc., were originated through religion. The religion mutely supported these inhuman customs. Therefore it was required to bring the real tenets of religion to the people. Similarly, the social workers understood that the overgrown importance on ritualism, superstitions, exploitation through the religious heads, idolatry, paganism should be eradicated as these were falsely propagated as religion to the uneducated people. They understood that unless these superstitions were removed, the foreground for the development of the society could not be prepared. Thus the awakening was not restricted merely to religion. It was inclusive and comprehensive kind. Taking inspiration from the ideology of Brahmo Samaj, the educated youths in Maharashtra started Prathana Samaj. Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj and Prathna Samaj worked to give impetus to religious reforms in Maharashtra. But the direction of Arya Samaj was altogether different from Brahmo Samaj. Arya Samaj asserted the greatness of the ancient Indian culture and Vedic Varna system and made people aware of the greatness of Indian culture. It boosted the a sense of pride among Hindu and created optimism. It boosted the spirit of nationalism as it laid stress on religion and the motherland.

Thus, a cogitation was started to empower the nationalistic movement. Intellectual reforms were started in Berar. Following the suit of Bengal and rest of Maharashtra, the youths
in Berar also began to work to form social forums for social reforms. They began to understand the problems in Berar. English regime brought a thorough change and put the country on threshold of Modern age. They gradually became aware of the need of social reforms.

### 5.2 Varhad Sarvajanik Sabha, Amravati (1886):

The political movement in India came to standstill after the British forces ruthlessly curbed down the revolt of 1857. During the same period, the movement of social awakening started in Berar. The social reforms had undeniable influences of the western culture. The social reforms were initiated by starting education of girls. But the leaderships during the initial era had been inclined to fight for the problems of farmers and political rights. But this thought did not get any foundation till the dawn of 1870. During the same time, Bombay Association was established at Mumbai and British Indian Association at Kolkata to ensure the political reforms. On April 2, 1870, ‘Pune Sarvajanik Sabha’ was established by Ganesh Wasudeo Joshi, who later came to known as ‘Sarvajanik Kaka’. Its main work was to remove mishandling of Parvati Estate at Pune. The organization took many pro people works. Following the suit, leadership in Berar began to felt necessity of having such organization in Berar to seek solution to social problems in Berar. But it took years to form such an organization. Meanwhile, National Congress was formed in 1885. Following social movement, political activities were also gradually gaining momentum. The leaderships in Berar were inclined to contribute in the national cause. A meeting of leaders in Berar was called at Amravati on Dec 27, 1886. Social leaderships from different parts of Berar gathered for the meeting. With retrospect of the bygone era, Warhad Sarvajanik Sabha was formed to seek solutions to the problems faced by people in Berar. Deorao Digambar Wakil from Akola was selected the first president of the society while Rangnath Narisngh Mudholkar and Dadasaheb Karandikar of Amravati were selected as the secretaries.

Since the inception of the British regime in Berar, Warhad Sarvajanik Sabha was the first organization working for the benefit of people in Berar. The society was started to strive for socio-political reforms in Berar.

The general intelligentsia in Berar was still ignorant of either its political future or social and economic upliftment. Intellectual Berar was dead. Raobahadur Mudholkar put life into standstill psyche of Vidarbha.
The main intention of the society was to create awareness about the prevailed political conditions and also to make aware them of their rights and duties towards the country. Unless people became aware of their political and social rights, the society could hardly achieve or secure its development. Mudholkar understood that the leadership in backward and enslaved country has to create awareness in society about political and social rights and duties. Mudholkar started his social and political campaign which created ground for future socio-political reforms in Vidarbha.

The impact of Varhad Sarvajanik Sabha held on the Varhad region. It provided a platform for new thoughts. Other districts in Berar also reiterated the forum to create foreground for new movements. Representatives from Vidarbha and Berar attended Mumbai convention of Congress held in 1889. They received authorized representation. Different resolutions were passed to increase their political rights.

5.3 Varshotsav and Lecture Series, Akola, 1890:-

The thinkers at Akola decided to start Varshostav lecture series in 1887. It was organized on the backdrop of Vasant Lecture Series at Pune. Lectures were delivered on different topics at Akola. Interactions also took place. Mahajani delivered lectures on diverse topics such as “rural structures” (1880), “French Nationals Victory in India and their progress” (1892), “Laws of Population rise and their examples in Europe and India” (1894). “A retrospect of Agriculture in Vidarbha during last 11 years” (1895). “Languages in India” (1905) etc.

During the lecture series Dadasaheb Khaperde delivered lectures on “Fundamental Principles”, “Pundit and Santram”, “Animal Food(1888)”. Balkrushna Govind Bodhankar delivered lecture on “Old Theories and New Research”, Moropant Balkrushna Paranjape “Industry and Fate (1905)”, Moro Vishwanath Joshi on “Social Leadership”, Dr. Vasudev Bhat “European Middle-Class Women”. The lectures were held on such diverse subjects.17 Mahajani was the president of the lecture series. He was not president only for name sake. He was actively involved in the task. They invited orators from Pune, sometimes they had to collect audience as well. Lecture series was not enough for public awareness and social reforms. Active efforts by many were required in such a great task. Public platform was required to make inviting participation from people. It was necessary to give public approval. However it was not to be happened by chance or a long period of time. Actual efforts were needed and the lecture series was one such an effort.
5.3 Berar Samajik Sudharna Mandal, Akola (1890):

The main reformist people at Akola convened a meeting to discuss social problems under the guidance of Devrao Digambar at Akola on July 21st, 1887. On the occasion a grand crowd was assembled. The main intention behind the meeting was to inform people about the side effects of child marriage and also to oppose such evil practices. They urged people not to marry their children at a young age. Instead, they should marry their children after a certain age. In the meeting, it was decided that the marriage of girls should not be made below 8 years and boys below 14 years. Similarly, second marriage should not be made after 40 years. Making a draft of the resolution signatures of the audience were taken.  

The decisions at the meeting were accurately drafted so as to follow the rules. Similarly, it was decided by Devrao Dimgambar and other leaders that the regulations should be sent to Jagatguru Shankaracharya to receive his solemn dictum to give authority to the rules. Again a grand meeting of Sarvajanik Sudharna Mandal was organized at Rajeshwar temple on Feb 17, 1889. On the occasion the draft of earlier meeting about the marriage age was passed. It was also decided that dowry should not be taken. The meeting thought over girl’s education and passed a resolution about girl’s education.  

Since 1884, teachers’ council was held in Berar. It was a general meeting of teachers and education officers. Teachers from different parts of Berar used to come to attend the meeting. As the meeting was sponsored by the government, it received better representation. The teacher community and educated class used to come together for the meeting. They had the capacity to think and accept a new thought. They used to take this thought to the rural areas. Therefore, it was decided to organize meetings of Varhad Samajik Parishad soon after the teacher’s council on the following dates. On Nov. 28, 1890, Varhad Samajik Sudharna Mandal was formed at Akola. Rao Bahadur Jathar was selected unanimously as the president. In his presidential address, he said—“Religion is service to God, doing good deeds and behaving well, it is essential. Encouragement to evil thoughts is a bad thing. Efforts should be made to eradicate such customs.” Such straightforward thoughts of religious and social reforms were put. Vishnu Mahajane was the secretary of Varhad Samajik Sudharna Mandal. Other office bearers included L.K. Chiplunkar and D.V. Bhagwat. Pamphlets were released to propagate its message. One such pamphlet had a draft of social reforms. It had the following rules.  

1. I will not marry my daughter early as the age given below. (20, 19, 18, 17, 16, 15)
2. I will not marry my daughter early as the age given below. (8,10,11,12)
3. I will not keep distance of more than three years between I and my wife. I will not marry after 40 years of age.
4. I will make efforts to remove obstacles in mutual relationship among Deshastha, Koknastha and Karhade. I will take no objection on such marriages.
5. I will not take dowry for my son’s marriage or do not put any burden.
6. I will not spend more than half the annual income in my son’s marriage.
7. I will not spend more than a year’s income on my daughter’s marriage.
8. I will give education to my son and wife as far as possible.
9. I will not take drinks.\textsuperscript{21}

Long discussions were held on these rules. The members were made by signing at least one of the rules and he should be taken as the complete member of the society.

The annual meeting of Varhad Sarvajanik Parishad was held at Amravati in 1895. It was chaired by Vishnu Moreshwar Mahajani. It sent 45 elected members from Berar to the Rashtriya Samajik Parishad (National Social Congress).\textsuperscript{22}

Dhondo Keshav Karve was arrived from Pune for the meeting.\textsuperscript{23} The meeting took review of the social reforms held at different places in Berar and rest of Maharashtra. During the meeting appeal was made to help the drought affected people.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, efforts were made for social reforms at Amravati as well. After the convention of National Congress in 1897 at Amravati, National Social Congress was also held. It was the ninth special meet. Similarly it had also political objective along with its social agenda. Waman Mahadeo Kolhatkar was the president of the National Social Congress. The meeting passed total 14 resolutions. These included women’s education, protest of consumption of addictive substances, charity, worship places, child marriage, marriage with more age gap, conjugal relations in different sub castes, widow marriages, good conduct, upliftment of inferior castes, unnecessary expenses on religious ceremonies, marriage with gap of more than 16 years should be made an offence etc. These issues pointed out the direction on marriages as well as it hinted at social progress of denies sections of the society. It revealed its point of view stressing social progress and urgency in eradicating evil social customs. The political leaders also started taking initiatives in social reforms in the first decade of the twentieth century. The convention of the Regional Social
Congress held at Amravati was attended by women in 1901. Wenubai Joshi and Vithabai Dande wrote essay on “women’s education” and Annapurnabai Gokhale and Indirabai Purchure wrote articles on “Use of idle time” and “humane service”.

The political atmosphere during this time had rapid changes. The importance was given to political issues. The questions which earlier raised dust in the society were lagged behind. People were influenced with the thought that political freedom as the only solution to all problems. The conflict between the political leaders and the social leaders was gradually eroded.

The social meeting was held at Native Library at Akola on Dc 13, 1903. People at Akola had moved outside the town as there was epidemic of plague prevailed in Berar. The meeting had a few men. Some of the representatives from Murtizapur and Yavatmal had attended the meeting. 60 men and 15 women attended the meeting. Mahajani, who presided the meeting put following thought through his address- We should have fellow feeling and a broad outlook about different religions and castes as it is the basic principle of the social change. Thus, the social congress befittingly had term National as an adjective. Individuals from every religions and castes should make efforts in any direction as it has a single objective. Therefore they should be a sense of self respect about the social reforms. However, religious reforms were omitted from general reforms as India has different religions as the thought on these intricate issues is not possible at this forum. However, it does not say against such efforts. The accusations of the society are altogether misplaced as it could not advocate overthrowing all religious rules. Sir Moropant Joshi also guided the meeting. He said that the reforms are necessary in all direction. They should not be one centric. He said that complete efforts of social reformers are to achieve national interest and should not be misunderstood as against the national interest, he urged. Thus, a picture of social reforms gradually started seen in every village. These meeting attempted to reconcile the spirit of nationalism and self imposed restrictions and the social reforms. It decided that agenda of making a new thoughtful and well cultured generation of men and women. A revolution of thought started in Berar through such discussions on reforms. It also helped in bridging the gap between the thought and action of these reformers. It put emphasis on action and as such activities of the Samajik Sudharana Mandal was appreciated by general people.
Varhad Samajik Sudharana Mandal had organized almost every year meeting and convention. It gave an opportunity from people in Berar to come on one platform and interact with one another. It created public awareness. It propagated the reforms intellectually.

Intellectual awakening was started by Varhad Samajik Sudharna Mandal in Berar. It availed a chance for people to adjudge between the public good and the social evils. It helped them to search a path of social progress. It started social awakening. It provided a platform for social thought. It created awareness about the prevalent social problems. They understood the need of social and as well as political initiative to tackle the varied social problems in society. They began to understand that problems could not be eradicated merely by creating social awareness. They understood the importance of political awakening in making social reforms possible in society. They understood that social problems could be solved only with political awakening.

5.4 The 13th convention of All India National Congress (1897):-

All India National Congress was established in 1885. It gave impetus to political awareness among people. The Congress launched country wide movements to bring political reforms.

R B Mudholkar and his associated attended the Convention of the National Congress held at Allahabad in 1886. They started taking active participation in the activities of the National Congress. He earned the reputation of best orator on the economical and political resolutions passed at the convention of the Congress. The names of R B Mudholkar and Sir Moropant were included in the Congress delegation led by Surendranath Banerji to England in 1890. Its main thrust was to support the amendments in Indian Legislative Council in England.

The delegation included Allan Hume, Sir Firoz Shah Mehta, Madan Mohan Ghosh, W C Banerji, Shariffuddin, Adley Norton, R N Mudholkar and Surendranath Banerjee. Along with supporting the reforms in Indian Legislative Council, he also informed the British about the socio-political conditions prevailed in India. Mudholkar and Moropant Joshi delivered many lectures and attempted to remove misconception and ignorance of British people about India and Indian people. The credit of little opposition to the reforms bill brought into the British Parliament by Lord Cross went to some extent to the efforts of creating conducive atmosphere about India by Mudholkar and his colleagues.
The political awakening was started in Berar with the efforts of Mudholkar, Dadasheb Khaprde, Deorao Digambar. These members used to attend the National Conventions of Congress as the representatives of National Congress. Mudholkar put his thoughts demanding an inquiry on the atrocities committed by police at the Allahabad convention of the National Congress. He also put his suggestion in the Congress Convention held at Kolkata in 1890. The political awareness was created in Berar through National Congress. R B Mudholkar (Amravati) and Deorao Digambar (Akola) were included in the welcome committee of All India National Congress Convention held in 1891. People in Berar came to discern the policies of the government. They came to understand their rights. Through a resolution at the Congress convention held at Prayag, Dadasaheb Khaprde demanded establishment of Military Colleges for Indian people and right to form battalions to Hindi people. The resolution came to discussion and passed with overall consensus. Impetus was given to political demands. The leadership in Berar was enthusiastic in demanding political rights through constitutional way. Its impact was clearly visible.

A grand public meeting was held at Akola to form Berar Regional Congress on Nov 2, 1894. 10,000 people attended the public meeting. They had come from different villages in Berar. Deorao Digambar was the convener. Dadasaheb Khaprde and Mudholkar were chiefly present on the occasion. Different resolutions demanding agricultural bank for farmers, agriculture education, Civil Service Examination in India, revenue and other resolutions were passed in the convention. It revealed the political awareness in Berar. It was generated due to the relentless efforts of the leadership in Berar. Narhar Shivram Paranjape of Yavatmal used to create awareness. The local bodies at the district, tehsil and Pargana were established to administer the areas and also to seek the demands of the people. They used to send the resolutions passed at the local bodies to the government. It thus sent ripples on political scenario in Berar. People in rural areas started attending public meetings and listening the speeches of the political leaders. They began to understand how to seek their demands from the government. The political awareness created by Paranjape was really praiseworthy.

Dadasaheb Khaprde, Mudholkar, Sir Moropant Joshi were the enthusiastic leaders at Amravati. They used to put the public problems to the government and worked to solve their problems. But neither the government nor the All India Congress Committee heed the demands of the region. Therefore, they decided to take the convention of the National Congress in
Amravati with optimism that all members of the Congress came to understand the problems in Berar and helped to solve those problems.

5.4.1 Impediments in the 13th Annual Convention of the National Congress:-

Permission to organize the 13th Annual convention of National Congress at Amravati was sought to the deputy Commissioner at Amravati. Deputy Commissioner Bullock wrote a letter and replied Mudholkar that the permission of Nizam was necessary to conduct the convention. In view of plague epidemic he asked Mudholkar not to conduct the convention at Amravati. Meanwhile, rumour was spread that divisional commissioner Bullock requested Hyderabad Resident to ban Congress. Therefore, Dadasaheb Mudholkar and Dada Joshi went to Nagpur Commissioner. While on their route to Nagpur, doctors were checking each passenger train. When they reached Horsebook, he informed them he would inform them about precautions to be taken during prevalence of epidemic of plague.

Again the second remour prevailed that the epidemic of plague would aggravate due to people coming from diverse areas. Some of the people were inclined to request the commissioner to cancel the convention. Joshi informed Dadasaheb Mudholkar about the matters. He then took Dr Khot and cleared the air of misconceptions of the aggravation of epidemics. Captain Horsebook declined to organize the convention at Amravati. He however, took out government orders asking to remain conscious of prevalence of epidemic. Series of efforts were made to impede the convention. But overcoming these impediments, leadership at Amravati decided to organize the convention on grand level. On Dec 21, Hume, the founder of the Congress appealed through an open letter to the congress workers to fearlessly attend the Convention organized at Amravati. The air of uncertainty about the proposed convention was cleared. The government had opened up quarantine camps at different places. The government used to quarantine the suspect into such camps. These camps were put near Malkapur on Badnera-Bhusawal rail route. To avoid pseudo quarantine of Congress workers coming from Bhusawal railway route, Dada Khaprade sent Dada Jog.

Mr Banerjee was also quarantine on suspicion of plague at Malkapur. He telegrammed to Dadasaheb Khaprade. He met the Commissioner and requested him to orders through telegram to release Banerjee and other Congress workers. But later Dadasaheb Mudholkar and Moropant Joshi went to Malkapur. Gokhale, N C Kelkar, Banerjee were captivated at the camp. They made their inquiry and took them to the convention. The officers of the quarantine camp assured them
that he would not restrict Sir Sankar Nayar, the president of National Convention who was coming in a separate coach. Thus, overcoming different problems, the convention neared the date of its organization. As per scheduled Sir Shankaran Nayar, the president of Convention came in a separate coach. He was given a warm welcome at Badnera railway station.  

5.4.2 13th Convention of National Congress at Amravati, 1897:-

On backdrop of perturbed socio-political scenario, 13th convention of National Congress was a great event. The country was under severe drought. The Southern India including Berar had disastrous epidemics of plague. Bengal had faced severe earthquake and hurricane. All such backdrop the murder of Rand and Aston at the night of jubilee celebration of the Queen at Pune, consequent police investigation and nabbing of Bandhu brothers and arrest of Lokmanya Tilak accusing him of rebellion and his punishment, the convention chaired by Sir Shakaran Nair on 27,28,29 December 1897 was important in many respect.

Khaparde was the chief initiator and he was made the convener of the event. Mudholkar was selected as the General Secretary. Karandikar executed the responsibility of the treasurer. The convention was held in the ground in front of the bungalow of Sir Moropant Joshi. The British government had been exploiting India. 19th century witnessed great droughts. British government ignored the relief measures during the epidemics of plague. They continued their oppressive misrule. The act of 1892 disappointed even the Moderate leaders. The attitude of British of looking towards Indians was contemptuous. They thought Indians as barbarous. Due to such attitude the soft corner for British erode away. The congress leadership gradually inclined towards extremist ideology. They came closer to the nationalistic thoughts of the national trinity represented by Lal Bal and Pal. On this backdrop the extremists’ ideology had its emergence in the convention. Though there was no clear-cut distinction between the Moderates and the Extremists; even these terms were not applied. It was fairly understood that the convener was the follower of the ideology of Lokmanya Tilak. He expressed his views fearlessly that the government had committed injustice with Tilak who was his staunch supporter. He was clear in his point of view. Thus the strong confidence of leadership in Berar had its definite impact on the work of National Congress.

The convention was decided call at Amravati. Annasaheb alias Moropant Joshi immediately called a meeting for organizing the historic event. Annasaheb was entrusted the task of raising funds. He asked the Congress leaders and notable citizens to contribute. Annasaheb
suggested to Pralhadpant Jog to firstly contribute as he was senior most advocate. But he suggested Annasaheb to contribute his share first. Moropant contributed Rs 1500. And in the first meeting, the fund of Rs 10,000 was raised at the first meeting.\footnote{33}

As the convention was finalized at Amravati, all Congress members launched preparation. The welcome committee was formed and Dadasaheb Khaparde was appointed as its president. But during the preparation of the event, epidemic of plague immersed. The crises ridden national affairs and prevalence of plague at Amravati put the proposed convention in the state of uncertainty. But the leadership Jog, Pant and others continued their undeterred efforts to organize the National Convention.\footnote{34} Funds were collected from throughout the Berar. The complete preparation including boarding facilities of the Congress representatives and preparations for the venue was started. Volunteers took pains in organizing the event. During the convention Dadasaheb Khaparde insisted putting the photograph of Lokmanya Tilak at the main venue. The Congress leaders, however, were not agreeing to put the photograph of Tilak as he was charged of sedition. They feared that government would think that Congress was supportive of anti-government factors. The reply of Khaparde was important. He said that what was the use of Congress had it not allowed the photograph of the National leader who sacrificed his life?\footnote{35}

The dispute was not resolved. It reached to the President. The President held a small meeting. Sankaran Nair, Congress President, Surendranath Banerji, W.C. Banerji, Dadasaheb Khaparde, Dadasaheb Mudholkar, Moropant Joshi etc. were present on the occasion. Surendranath Banerji sorted out a solution. He said that he would mention a contribution of Tilak. Dadasaheb approved the suggestion as he liked it and the dispute was resolved.\footnote{36} The Congress representatives from Madras Presidency, Mumbai, Central Province, Bengal and Punjab had attended the convention. Justice Ranade, W.C. Banerji, Surendranath Banerji, Bipinchandra Pal, Tagore, Sir Dinshah Wachha, Ananda Charlu, Ghoshal, Pundit Madanmohan Malviya, Gopalkrishna Gokhale, Subramanyam Iyer, Babu Vaikunthanath Sen; Jai C Ram, Pundit Shyam Narayan, Virendranath Dutta, Parthasarthi Naidu from Lahore; Keshavrao Joshi from Nagpur; Barister Adam from Madras, Sadashivrao Bhagvat, Narsimha Chintamani Kelkar, Rajandekar from Akola, Umeshchandra Banerji, Bion Narayan Khar, Ambika Charan Mujumdar, Govindrao Kane, Pandurang Govind Vakil, Shivratan Singh, Gulam Ahmad, Ramjas Naidu, Prof. Sathe, Bhupendranath Bora, Subramanyam Iyer, Mr. Setalwad, etc. leaders attended the convention. The grand pandol was set up near Camp Road in the yard of Moropand Joshi’s
bungalow. The King’s photograph was put on the stage. When the procession reached to the venue it was crowded with the representatives, delegates and spectators. Women were also largely present. The convention was started with the welcome speech of the convention’s convener Dadasaheb Khaperde. Different resolutions were tabled during the convention.

The continuous droughts in the last decade of the nineteenth century threw the socio-economical affairs out of gear. 1897 witnessed a severe drought. But the British Government did take no ameliorative step. Instead, the British officers impeded the initiative of Congress workers who wished to help them. On this backdrop, Prof Achyut Sitaram Sathe tabled resolution asserting Government’s steps to overcome the ill effects of the drought. The convention also passed the second resolution seeking government to rescind the post of Indian Minister. Again, the convention expressed the wrath of the country on the government policy on Plague Epidemic. The complained was made on the Jungle Laws. A resolution was put on agriculture tax. The problems of Berar were put before the National Congress leadership.

Khaprde put his vehement views on drought and prevailed epidemic of plague. Shankaran Narayan was the president of the Congress Convention. Though he put moderate language of a loyalist, he brought every mistake of the government to its notice.

Keshrao Joshi expressed his resentment that the Government did not give appointment to Indians despite their required qualification. He brought to the notice of the Congress worker that there were 1854 posts of salary of Rs 10,000, but only a single Indian was appointed on the post.

Speaking on a resolution, Vishnu Bhagwat resented against the increased agriculture tax. He said that Congress would not approve hike in agriculture tax. He said that scourge their backs but did not take away their morsel from their hands.

The Congress convention organized to discuss the problems in Berar, were largely put aside during the convention. The leadership of the region failed to bring fore the plight of people in Berar. It could not satisfy the leadership like Khaprde. The Congress president did not utter a single word about the prolonged crises in Berar. The following Conventions though passed resolutions for Berar, but the region was not given any attention. The people in Berar became aware of the recurrent problems in Berar. After the convention, people started voicing their problems. The government did not take any step to either check the growth of plague in rural areas or to ameliorate the problems in drought affected regions. The government did not take
steps to help the people. These problems were effectively put during the convention. The government’s attitude of racism was on increase. The government used to appoint Indians at lower salaries. The dual working style was gradually appearing before the public.

5.4.3 The impact of the 13th Convention of National Congress:-

The 13th Convention of National Congress had a lasting impact in awakening the flames of Nationalism and patriotism in Berar. Its direct impact was seen in rise of popularity of Dadasaheb Khaparde. The British officers were highly apprehensive about Khaprde. They had bestowed titles of Sir to Moropant Joshi and Raobahadur to Mudholkar, who were moderates but no title was conferred on Dadasaheb Khaprde. However, the people in Varhad gave him the title of Naob of Berar. It revealed the affection he had of people in Berar and influence of his state forwardness and courage.

The spirit of extremist of Lokmanya Tilak was pullulated in Berar. Lokmanya Tilak gave an ardour of public festival to Ganesh Ustav. It started in Amravati in 1893. Dr Y K Deshpande, a noted historian wrote his memories at A V School. He had pointed out that they had received the cultural heritage since their childhood. Along with Ganeshotsav celebration, Shiv Jayanti Celebration was also started in Berar by Amravati Congress unit. The soil of Berar was productive of the extremism and the impact was seen in future years of the freedom struggle. After the Congress convention both the celebration were celebrated on a grand basis giving an effective medium for spreading political awareness.

Dadasheb Khaprde had organized an Oratory programme “Bal Vakrutojjak Sabha” for students to instill the spirit of nationalism. The forum was utilized to deliver the lectures on political scenarios. Another impact of the Congress Convention was that it created a tradition of great orators in Berar.

1) Veer Waman Joshi (Amravati)
2) Loknayak Bapuji Ane (Yavatmal)
3) Shamrao Dada Deshpande (Yavatmal)
4) Pundit Pannlalji Vyas (Khamgaon Distt Buldana).

These leaders’ speeches were influential. They could draw a mob to listen their lectures. Another impact of the convention was that his work became nation wide. The ties of Dadasaheb Khaprde and Lokmanya Tilak became strong. Tilak in one of his letters said that he could not do anything without leaders like him.41
In the National Convention of the Congress, Khaprde also held a meeting of Patil and Patwari. They put their problems and plights caused due to the atrocities of the government officers. The speakers criticized the officers in strong words. Thus the convention hit hard the government. As Dadasaheb Khaprde himself was participated in the meeting, the government took out all his posts.

Thus the convention cast a comprehensive impact on Berar. It also boosted the emergence of the reform movement in Berar. The people here became aware of the national freedom struggle and the leadership in Berar shined on a national platforms.

The next convention of the Congress was held in Lucknow in 1889. The convention took note of the different problems in Berar. A special resolution on Berar was passed in the convention. The resolution included a demand that all rules and Acts in Berar should be drafted by the council of the Viceroy. A status was approved for the Berar. These demands were included in the resolution. Khaprde, Moropant Joshi and Digambar Wakil were included in the All India Congress Committee. Lokmanya Tilak celebrated public Shiv Jayanti Festival at Pune in 1899 and granted the presidency. Dadasaheb Khaprde reached top of popularity. Muslims appointed him president of their education institutions. R. B. Mudholkar was included in delegation of Sir Firoz Shah Mehta during Lahor Convention in 1900.

Overcoming the different obstacles, Dadasaheb Khaprde and Rangnath Pant Jog successfully organized the National Convention of the Congress. More than expectation the convention was successful. The delegates came from different part of the country thanked the people of Amravati for their hospitality.

Samajik Sudharna Mandal, a social organization started its intellectual pursuit on the social problems. The social evils Casteism, child marriage, problems of widows, superstitions and untouchability etc were deep rooted in the society. The handful educated people had awareness about these evils. It was not enough and the need was gradually felt to spread the awakening. They felt the need of creating awareness about the rotten social customs. The intellectual awakening was started in Berar. The work of awareness was taken up on anvil.

The social awakening gave impetus to political reforms. The national convention of the Congress held at Amravati threw light on political problems. The public began to understand the real nature of the British Government. Awareness was created to solve the political problems in
Berar. During British regime, education gave impetus to movement of intellectual and social reforms in Berar. It was only due to education, social reforms were made possible in Berar.

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