CHAPTER 7
SOCIAL MOBILITY IN BERAR

Berar was basically an agriculture province with barely presence of industry. People at large were uneducated, religious minded. They were in morally better conditions. They were honest, religious and compassionate.

The nature of the society did not remain constant as many changes took place in Berar. Despite its traditional mindset, the society in Berar had seen series of freedom struggles and Dalit movement. The region took part in the national level campaign and helped reaching the message to rural level. Mahatma Gandhi toured Berar as its part of untouchability eradication programme. It propelled the upper castes to work towards eradicating untouchability. Its impact was felt and many public meetings and conventions of the depressed sections of the society took place. Pre-Ambedkarite Dalit movement was also received impetus.

In initial phase, local Dalit leadership with help of the upper caste leadership, attempted to give push to the Dalit Movement in Berar. But it lacked momentum. Dalit leadership on their own immersed and worked in social, religious, economical and political fields. It was altogether a notable movement. Later in the leadership of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar the movement picked up real momentum. These movements perturbed the social set up in Berar.

7.1 Social set-up in Berar :-

Like other parts of India, the society in Berar was depended on agriculture as its main occupation. The society had supremacy of Patil, Pande, Deshmukh, Deshpande. The society at large was uneducated, ignorant and superstitious. The important person in rural set up was Patil.\(^1\) He was government executive. Watandar and Aasami were also other two important positions in rural set up. Other than Watandars, the rich farmers were called as Aasami. They were also termed as Bichayati.\(^2\)

*Pandebuwa* or *Diwanji* had next position in social hierarchy. They were the legal advisors at the village. *Mahar* community was as uneducated as the community of *Kunbi*, but the community was more vocal and intelligent due to close association with the government. *Mahar* used to work for agriculture and his other private work for which he was paid in form of food
grains, usually called as _Baluta_. He used to get cash salaries for his government work which was called as _Vatan_.

The agriculture set up in Berar included farmers, money lenders, Jamindar, traders, artisans, farm workers, Patil, Kulkarni and Deshmukh. Village usually had one or two houses of Brahmins. But it used to differ as some villages had more houses of Brahmins. The work of Kulkarni (accountant) was traditionally descendent to a Brahmin family. Beside Kulkarni, Joshi, another Brahmin who used to do religious duties in villages like performing rituals, and citing Muhurt by looking into Panchag. It was traditional work of Brahmin to do religious duties and teach people on religious matters. But they were well versed in reading and writing, they also received the works clerks. Thus, rural set up had diverse occupations. Later British looked into it and brought the number of Balutedar to 12.³

It is seen that village Carpenter had the first place in 12 Balutedar in rural set up. They had to prepare wooden agriculture tools and implement required to farmers. Like carpenters, ironsmiths and potters had also important place. Ironsmiths used to provide required agriculture tools to farmers while cobbler used to provide chapels, water cans and other things made from tanned leather. Potters had the work for supplying pots made up of clay. Barber (Navhi) and cloth washers (Parit) had also stick to their ancestral professions. Mahar community had the work of protecting the villages. As they used to protect the village boundaries they were termed as Weskar. Mang, Guraw and Koli communities also served their ancestral task. Farmers had a close contact with all these communities. A social set up was established on ancestral professions, which was called as _Balutedari_. Each village had set up of 12 Balutedars and 12 Alutedars to earn the social livelihood. _Bara Balutedar_, as they were often termed as, included Chaugula, Mahar, Sutar (carpenter), Kumbhar (potter), Navhi (Barber), Lohar (Ironsmith), Parit, Bhat, Gurav, Mulani and Koli (Fisher) while _Bara Alutedars_ included Teli, Tamboli, Sali, Mali, (Gardener), Jangam, Thakar, Ghadshi, Taral, Gondhali, Sonar (Goldsmith), Dabri and Bhoi. Their number used to differ as place to place depending on the requirement of the villages.

_Balutedari_ was in a sense a complete set up of rural economy. Bara Balutedars and Bara Alutedars used to work to fulfill all requirements and needs of the village making it self sufficient. They used to get remuneration from their services in forms of food grains from farmers. _Balutedari_ system was the backbone of the rural set up and rural economy. Farmers women used to help in the task of agriculture. After the intrusion of Muslim rulers, the padadha
system was introduced in the society, which was earlier not there in Berar. The condition of Hindu women was better in comparison to the condition of Muslim women.

Rayatwari system was continued during the rule of Muslims in southern parts of India. Malgujar system was their between the subject and the ruler. There was often no Malgujar, Talukedar, Jamindar as such. Patil and Patwari used to collect taxes and provide the taxes to appointed Talukedar or Subhedars by taking out their own share. Each Pargana had Deshmukh and Deshpande as officers and as they were Watandars, they used to stick to the ancestral status. They used to monitor the complete process of the tax collection and had bestowed lands for the maintenance of their status. They retained their powers due to ancestral posts. Though during British regimes their authorities were taken off and paid mere annual grants, they used to retain their social status.

Malikabar revenue system was continued since a long era. Berar had salient era during Muslim rule. It helped to brought wider area under cultivation. Religion and traditions had a great imprint on society. Religion had greater influence on social life and intruded in each aspect of social and family lives. Thus each field of human activity had the dominance of men causing mental slavery to women. Ignorance, religious temperament and traditional mindset gave rise to acceptability to social ills like female infanticide, child marriage, Sati, marriage with elder grooms, polygamy etc. These social evils have made the lives of women depressed.

Urban areas in Berar had a social set up based on trade and industry with big traders, small traders, workers and labourers, a social set up was evolved in Urban areas.

7.2 British Regime and Caste system:-

During pre-British era, education was religious and professional in nature. The right of religious education was restricted alone for Brahmins. Other castes, especially lower castes were completely denied of the knowledge. The education for other people, the nature of education was of professional nature, restricted to acquiring professional expertise. The education was home based and students had not to attend the schools, but they had to prune their expertise at the home based ancestral profession or small industries. The education which is based on religion discriminated amidst castes and made the social divide on the basis of religious and social authorities. The social set up had rigid restrictions of castes. Every individual had to do profession as per his caste. The society had not given freedom to any other profession than
ancestral occupation. The restrictions of child marriage, polygamy, *parda* system, *Devdasi* etc were prevalent in the society.

The British initially had not interfered in the social set up of India, but they did comprehensive changes in administrative set up. Subha, Pargana and Mahal centric administrative setup was put aside and new district and tehsil set up was introduced. The Watandari system was abolished. The post of collector was introduced as the head of the district and Tehsildar and Fauzdar were introduced. The British earlier did not interfered with the rural set up. But they bring under law Mahar labourers and Jaglyia society and a certain secured wages were provided to them for their works.

Brahmin had special rights in society. They have right of teaching and learning. Therefore they received higher post in the government offices while the neglected sections had to face deplorable condition as they had no access to education. The condition of women and the Shudras were deplorable.

During British regime, scientific and democratic thought gradually reached to people through western education. The secular education system started by the British gave a jolt to the casteism.  

The new set up which decided the individual status of individual on education he had acquired initiated the gradual changes. As education was made open and accessible, the status inherited in the caste set up had left with little importance. People from depressed communities became ready to acquire social position based on their education and expertise. The British had required the staff to rule the country. They had accepted newly educated class into the secondary services. The new class of employees came from different strata started working on the same status. The reputed class people made their gradual reach to the government services. The spread of education and objectivity in attitude put aside the unscientific racial assumptions and caste discriminations. The caste system based on unscientific theories was put to scanner. A gradual change was perceptible in the attitude and point of views of the people. They became aware of the fact that discrimination based on birth and inherited family background and consequent exploitation was unjust. The propensities of the people gradually changed due to the westernized education.

Along with Industrialization, the process of urbanization also got momentum. It increased means of transportations. Industrialization and urbanization boosted the social mobility. It
increased interaction between different communities. Their interactions were also increased as people have to search for employment. They had to move from one place to other. The new values and new thoughts were spread. Social reformers were influenced with the new thought and knowledge and they educated the society to throw the age old rusted casteism and other bondages imposed by the society. Along with transportation, books, newspapers, telegrams bridged the gap between distant places. The new values of equality and freedom started reaching the common men. People in Berar gradually acquired a vision.

The British rule was fruitful in cultural sense. The British rule removed the age old stagnancy in the social set up and gave impetus to social mobility and progress. It was due to the industrial revolution brought during the British regime, India which was then in medieval attire gradually arrived in the modern world. The public were already fed up with the age old rules of kings and sardars. The new administration based on the principle of supremacy of law and equality brought a lease of new life. Educated youths from upper classes who could able to speak English were readily adopted in government services. It boosted a class of British favouring higher second class. Similarly, change was also perceptible in rural areas. The British made roads for their trade and administration. It was more penetration of transportation into the rural areas, the self sufficient village system was destroyed and extended kind of economy was set up. A new administrative set up was introduced to acquire agriculture taxes. The watandari system was abolished and Patil-Kulkarni and other people from higher society was accommodated into the government services. The court took the place of Gram Panchyat bringing a universal system of receiving justice. The people in rural areas had also greater contacts due to market places and government offices. These political and economic changes put a greater change on the public expectations and sensibilities. It created a necessity to look at the age old concepts and knowledge with more scientific and discerning eye.

7.3 The spread of Satyashodhak Samaj in Berar:-

Mahatama Jotiba Fule established Satyashodhak Samaj at Pune in 1873. It was the main aim to remove the ills in the established social system and emancipate the downtrodden class from the casteism of the upper classes. The main cause of social discriminations and disparity lie in the egoistical supremacy of Brahmin over other communities. Brahmins imposed religious, social and economical slavery and continued their unrestricted exploitations. They established complete control on social set up and acquired unrestrained powers and authorities. Other
sections of the society had to be deprived of their natural rights.\textsuperscript{7} Satyashodhak samaj attempted to create a wave of self confidence in sections other than the Brahmins in Indian society. The voice of Satyashodhak samaj was the shrill cry of the society which was oppressed over the span of centuries.\textsuperscript{8}

Satyashodhak samaj was founded with a broad humanitarian spirit. Its main objective was to emancipate the oppressed class from the bondages and ensure their social, educational, economical, cultural and political empowerment to established self sufficient and truly humane society.

It does not restrained to specific class and it spread in different sections of the society. The first Satyashodhak Samaj was established at Wadegaon in Balapur tehsil in 1901. The samaj published the manifesto for the welfare of non-Brahmin castes at the printing press Badoda Vatsal Printing press in 1905. It had reports of the work of the branches of Satyashodhak Samaj established at Berar and Nagpur.\textsuperscript{9} It pointed out the work of these branches made following the basic tenets of Satyashodhak Samaj. These branches were as following

1) Mul Kasbe, Karajgaon, Dist Elichpur
2) Belura Dist Amravati
3) Naigaon, tehsil Chandur, district Amravati
4) Naigaon, tehsil Yavatmal, district Wani
5) Kasbe Patur Sekbabu, District Akola
6) Kasbe Wadegaon.

Similarly large number of the followers of the new samaj gradually rose up to 1000 during the period of four years since 1901.\textsuperscript{10}

The new social leadership was prepared from these newly established branches and its work made in Berar. Bhagwan Mohnaji Patil Mankar, Sukhdeo Dattuji Patil Mankar, Wadegaon, tehsil Balapur district Balapur, Dadusingh Sonaji Deshmukh, Naigaon, tehsil Yavatmal, district Wani, these new propagators of the samaj came from Berar.

During 1900, Shastri Narobaji Mahaghat and Shastri Dharmaji Dumbre, these two persons of Maratha community came in Berar from Otur, tehsil Junnar, district Pune. A meeting was convened at the residence of Krushnaji Lakshman Sonar at village Karajgaon. The meeting elaborated upon the atrocities made by Brahmins and highlighted a need of establishing a branch of Satyashodhak Samaj. Consequently, on next day, the meeting was convened and a branch of
Satyashodhak Samaj was established in 1900. Nimbaji Krushnaji Akolkar, Suryabhan Chandaji Khajone, Bhagwanrao Balaji Kandalkar, Krushnaji Kakaji Chaudhari, Motiram Tukaram Wankhade, Gopalrao Lakshman Sonar, Shaymji Gambhirji, Charpa, Dhanaji Keshavji Nimkar, etc. contributed greatly in established the branch. Mahaghat and Dumbre stayed in Berar for 2-3 years and created public awareness by delivering public lectures. Different branches were set up due to their persuasion. On backdrop of Satyashodhak Samaj, during 1904 to 1910, Krushnarao Pandurang Bhalekar took relentless work to spread its work at Karajgaon, Belura, Naigaon, Singanapur and Akola.

He prepared a set of Satyashodhi Samaj workers which included Kushalrao Suryabhan Patil (Kawadikar) at Karajgaon, Raorao Patil (Kawalij), Yashwant Khushalrao Deshmukh (Belura), Baliram Vikramji Patil Deshmukh, Khanapur, tehsil Morshi, Khushalrao Patil Sisode, Naigaon, Yashwant Ganapatrao Marathe, Khallar tehsil Daryapur, Ramraoji Dawre. These workers were constantly in touch of Krushnarao Pandurang Bhalekar.

After Mahaghat, Dumbre Shastri and Bhalekar, Bheemrao Mahamuni, Mumbai came to Vidarbha. The background for the Satyashodhak samaj was already prepared in Berar and the Jalsa, a cultural programme to propagate the message of equality and social justice was held for the first time at Wadegaon. Mahamuni delivered his programme Bheempuran on April 3 and April 4, 1906. More than 1100 people were present on the occasion and gradually the jalsa was popular in Berar.

During 1900 to 1920, the members of Satyashodhak Samaj were actively engaged in their work at their respective villages and towns. Their activities include organizing programmes like Jalsa, education extension, eradication of untouchability, disallowing Brahmin in family rites etc. Maratha Shikshan Parishad, Mali Shikshan Parishad and other councils of different backward castes had greater influence of the teachings of Satyashodhak Samaj. 1900 to 1920 was the period of intense activities of Satyashodhak Samaj. It extended its branches at different villages and increased its membership quantitatively and qualitatively as well.

The second generation of Satyashodhak Samaj was prepared during 1910 to 1940. The work of Satyashodhak Samaj was continued unhampered. The programmes like Jalsa, lecture series, Kirtans, public meetings were held to propagate the message of Satyashodhak Samaj. The following workers were on front that included Pandharinath Patil, Aanadswami, Shamrao Gund, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh, Kashiram Bapu Deshmukh, Aanadrao Ladhake, Adv. J. C.

The scenario during 1920 to 1940 was changed due to new Brahmanetar Party. The Brahmanetar party put the Satyashodhak Samaj on back foot. But the period had Satyashodhak Jalsa, social councils, women councils, farmers’ councils, untouchable’s council etc. The period had extensive rise in literature. Series of books, newspapers were published to propagate the message. The public awareness was made and the role of Satyashodhak Jalas and Kirtans played an important role in propagating Satyashodhak Samaj and consequent Brahmanetakr Party.

The newly educated youths also played a major role in transforming Berar. Loknayak Bapuji Ane, Dr Ramrao Deshmukh, Bhawanishankar Niyogi, R Naidu, Pandharinath Patil, Barrister Panjabrao Deshmukh, Adv Narayanrao Amrutkar, R Khapde, Vishnu Moreshwar Mahajani etc had brought the message of reformation in Berar. Brahmins had also inclination for reforms. But pursuance of Satyashodhak Samaj had a far reaching influence as it made the educated youth aware of the social divide and he started putting his point of views forcefully. The movement of Satyashodhak Samaj created a gradual awareness among the backward communities.

**7.3.1 Impact of Satyashodhak Samaj’s public meetings, councils and conventions:**

Satyashodhak workers took public meetings, gatherings, councils and conventions at different villages to propagate the message of the Satyashodhak Samaj. These programmes were largely successful.

The second convention of Akhil Bhartiya Satyashodhak Samaj was organized in Amravati district in 1928. Adv. Keshrao Bagde (Pune) presided over the function. The dignitaries Narayanrao Amrutkar Patil, Purushottam Dattatrya Dhole, Motiram Tukaram Wankhade, Pandharinath Patil etc were chiefly present.
Different conventions, councils, public meetings, farmers councils were held in Akola, Amravati, Buldana and Yavatmal districts. The data of these meetings is given below.

1) Eighth Satyashodhak Parishad held at Town Hall at Akola on April 13 and 14m 1918. Wachandra Ramchandra Kothari and Bapuji Dadaji Gaikwad presided over the programmes. It passed resolution stressing promotion of women education, ban on child marriage and demanded free and compulsory primary education and separate constituency for the Backward communities.

2) Satyashodhak Parishad was held at Akot in Akola district on Jan 28 and 29, 1922. Mukundrao Patil, Ahamadnagar presided over the programme.

3) Satyashodhak Parishad was held at Warkhed in Buldana district on May 12, 1922. Yamnajirao Amle presided over the programme.

4) The meeting of Satyashodhak Samaj was held at Kalgaon in Pusad tehsil (Yavatmal District) on Feb 13, 1922. Nagorao Sadashiv Wani Hingmare presided over the meeting.

5) The convention of Satyashodhak Parishad was held at Buldana on May 13, 1923. Yamnajirao Amle presided over the programme.


7) Satyashodhak Parishad was held at Dapura, tehsil Akot and District Akola was held on Jan 4, 5, 1925. Ganapatrao Patil presided over the meeting while Machindra Khedkar, Anandswami, Keshavrao Deshmukh, Telharekar, Pandharinath Patil were present on the occasion.

8) 26 Feb 1927, Amravati District Satyashodhak Parishad, Wathoda Shukleshwar, district Amravati. Adv Amrutkar, Pandharinath Patil and Aanandswami.11


In view to achieve political rights of Non Brahmins, Brahmanetar movement was started under the guidance of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj. Its impact was felt on Berar and different councils were formed to create awareness among the Non-Brahmin communities. Different
programmes were held to achieve the social and political objectives. Its brief chronicle is given below:

1) During 1918 -1920, the public gatherings of Kunbi Samaj were held at Khadki (Yavatmal), Gondiya, Bhandara, Chandrapur. The topic of these gatherings were remarriage of widows and integration of sub castes.

2) Kunabi Samaj Council’s first Convention was held at Wani, District Yavatmal on Mar 10, 1933. Pandharinath Patil presided over the convention. It put the thought of equality among all Non-Brahmin and demanded reservation in accordance with the percentage of Kunabi samaj in total population. It appealed to throw out the rotten customs and traditions. It stressed the need of integration of different sub castes. Vaishnav Shimpi Parishad:-

1) Vaishnav Shimpi Samajonnati Parishad, Murtijapur, June 23 & 24, 1928. Baburao Hud, Nagpur presided over the council

2) Vaishnav Shimpi Samajonnati Parishad, Salbardi, teshil Morshi was held on Feb 26, 1930. The chief convener of the meeting was Dattatraya Namdeo Mirkute.

3) 10th convention of Vaishnav Va Shimpi Samajonnati Parishad was held at Yavatmal on May 20 and 21, 1933. Pandurang Sawji Wadone was the president.

Total 10 conventions of Vaishnav Shimpi Samajonnati Parishad were held in Berar which stressed education to ensure progress of the community, social reforms and appealed to throw out supremacy and control of Brahmin. It advocated throwing out rotten traditions and integration of sub castes. The organizers of these councils were closely linked or associated with Satyashodhak Samaj.

Like Kunabi, Marathi, Mali, Vaishnav, Shimpi, the councils and public meetings of Nabhik Navvi community were also held. Similarly, the meetings of some of the minor castes were also held. These councils helped integrating the sub castes and propagating education. Satyashodhak Samaj also took meetings of Vaisha, Komati, Gawari, Wadar, Pardhi and Panchal castes. The members of Panchal community were active since the inception of Satyashodhak Samaj in Berar. These councils were held with initiation of Jaigovind Kshirsagar. These meetings are given below.

1) Panchal Brahman Sabha was held at Amravati in 1924. It passed different resolutions ascertaining development of the community.
2) In 1924, Vishwabandhav and Panchal Bandhu Samaj Unnati Parishad were held at Yavatmal. It included Sonar, Kasar, Patharwat etc. Similarly, the caste meetings of Komati Vaishya, Gowari were also held.

Similarly the Komati Vaishya and Gowari community meetings were also held. These included

1) Komati Vaishya Vijay Parishad, Yavatmal, Kashinath Niranjan Kawatikwar as the president. It passed resolution against the Brahmin supremacy, child marriage and girl education.

2) Gowari Caste meeting, Darwha Oct 26, 1922.14

These meetings decided to spread education awareness in their community. They also decided to make religious rituals at their hands. All these caste movements were inspired by Satyashodhak Samaj. Different councils, meeting and conventions held on socio-political issue throughout Berar brought unanimity and harmonies in different castes. Satyshodhak Samaj attempted to make a federation of all different non-Brahmin castes. Education councils taken by these castes’ organization has rare appeal in evoking attention of rural people toward education. Rural Education conference was held at village Kalamb in Balapur tehsil of Akola district. Vithobaraao Patil Dongregaonkar presided over the conference. It discussed the following points. 1) Compulsory Education, 2) Loans, 3) Panchyat Act and 4) Reforms in Marriage Institutions.

The caste council established following the tenets of Satyashodhak Samaj definitely created awareness about the need of social reforms. Brahmins have unity. But non Brahmin castes were dispersed. The caste councils were used for social reforms, achieving political rights and bringing social equality.

Kunbi, Maratha, Mali, Teli, Nahwi, Dalit, tribes and minorities took up the work of Satyashodhak Samaj. The leadership of these castes became conscious of the fact that they can equally fight against the injustice made by the Brahmins. Instead of making these gathering as festivals, they utilized the opportunity to create awareness.

In brief, Satyashodhak Samaj members took different public meetings, called councils and conventions to create awareness in the society. Those were proved a mile stones in propagating the message of social equality, fraternity and revolt against supremacy of Brahmins.

The awakening could foster the spirit of unity and kept the momentum of these public meetings and conventions. Satyashodhak Movement was important to form Brahmanetar Party.
It also made councils of different castes. The issues like education and revoking supremacy of Brahmin in social and religious affairs, girls’ education etc were strongly imprinted on the mindset. Brahmanetar Party strongly put its political aspiration of the non-Brahmin communities. Different issue based movements were also launched to ensure reforms. They also took a strong position for eradicating untouchability prior to Dr. Babasaeb Ambedkar. Coordination among the depressed sections was sought through the strong advocacy for removal of untouchability at different congregations of Mahar, Dalit, Matang and other depressed communities. A new progressive thought was given by the movement. People at every village stood against the social and religious exploitation at the hands of Brahmins. It also put the problems of farmers and agriculture before the government. In Buldana district, movements were made against money lenders and jamindars. Pandharinath Patil and Anand Swami led the agitations.

Thus the impact of Satyashodhak Samaj was strongly felt on society in Berar. It advocated different social reforms. They attempted to solve the problems of farmers. It integrated sub castes. It propagated education and they were gradually aware of social rights. It also gave impetus to organize functions within the community by eschewing Brahmins. It attacked the religious exploitation at the hands of Brahmins. It propelled people to make them free from the intellectual slavery imposed by Brahmins.

7.3.2 Jalsa events of Satyashodhak Samaj in Berar:-

Mahatma Fule wrote a play “Trutiya Ratna” before founding Satyashodhak Samaj in 1853.15 After founding Satyashodhak samaj on Sept 24, 1853 he started organizing folk programme. Different initiatives were taken up to make it a public movement. He selected the medium of folk culture to propagate the message.16

Marathi folk culture has rich tradition of Gan, Gaulan, Lawni, Dashavatar, Tamasha, Murli. Satyashodhak artists took up the external glitz of these folk traditions and took those media to spread awareness among people. They made Satyashodhak Kalapathak. Satyashodhak Jalsha had its roots in Mahatma Fule’s play Trutiya Netra.17 The dramatic events and ardent dialogues might have propelled to form Jalasha.

It was important that poets and artists should write with a pang and appeal to the communities. Its main aim should be to educate people. The movement later gain public acceptability and granually these campaigns or squads were replaced with Jalasha. Jalasha was
an instrument to reach to the deprived society. It ruthlessly attacked the religious and other superstitions prevailed in the society. It was proved an effective medium for bringing social change.

Bhimrao Mahamuni, a *Sonar* by caste from Otur was the first Shahir of Satyashodhak Jalsa. He was strongly influenced by Dumbre Patil, Mahaghat and Bhalekar. He came along with Shastri Naro Mahaghat and Shastri Dumbre came to Berar in 1906. They also came to Wadegaon, Paras and Karajgaon. He performed his show “Bheempuran” at Wadgeon tehsil Balapur in Akola district on April 3 and 4.18

The efforts were started since 1910 to give organized shape to Satyashodhak Samaj movement. Wankhade and Gulabrao Sisode, senior propagators of Satyashodhak Samaj in Berar felt need of Satyashodhak Jalasa to take the message eloquently to the depressed and neglected sections of the society. The movement of arranging religious programme by men within community started by 1900. These include marriage by Satyashodhak system, Vastu Shanti, death anniversary etc. Haricha Jalasha was the first Jalasha in Berar. Dandar, Gan, Gaulan these folk artists from Berar were trained in Jalasha. Accepting persuasion of father Khushalrao Sisode, Gulabrao Sisode started Satyashodhak Jalasha at Naigaon, Chandur Railway district Amravati. Gulabrao Sisode was the owner of the Jalasha. Haribhau Khadse, Pimpri Wardha performed woman’s role in the show. Therefore, the Jalasha came to be known as Naigaonkar’s Haricha Jalasha.

Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj had organized a congregation of Jalasha artists at his princely garden in which along with Jalashas from Western Maharashtra, Naigaonkar’s Haricha Jalasa also participated into it. Folk artists from different places from Vidarbha had present at the congregation.

The convention of Akhil Bhartiya Maratha Education Council was held at Khamgaon in 1917. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj presided over the convention. It was attended by leaders of Backward classes including the workers of Satyashodhak Samaj. It was the same convention which propelled Pandharinath Patil to work for Satyashodhak Samaj. During the nights, different Satyashodhak Jalasas were performed during the convention. It helped to promote Satyashodhak Samaj and the Non Brahmin movement. Newly founded Haricha Jalasha started organizing its performances and gave a boost to Satyashodhak Samaj movement. It prepared a series of
Jalashas in Vidarbha. Dandar, Gan, Gawalan etc art forms were used to promote the tenets of Satyashodhak samaj.\(^{20}\)

These arts had to suffer many a times atrocities of the established sections. False charges and cases were put against them. They were ridiculed as Tamashgir. Such responses came from the established sections were natural consequence as the teachings these Jalasha had to cater had challenged the authority of the established sections. Similarly, new thoughts and attitude for change had been propagated through these programmes. The topics and the medium used were from the life and experiences of the Backward communities.

They understood that unless the people are made aware about the inferiorities of Brahmin, the highest stratum in Indian social set up, it would be hard to remove influence of Brahmins. They started objecting Brahminism. They understood that it would not take time to create a better social order, unless social and religious misconceptions spread by the Brahmins to achieve their selfish ends are abolished.

Jalashas performances were made through different fairs, public meetings and private programmes. The role of Jalashas in Satyashodhak marriage was more stressed. It created courage among non Brahmins to perform family rituals and ceremonies without aid of Brahmins. The following marriages and Satyanarayan pujas were held without Brahmins.

Satyashodhak marriages

1) Bunkaji Mallkaji, a Satyashodhak from Wathoda Shukleshwar, district Amravati had married his daughter Kalwantibai with Kisanaji Ladhe, Bhugaonkar in Satyashodhak marriage custom. Dhurde, a non Brahmin served the function of priest in the marriage.\(^{21}\)

2) 2 to 3 marriages in the family of Raje Lakuhi Jadhav, Adgaon Raja, Buldana were held following the new method. Khanderao Jadhav served the role of priest in these marriages.

3) The marriages in the families of Amruta Gaikwad, Jaywant Jadhav, Rama Malhar, Sayyaji Mahar were held following the percept of Satyashodhak samaj. Rajaram Gaikwad, Sampat Pawar, Balwant Hatkar performed the rituals in these marriages.\(^{22}\)

4) Around 50 marriages were held following the direction of Satyashodhak samaj at Deulgaon Mahi in Buldana district. Ramrao Vithoba Shingane Patil, Ramdad Balaji Kalhale, Deshmukh, Bhagwan Behuji Shingne performed marriage rituals.
Satyanarayan Puja

1) Satyanarayan Puja (worships) was made following the guidelines of Satyashodhak Samaj at village Punda in Akola district. Pandharinath Jayale performed the rituals.

2) Satyanarayan Puja (worships) at the residences of Punjaji Patil, Rana Teli, Pandurang Jadhav, Sarjabai Dukre, Vithoba Mule, Motiram Mahar, Renukabai and Pandurang was made following the guidelines of Satyashodhak Samaj at village Padali in Buldana district.

3) The christening of young baby in the family of Ramrao Shinde in Buldana district was made with Satyashodhak system.

4) Satyanarayan and ablution were performed following Satyashodhak system at Khairav in Buldana district.

5) The last rites in the family of Sampatrao Patil, resident of Paras, District Buldana was made in Satyashodhak system.

6) Religious rituals at Pimpalgaon Kale(district Buldana) was held following Satyashodhak tenets.

7) Similarly, marriages, last rites, annual remembrance of departed souls, satyanarayan etc were celebrated following Satyashodhak tenets at village Antura in Amravati district.

Thus, Satyashodhak Jalase initiated a custom of organizing marriages barring the traditional role of Brahmin priest in arranging marriages. The marriages were started simply by garlanding the couples. It baffled Brahmin class.

On backdrop of Bharat Sevak Samaj and Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, Dada Honade, resident of Arvi, district Wardha organized camps to take the thoughts of Satyashodhak samaj to people. Along with physical education, the thoughts of Satyashodhak samaj were stressed upon. These camps were held in Yavatmal, Amravati, Wardha and other districts.

Rashtrasant Tukdojimaharaj, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh, Nanaji Kadam etc Satyashodhak leaders guided the participants through the camps. These leaders used to give information of the urgency of social reforms to students and threw lights on the movement of public awareness. The Jalasha put the immediate problems of the neglected communities and propelled to think about. It created public awareness. The following were the topics of Jalashas.
Earlier, Brahmins had separate and reserved ghats for their baths and rites on river banks while other communities have different locations to take bath in rivers. 1) The issue of the ghats, 2. Balding of widows, 3. Family tussles, 4. Satyanarayan, 5. Wastu shanty, Gharbharni, 6. Importance of Education, 7. Social reforms, 8. Origin of different religions, 9. Supremacy of Brahmins, 10. Ethics of Brahmanism, 11. Vanity of rituals, 12. Opposition to Superstitions, 13. Opposition to middle men (priests) in religious occasion, 14. Importance of girls' education, 15. Opposition to religious superstitions, 16. Search for farmers, 17. Opposition to casteism, 18. Opposition against the exploitation by religious authorities and money lenders, 19. Pervasive and compulsory education, 20. Importance of cooperative credit societies, 21. Opposition to untouchability, 22. re-marriage of divorced and widows, 23. Indebtedness; with these topics of public welfare, group of 8 to 10 artists performed on stage whole nights. Around 10-12 thousand people from the town and adjacent villages gathered to see. People used to cry looking at their own sorrows and sufferings put in these performances. These shows propelled people to raise voice against the continued exploitation. They decided to make their religious rituals without involving Brahmins. They started advocating education and denounced untouchability.

Satyashodhak Jalaskars gave the new aspiring thoughts to the society. It stressed upon the social system based on Justice and equality. It adopted the new scientific thought putting aside age old rotten customs and traditions. It created a wave of understanding in the larger society and initiated social change. It casted its influence deeply on the life and thoughts of people. These Jalashas were active till 1946, later they were changed into Ambedkari Jalasha. Satyashodhak Jalasha purified Tamasha a folk theatre making it a positive medium of social change. Berar had no group of Tamasha, but its campaign and persuasion was important in awakening public consciousness to reforms.

Berar was the region with supremacy of Patil, Deshmukh, Kunbi, Maratha etc. The wealthy people had greater attraction for Tamasha. It was hard to bring these people to Satyashodhak Jalasa, but these movement did it. However, Tamasha had greater attraction. Earlier, the difference between Tamasha and Jalasha were shown through Jalasha by pointing out adverse impact of Tamasha on society, families and individuals. It also revealed financial loot made by those Tamashas.

Jalasha was essentially a social awareness programme. It was different from Tamasha. Satyashodhak Jalasha had to convince society the adverse effect of Tamasha. Satyashodhak
Jalasha highlighted the importance of education to the Backward communities. It was education which regenerated the backward society.

**7.4 Coordination of Satyashodhak Samaj and Dalit Agitation**

Mahatma Jyotibha Fule’s philosophy and teaching was spread by the follower of Satyashodhak Samaj in Berar. Satyashodhak Samaj generated a new spirit in Backward communities. It since initial days gave preference to untouchability eradication. The leaders from the untouchable communities were associated with the Satyashodhak samaj since the first half of the nineteenth century.

It was due to the emphasis of Satyashodhak Samaj and efforts of Maharshi V R Shinde and Chandawarkar, a resolution to eradicate untouchability was passed in the Convention of National Congress held at Calcutta in 1917. The first conference held in Mumbai on the issue of eradication of Untouchability on Mar 23, 24, 1918 was presided over by Sayaji Gaikwad. Sir Chandwarkar was the convener of the conference. Sawlaram Yande, Koluskar, Shet Damodar, Nandagawli these leaders were chiefly present on the occasion.

Satyashodhak Movement provided a hand of help to different backward castes to fight for their social and religious rights. Satyashodhak Samaj workers used to attend the meetings and gave guidance. A convention of Berar Mahar community held at Chikhal on Feb 7 and8, 1920 was attended by Baburao Patil, Maharshi Shinde, Pandharinath Patil while Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar himself chaired a convention of the Backward communities held at Akot (District Akola) in 1929.


The leaders and workers Satyashodhak samaj had undertaken work of eradication of untouchability. Wamanrao Deshmukh had started a water kiosk for Mahar community at village Nimba in Balapur tehsil of Akola district. It was due to the work of Satyashodhak Samaj in untouchability eradication, coordination was sought between Satyashodhak Samaj and Dalit agitation.
Pandharinath Patil convened a convention for Untouchability Eradication at village Undri in Buldana district on June 3, 1933. R K Nehru presided over the meeting. Around 20,000 people attended the convention. The convention passed the resolution allowing entry to Dalits in temples and other public places. Pandharinath Patil devoted himself in the task of eradication of untouchability. He started hostel for Maratha and other Backward communities at Chikhali in Buldana district. He presided over the public programmes held at Aandhnaya in Buldana district and Ramgaon, tehsil of Yavatmal district.32

Satyashodhak leaders and workers participated in the public meetings and convention held for eradication of untouchability in Berar. Some of the meetings were presided over by the leaders of Satyashodhak samaj. They were conveners of some of the meetings and conventions. In matter of thought and action, the leaders and the workers of Satyashodhak Samaj were on forefront.

Wamanrao Deshmukh, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh, Pandharinath Patil, Gulabrao Sisode, Anandswami, Khushalrao Deshmukh, these leaders worked for eradication of untouchability. Many of them had to face social boycott from the upper castes.

Thus the coordination was sought within Satyashodhak Samaj and untouchability eradication movement. A feeling of affinity was created in non-Brahmin sections for the untouchability. Non-Brahmin and the untouchable communities were gradually integrated. The foreground of Dalit movement in Berar was prepared through the work of Satyashodhak Samaj. A new social set up free from social discrimination and exploitation at the hand of Brahmins was definitely coming in view. The voices of larger non Brahmin society were assimilated with the voice of the untouchables. Satyashodhak Samaj had appealed the society to deliver right in religious equality for the complete humanity and remove the age old Brahmin order. It sought coordination with the leadership from untouchable communities to make Brahminical order collapse. The special guidance was given at village level to spread education among the untouchables. The door of education was gradually opened up for the deprived sections. They began to understand the importance of education. Unity of non-Brahmin and the untouchables was thought to be the only solution for eradication of untouchability.

The society came to understand that unless the problems of untouchability eradicated, it could not achieve progress. Hindu samaj came to understand that it was completed sap out due to the casteism. Non Brahmin and leaders of Satyashodhak samaj raised voice against the
Brahmin’s divine tenet of supremacy over the society and discard of untouchable communities. Non Brahmin and Satyashodhak Samaj stood against the untouchability. It created a positive feeling among the depressed sections that they were not inferior to Brahmin. Awareness was started to establish equality in society. The principle of Equality was introduced in the society mitigating the caste supremacy in the society.

7.5 Vedoktta Issue and Emergence of Brahmnetar Party:-

The Vedoktta issue which had a stormy intrusion in the life of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj had a larger social reference. It provoked sensations in the society. It threw light on the age old rusted attitude of Brahmin communities as well as determination of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj to fight against the social discrimination.

Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj along with other members of the royal court had gone to perform the ritual of holy Kartik bath to Panchaganga river. He took Narayan Bhatji to recite the holy chant. It came to notice of Chhatrapati that he had chanted some other mantras instead of Vedic mantra and the Brahmin himself had taken no bath. When the Chhatrapati inquired about his actions, the Brahmin arrogantly replied that there was no need to chant Vedic mantras as Shahu Maharaj was not Kshatriya. An inferior puranic system had to be followed for Shudhra. It was necessary to take bath before chanting Vedic mantras but no bath ritual had been prescribed for Brahmin to chant verses from Purana.

After listening the arrogant answer of the Brahmin, Chhatrapati Sahu had silently told him that he was a Kashtriya. But the Brahmin arrogantly said that unless Brahmin community declares himself to be Kashtriya, he would not value him more than a Shudra. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj poignantly came to know the rotten customs of Brahmin community. He thought that when a Brahmin could behave so arrogantly with a king how he would behave with common men. The attitude of Brahmins which was earlier brought to notice by Mahatma Fule was still prevalent in society. Therefore, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj decided to fight against the supremacy of Brahmins. After the incident, Shahu Maharaj insisted that all rituals within his palace to be performed according with Vedic system. He ordered his family religious head Appasaheb in 1901 to perform all rituals within the palace following Vedic system. But the priest continued delay. Shahu Maharaj then inquired him why should not he stop the salary of the priest. But he grossly refused to follow the orders. Ultimately, Chhatrapati Shahu took order to stop the
salary of the royal priest and also seized princely estates bestowed on other priests. The decision caused great disturbance among the Brahmins. But the British also supported the Chhatrapati.

Taking side of the princely priest, Lokmanya Tilak criticized Chhatrapati Shahu. Tilak argued that some of the sections had pressurized Brahmin community to perform at the stake. Many Brahmins had opened up a campaign against Shahu Maharaj and leader like Tilak had also participated in it. It revealed the age old and anti progressive attitude of Tilak to look at the social issues. Lokmanya Tilak had taken such a stand that social issues should not be interfered with the political agitation. He argued that it was not proper to allow interference of the British into the social setup. But surprisingly, in the Vedokta case, he insisted the government’s interference into the case. He argued that it was necessary for social harmony as it would cause riot like situations, opined Tilak.

The positive thing happened through the Vedoctta case was that it propelled Chhatrapati to clash against the supremacy of Brahmins. He created the sense of pride in Non Brahmin communities. A wave against Brahmin society was started amidst non Brahmin communities. After Chhatrapati Shahu rescinded the princely vatsans given to his Brahmin priests, the dispute between Brahmin and Non Brahmin took wide public attention. Non Brahmin leaders avowed to obliterate Brahmin supremacy prevalent in society.

Satyashodhak leaders took up the side of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj and attacked on Brahmin communities. As Chhatrapati had put check to religious and social authority of Brahmins, the leadership of Non Brahmin and Satyashodhak samaj naturally came to the Chhatrapati. Chhatrapati Shahu was the leader of Non Brahmin agitation. The amenity between Brahmin and Chhatrapati Shahu escalated due to the polarization between Brahmin and Non Brahmins in Maharashtra. At last, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj received the rights over religious rituals. The main impact of the whole movement was that Chhatrapati passed an order to give 50 percent reservation for the Backward communities in 1902. It was the first decision of caste based reservation.

The Vedoktta case gave impetus to the spread of the movement of Satyashodhak samaj. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj challenged the social and religious supremacy of Brahmins and created a sense of pride among Non-Brahmins. They decided to fight against the supremacy of Brahmin community and exploitation of non Brahmin communities at the hands of Brahmins.
Thus, the dispute between Brahmin and non-Brahmins was started. It gave impetus to non-Brahmin movement.

Its impact was seen as *Shranya*, programme launched to insist the religious authority to other communities, were held at Kolhapur and Berar province. Public *shravaneya* were formed at Morshi, Chandur Bazar, Jambhugaon, Buldana, Dhanodi, Wardha etc in 1921. It proved that the right of Non-Brahmins on Vedic rituals.\(^{36}\)

The changing political scenario was also one of the reasons for the emergence of Non-Brahmin movement. The work of Satyashodhak samaj created awareness among the Non-Brahmin communities. They understood the importance of political powers. Meantime, political reforms also started. In 1917, Minister Montagu reforms declared the British policies in India which included gradual step by step establishment of responsive government in India. The new declaration had promised more representation for the central Legislature and participation of public representatives in power. Therefore different groups became active to grab the political opportunities.

Satyashodhak movement remained isolated from the politics. But when political opportunities knocked their doors, many of Satyashodhak leaders associated with Non Brahmin movement, which was a socio-political agitation. Later, Brahmanetar political party was also initiated.

Shahu Maharaj had taken active participation in Brahmanetar Movement since its initiation. The progress of non Brahmin communities was the main objective of Shahu Maharaj. He had himself seen the exploitation made by the upper caste Brahmins. He started his campaign to stop the continued exploitation and deliver them their social rights and justice. He stressed on organizing Bahujan Samaj. It was due to the efforts of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj complete non Brahmin communities came close to Non-Brahmin movement.

7.5.1 Emergence of Brahmanetar Party in Berar and Its impact:-

After Montagu Chelmsford reforms were introduced in India in 1919, a gradual change in the minds of leadership of Satyashodhak samaj. After, the declaration of the reforms, the Non Brahmin party achieved prominence in southern parts of Maharashtra. It accepted the British supremacy and opposed freedom struggle and boycotted their political rights.\(^{37}\)

Similarly a separate stream of Non Brahmin party started flowing in Berar. Non Brahmin party had increased the aspiration of Non Brahmin communities. It was due to the constant
support of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, the political workers of larger Bahujan samaj were attracted toward non-Brahmin party. The party workers took relentless efforts for the spread of Non Brahmin party and it spread in all four districts of Berar. It garnered popularity of Non Brahmin party.

11th convention for Maratha Education was organized in 1917 at Khamgaon. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj presided over the meeting. He arrival in Berar boosted the Non-Brahmin movement in Berar. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj stressed the compulsory and free education. He said that unless age old restrictions of castes are overthrown, political freedom had no utility, he stated. He advised Maratha to set up industries and trade. The main thrust of the convention was the spread of education. He stressed the spread of education and laid stressed on integration of different castes. He advised to forget the age old stories of Ram and Parashuram. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj and leader of Satyashodhak samaj had thought to make non Brahmin society capable of acquiring rights. He understood impediments of castes, therefore he appealed the society to renounce age old social restrictions.

The convention emphasized that Maratha was Kshatriya. Different sub castes like Kunbi, Rane, Rajput etc were one. Each individual caste and sub caste started putting Kshatriya before their caste, like Kshatriya Maratha, Kshatriya Mali, Kshatriya Dhanger etc. A feeling that they were not inferior to Brahmin, but in fact superior to them started gaining grounds. Different communities participated in the Non-Brahmin Movement. Different castes started organizing their convention with new name Kshatriya Malim Kshatriya Shimpi etc started in Berar. It was due to Brahmanetar Movement, integration of sub castes and priorities of education were stressed in Berar region.

7.5.2 Public Meetings, Councils and Conventions of Brahmanetar Party in Berar:-

Satyashodhak Samaj was essentially a non political movement. But its political form was best represented by Brahmanetar movement. It was important to restore rights of the backward communities. It was a democratic movement and was soul for the upliftment of the society at large. The society gradually became aware of the nature of the crafty tactics of Brahmins. The charges of casteism were levelled against the Brahmanetar movement but the basic motive was behind the movement was to make aware the larger communities. Public meetings and conventions were held to propagate the message.

The conferences, public meetings were held at following places.
1) The festival convention of National Brahmentar Political Council was held at Darvha, tehsil (District Yavatmal) on May 17, 1920. Gopalrao Kolekar presided over the convention.

2) Akola District Brahmanetar Convention was held at Akola on June 3 and 4, 1920. Keshavrao Bagde chaired the convention.

3) The second meeting National Brahmanetar Political Council was held at Yavatmal pm June 20, 1920. C K Bele, Mumbai presided over the meeting.

4) District Brahmanetar Parishad was held at Warkhed in Buldana district on May 13, 1922. Yamnajirao Bhosle presided over the function.

5) Buldana District Brahmanetar Parishad, Jambhul Dhabe, tehsil Malkapur, district Buldana was held on Aug 26, 1923.

6) Brahmanetar Parishad was held at Digras in Yavatmal district on Sept 16, 1923. Pandharinath Patil, presided over the meeting.

7) CP& Berar Province Brahmanetar Social Council was held at Morshi in Amravati district in 1924. Bhaskarrao Patil chaired the council.

8) District Brahmanetar Convention was held on April 17, 1924

9) Brahmanetar Council was held at Chandur tehsil of Amravati district on Nov 4, 1924. Adv Amrutkar presided over the function.

10) Meeting of Brahmanetar Social Council at Chikhali, Buldana district. Anandswami was the convener.

11) District Brahmanetar Sangh was held at Anjani Kurha in Chandur tehsil of Amravati district.

12) 10th convention of District Brahmanetar and Gawali community aggregation was held at village Loni in Mehkar tehsilof Buldana district

13) Elichpur Brahmanetar Council, dated Dec 23, 1928

14) The first convention of Amravati district Brahmentar Council and fifth convention of Akola district Brahmentar Council were held at at Katpurna conflux at the boundary of Daryapur-Murtijapur on Dec 30 and 31, 1928.

15) The Second Convention of Washim tehsil Brahmanetar Council held at village Shirpur on Jan 20, 1929. Bhalchandra Khedkar was the president while Anandswami grace the convention.
16) The first convention of Berar Young Brahmanetar Council held in the Central Province on Dec 27, 1929.
17) The seventh convention of CP & Berar Provincial Brahmanetar Council held on Dec 26 and 27, 1929. T J Kedar was the convener while Namdeorao Eknath Dawle was the president.
18) The second convention of Elichpur tehsil Brahmanetar Council held on Feb 14, 1930. Ganpat H Bhonde was the convener.
19) The fourth convention of Yavatmal Brahmanetar Council held on Feb 14, 1930. Nanasaheb Kedar was the president.
20) Buldana District Brahmanetar farmers’ council at Jalgaon, June 30, 1929. Annasaheb Kayande was the president.
21) Mehkar Taluka Brahmanetar Parishad Goregaon (Panchal), on Nov 4, 1930. Annasaheb Kayande was the president.
22) Seventh convention of C.P. & Berar Brahmanetar Council at Nandura in Buldana district on Nov 24, 1932
23) Fifth CP & Berar Brahmanetar and Satyashodhak Joint Conference at Salbardi on March 9 and 10, 1932
24) Buldana District Brahmanetar Parishad, Undri, June 1932. R. Naidu was the president.
26) Eighth convention of Buldana Tehsil Brahmanetar Council, Feb June 1, 1933
27) Third convention of Pusad Taluka Brahmanetar Council was held at Umarkhed on Jan 28, 1934. Adv Bagwe was the president.
29) The joint convention of the fifth Akola District Brahmanetar Council and first of Amravati District Brahmanetar Council on Dec 30 and 31m 1929. Motiram Wankhade was the president. Two resolution passed 1) support to Religious Places Bill, 2) Eradication of Untouchability and 3) Talathi system.
Meetings of Agricultural Labourers’ Council were held at Pimpalgaon, Asalgaon, Wadashengi, Sungaon, Zonala, Tamgaon, Paturda during Oct 16 to Oct 22, 1936. Pandharinath Patil, Aanandswami and Sukhdeo Patil were the speakers.

Yavatmal Taluka Shetkar parishad, Falegaon. Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh, president while Marotrao Kadam, Chavan Gawande were the chief guests.

Above mention public meetings, conventions were held. Different social economical and religious issues raised through the platforms. It also gave impetus to farmers’ movement. The leaders of these movement were big farmers and land owners but they discussed the issues like agriculture tax, protection of ancestral land, loan waiver on small holding land, education, agriculture reforms, freedom from religious exploitation, new agricultural reforms, place of farmers in Indian Constitution, public participation in administration were raised on platform of these conventions public meetings. Satyashodhak worker were called on to walk with farmers and labourers. Farmers were more inclined towards the Brahmanetar movement and they were gradually aware of their rights.

The movement, through its series of conventions and public meetings reached to the grass root levels of the society. It boosted a mentality to fight back the imposed social restriction by Brahmins. The movement brought closer different sub castes achieving integration. It created conducive atmosphere for spread of democracy by making democratic order in the movement. It boosted the role of these communities in social, educational and political fields.

The large scale presence of the Bahujan samaj to the meetings of Satyashodhak samaj and Brahmanetar Movement showed the signs of organization in the society. They were made aware of the age old restriction and injustice. The non Brahmins were organized to take back their rights. It promoted the thought of equality and worked to implement it in the society. The society became aware and gradually it took steps to make free from the imposed rules on society. It promoted the society to become self reliant to make itself free from the social slavery imposed by Brahmin community. It apposed superstitions and took effort for the spread of education of women.

7.5.3 Merger of Brahmanetar Party into Congress:

It came to notice of people that established Brahmin society had been accusing the Brahmanetar Movement of casteism. The movement was basically democratic and socialistic in nature. Non Brahmin society backed the Brahmanetar movement. The movement created
awareness in the society by making in self reliant for regenerating from the age old slavery of Brahmanism. It opposed supremacy of the upper castes and propagated the thought of equal partnership in social all social activities. It thus achieved integration of non-Brahmin Hindu communities on a broader scale. It brought awareness in social and political fields. Brahmanetar Party fought elections in 1923 to give a political platform to non-brahmins. In Buldhana district Yadav Madhav Kale of Swarajya dal party defeated the candidate of Brahmanetar party to get elected on the council.\textsuperscript{40} Though Brahmanetar party was defeated in the election, it created public awareness about the rights of depressed sections of society. The impact of the movement gradually increased. The joint convention of Brahmanetar party and Satyashodhak samaj was held at Chikhali in Buldhana district in 1926. The convention was also held at Salbardi (dist. Amravati) in 1927. The diamond jubilee celebration of Satyashodhak Samaj was convened by Baburao Bhosle at Nagpur in 1933.\textsuperscript{41} Vitthal Ramji Shinde was the president of the celebration.

The Brahmanetar party would all seats of district council election held in 1934. Similarly, the district councils of Wardha and Nagpur were also owned by the party.\textsuperscript{42} In brief, the impact of the party increased tremendously as it own all district councils in Berar barring only Chandrapur and Bhandara. It was the result of the social impact made by the Brahmanetar movement.

Brijlal Biyani worked to bring the Brahmanetar party into the Congress fold. He pursued the leadership to bring the party into Congress for the purpose he participated in the convention of Brahmanetar party held at Amravati.\textsuperscript{43} It was due to his efforts, the elected members of Brahmanetar party became the Congress member. Following the advice of R.B.Naidu, Pandharinath Patil and L.M. Bhatkar visited the then Congress president Subhashchandra Bose and Rajendraprasad and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. They suggested them to make merger of their party into the Congress. In the same year regional Brahmanetar party decided to merge it into the Congress and consequently in 1938 the Brahmanetar party merge into the Congress.\textsuperscript{44}

**7.6 Mahatma Gandhi’s Harijan tour in Berar:**

Mahatma Gandhi toured in Berar in 1921, 1926, 1927 and 1933. His public meetings were held at different places. These meetings had sown the seeds of equality. He took efforts to eradicate the stigma of untouchability. He gave the message of equality through his lectures. The principal of equality should be observed at public places. He propagated the message of equality
and called on society the message of equality during his tours. Its impact was defiantly felt on eradication of untouchability and temple movement as well.

7.6.1 Mahatma Gandhi’s Khadi campaign during 1927:-

Mahatma Gandhi made sincere efforts to eradicate the untouchability which was grossly prevalent in society. He toured Berar and rest of Vidarbha extensively for the purpose. During Feb 2 to Feb 8, 1927, he visited Gondia, Wardha, Hinganghat, Chandrapur, Warora, Pandharkawda, Ghatanji, Amravati, Akola, Khamgaon, and Malkapur and delivered public speeches urging people to eradicate untouchability which was stigma on Indian society.45

Mahatma Gandhi in his speech delivered at Khamgaon called on people to shun foreign goods and cloths and also the cruel untouchability. He said, “liqueur and foreign cloths are untouchable but not any person”. He attempted to eradicate the heinous custom of untouchability. He stressed eradicating untouchability during his 9 day tour.

Mahatma Gandhi came to Amravati on Feb 6. Amravati Municipality felicitated Mahatma Gandhi and conferred a citation. Annasaheb Kaloti, Municipal Chief also delivered a lecture and conferred citation and Rs2500 funds collected for propagation of Khadi.46 Barrister Ramrao Deshmukh had also given some donation for the memorial of Deshbandhu Das. He also paid visit to Hindu Mission Hostel.

Thousands of people used to attend the public lecture of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi laid stress on propagating use of Khadi. He also called on people to allow entry to the untouchables at temples, public wells and schools. He also took public meeting at Akola and called on people to use Khadi cloth to promote a spirit of true nationalism.47 Mahatma Gandhi inaugurated Khadi Bhandar at Khamgaon.48

Khadi received recognition due to the tour of Mahatma Gandhi in Berar. They started wearing Khadi cloths. Some of them use to drew cotton threads. It created a spirit of self reliance among people. It boosted the spirit of Swadeshi and they participated in the movement by eschewing foreign cloths and materials. A spirit of patriotism immerged in the hearts of people and they gradually became confident.

A meeting was held during public Ganesh Utsav at Wadali in Amravati district. Vitthalrao Shende presided over the meeting while Bhagwanrao Mirgi and Punjappaji delivered lectures on the immediate need of eradicating the stigma of untouchability. A resolution was passed to allow the participation of untouchables in the Ganesh festival and its actual
implementation was also started. The rituals like participation in aarti and others were collectively held. The untouchables and the touchable people used to take water from the same well. Vitthalrao Shende and others decided to organize sell camp of khadi cloths at Wadali, a locality of the untouchables. Similarly, people were inclined to allow Harijan people entry into the temple of Amba at Amravati. After Mahatma Gandhi’s tour, Harijan Seva Sangh went in to the localities and made sanitation work on Dec 18, 1931 and celebrated it as Harijan Day. Efforts were made to provide water supply and latrine in the locality of the untouchables. Khadi education was also implanted.49

7.6.2 Mahatma Gandhi Harijan Tour in Berar in 1933:-

Mahatma Gandhi made tour of Berar in 1933. Along with eradicating untouchability, Mahatma Gandhi started collecting funds. It was Mahatma Gandhi’s tour after Poona Pact. Mahatma Gandhi came to Nagpur on Nov 9, 1933. G. A. Gawai, general secretary of Depressed Classes Association, K. G. Nanadgawli, president C.P. & Berar Harijan Mandal felicitated Mahatma Gandhi with citation.50 The present citation pointed out that overall development of backward society is possible on imparting greater access to education, wealth and power and for the purpose, more education institutions, gymnasiums and industries should be set up, such request was made in the citation to Mahatma Gandhi. The citation also pointed out the wrath and agonies of the depressed classes. It stated that the upper classes had not committed mere atrocities against them but they had been inclined to kill the downtrodden people. They met contemptuous treatment in religious function. Even in social life, these upper classes showed their complete disregard to elect them to the local bodies. The continuous disregard had propelled the untouchable to think that unity with the upper classes could not be the way for the betterment of the depressed sections. The citation reminded Mahatma Gandhi that he had assured that he had put his soul mortgage to the untouchables before Puna Pact, therefore, the upper classes should make lakes, wells and other water bodies and religious place to root out the discrimination against the lower classes.

When Mahatma Gandhi reached Achalpur on Nov 21, 1933, a demonstration was held in front of the motor of Mahatma Gandhi.51 Demonstrations were held against Mahatma Gandhi. Thus, Mahatma Gandhi had to face some opposition during his work for the emancipation of the depressed classes.
During Mahatma Gandhi’s tour, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh, Brijlal Biyani, Thakkarbappa had cooperated Mahatma Gandhi. Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh took Mahatma Gandhi to Achalpur, Chikhaldara, Amravati, Morshi etc. These tours were conducted and convened by Brijlal Biyani.52

When Mahatma Gandhi reached Amravati and went to a gymnasium, around 100 untouchable youths presented their physical skills and yoga. Mahatma Gandhi was overwhelmed to see youths of different communities working together.

Mahatma Gandhi said that eradication of the untouchability is significant in financial point of view. He referred Harijan andolan as Yadna. He at last requested the audience that the contribution made by the women in form of jewellery and money would be used for eradication of untouchability.

When Mahatma Gandhi came to Yavatmal, Loknayak Bapuji Ane applauded the contribution of Mahatma Gandhi. He said, “Ever since I set foot on the soil of Berar, the name of Bapuji is re-vibrating in my years. After years of comradeship a friendship has grown between us; the measure of which I cannot describe to you adequately. I expect to hear his name echoed in every nook and corner of Berar.53

Grandfather of India was pleased with grandfather of Berar. He supported the works of untouchability eradication. Influenced by the teaching of Mahatma Gandhi, different people devoted themselves for the task of eradication of the untouchability.

Harijan Seva Sangh was established in Berar due to the visit of Mahatma Gandhi. It not only though about eradicating the stigma of untouchability but practiced it. Harijans were started allowed at temple and wells. The traditional and dogmatic people opposed the untouchables while some people from the upper classes devoted in the task of eradicating untouchability. They gave bath to the untouchable boys and girls. Schools were started for them. These works gave impetus to the task of eradication of the stigma of untouchability.

The upper classes came to understand that eradication of untouchability was not alone the issue of emancipation of the untouchables but also the upper classes. They felt the need of going to the localities of the depressed people for eradicating the vice. Dadasaheb Khaprde, R. B. Wara, Bhat, Dr Randive, Barrister Ramrao Deshmukh, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh, Sir Moropant Joshi, G. B. Kane, R. B. Mudholkar, W. D. Joshi, Narayanrao Bamangaonkar, Yamunabai Hirlekar, similarly leadership from Akola Dadasaheb Majani, Haribhau Parchure, Brijlal Biyani,
Pandharinath Patil, Santoshrao Patil, Tatyasaheb Kolhakar (dramatist) from Buldana, Dhulkar from Achalpur took measures to eradicate untouchability. Similarly, Harijan Din was celebrated at Akola.

It was the family tradition of Dr Panjabrao Deshmukh to give feast to Brahmin. He stopped the practice after taking his family member into confidence. Instead of Brahmin feast, the feast was given to the students at the orphanage at Amravati and the students in Rohidas and Chokhamela Boarding schools. Mother of Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh put *gandha-akshada* to students and without putting any kind discrimination, these students were served meals. Dalpatsingh Chavan from Arvi, Wamanrao Ghorpade (Nagpur), Uttamrao Kadam, teacher at Shivaji High School were chiefly present on the occasion. Thus, Dr Panjabrao Deshmukh became active in eradication of untouchability.

Meeting organized at Akola was chaired by Brjalal Biyani. Babu Jagjivanram inaugurated the meeting. Brijlal Biyani had compassion and love for the depressed classes. He took efforts to elect Khadse, More, Khandare of depressed communities in Council election who were given Congress tickets. Thus, the political leadership in Akola showed inclination in providing political seats for the depressed classes. It was the impact of Gandhi’s visit and consequent message that workers from the upper classes and lower castes started working together in eradicating the vice. Harijan Seva Sangh established at Akola, Amravati, Yavatmal and Buldana took efforts in eradicating untouchability. They went to the localities of the untouchables and cleansed their houses. Water bodies, wells and temples were made open for the downtrodden communities. Schools, colleges and hostels were started. The cultural programme of songs was made at cooperative hall and the collected revenue was given to run the activities of Harijan Seva Sangh.

The work of eradication of untouchability was given new impetus with the visit of Mahatma Gandhi. The feeling of compassion was started generating in the minds of the upper classes men. They started taking active participation in the work. The awareness was created in the upper castes that schools should be started for the depressed classes’ students. Similarly, awareness created that the denied sections should be given economical and social reforms as well to bring them on the path of development. Mahadeo Mang of depressed class man started his small enterprise at village Ridhora in Balapur tehsil. It created awareness about starting some industries.
In brief the visit of Mahatma Gandhi propelled upper classes people here to undertake the task of eradication of untouchability, sanitation drives etc. Similarly efforts were made to make them participate in politics. The political place of authorities was given to the leadership of the down classes. Khadi campaign boosted a sense of pride and self reliance. They were made self independent to avoid derogative help thrown by the upper classes.

Harijan tour propelled women in Berar to participate in political activities. They participated in the sanitation drive launched in the localities of the untouchables. The children of the untouchables were given baths and new cloths. Women started participating in the agitation launched to provide education, health, library, hostels, the eradication of superstitions, water availability and entry into temples. Durga Joshi requested the upper classes women to give tilgul with affection to the women and children of the depressed classes. On the day of Sankranti, Jan 14, 1933, Upper Caste Hindu and Harijan meet was organized by Amravati district Harijan Sevak Sangh held at Brahmavidya Mandir. The meeting was attended by around 700 to 800 people including men of higher castes. Harijan brethrens distributed tilgul and upper caste men accepted it. After the initial accord, the dignitaries delivered lectures.

It was decided that such like meetings should be held at each village to express the solidarity of Hindu community throwing out all kinds of age old discriminations. Following to the wish of Mahatma Gandhi, attempts were made to throw out age old untouchability and expressed strong unity in Hindu samaj. The untouchables should not miss the opportunity of establishing unity within Hindu samaj. Tracing the same message, V. D. Brahma, D. G. Angal, Dr. Varhadpande, Prabhavati Brahma, Tarabai Randive of Harijan Seva Sangh published one such open letter on Jan 10, 1933.

On Jan 15, 1933, women unit of Harijan Seva Sangh organized women’s meet in view of Sankranti festival. Harijan women and upper class women participated in the programme. 200 women of lower castes and 700 to 800 women of upper castes participated in the meeting. After tilgul distribution and cultural programme, Tarabai Randive, Mrs Ghate, Lakshmibai Naik, Savitribai Bhat delivered the speeches. Manutai Khaparde, Shantabai Gokhale, Mrs Joshi took efforts for the success of the programme.

Following order of Mahatma Gandhi, Amravati district Harijan Seva Sangh celebrated the second Harijan Din on April 30, 1933. Gulabrao Bakshi, Dr. Warhadpande, Geetabai Tappe went into the lower castes localities at Mangpura (Matakhdiki), Bhangi Mohalla at Masanganj;
D. B. Kurhade and D. B. Pyarelal went into Doharpur; Dr. Padole, Sheshrao Thakre, Mahalle Wakil, Arkabai Bhave, Sundarabai Bhave went into Hamalgaira. They swept the houses of the untouchables and washed their children. A public meeting was held in the evening at Jog square. P. Pyarelal presided over the meeting while Dr Warhadpande and Gulabrao Bakshi delivered their speeches.

A resolution was passed to allow complete freedom to lower castes complete entry into the temples. Municipalities at towns and cities should remove the problems of water supply, sanitation, latrines and public lighting at Dalit localities. A request was made to upper caste Hindu that they should not give stale and thrown out foods to workers employed at private household works. Onset, public social gathering of women was held on April 26, 1933. Putting aside, age old social discriminations, 1500 Hindu women happily participated in the programme.

On Nov 16, 1933, Amravati city was decorated to welcome Mahatma Gandhi. His meeting was held at Wadali village. R. B. Brahma, Veer Wamanrao Dada, Barrister Ramrao Deshmukh, Nanasaheb Bamangaonkar, Dr. Soman, Dr. Warhade, Pande etc were chiefly present at the meeting. Similarly, under the guidance of Annasaheb Asnare, the volunteers of Shri Hanuman Vyayam Prasarak Mandal were chiefly present at the public meeting. Special place was reserved for women. Tarabai Modak, Parvatibai Patwardhan, Bagwe, Sharangpani, Mrs Deshmukh etc women were chiefly present. Mahatma Gandhi called on children to become true follower of the god and have compassion for whole humanity. He said that Harijan agitation is like a yadna. The meeting was concluded after bestowing a citation to Mahatma Gandhi. Harijan Fund was raised at the meeting.

The meetings were also held at Amravati, Paratwada, Morshi, Yavatmal, Pusad, Khamgaon, Buldana, Chandur. Public awareness about eradication of untouchability was made. Women started going into the Harijan localities and started educating the children of the untouchables. The discrimination was attempted to put aside by social get together programme like Haldi-kunku of women. They were enabled to live a life of dignity.

Reading of Valmiki Ramayana and Bhagvat had been started by Harijans in Bhangipura, Deshmukh File in Akola district. Congress worker Dayambhari read the sacred books. Radhabai Govindka, Kisanlal, owner of Savatram mill, Biyani, President of Vidarbh committee, Shri Nagorao Mane also visited the place frequently to read the sacred text for audience. Mrs. Biyani and Miss Tara Mashruwala distributed the leaves of Apata trees on occasion of Dushera.
Pramilabai Oke, Subhadrabai Joshi, Usha Joshi visited Mangpura and distributed dates and coconuts among the Harijans. They also called each child of Harijan on the day of Diwali and make them to take holy-bath and also gave them gifts. Sau Shantabai Joglekar distributed snacks and sweets as token of gift to the students of Sukoda village. Kakubai Gadre, Ramabai Kelkar visited the localities of Harijans.

On the same occasion, the Harijan students of Nawabpura and Bhangipura locality of Akola dist. get sweets from renowned persons. Khadi was distributed among Bhangi Brothers in Bhangipura locality of Deshmukh File in traditional way.

The monthly scholarship of Rs. 25 was given to total 7 school and college going students by Raghumal Charity Trust. David Scholarship of Rs. 40 is given to 4 college students.

Two schools of Bhangipura and Mangpura of Akola, classes of Maharwada, Harijan school of Umari and Adult school, two boys schools at Sukoda and Kanadi used to receive economic help with teaching aids. Dadasaheb Pandit, Khapli, Sawalaram Gawande, Omkar, etc. worked in these institutions.

New school for deprived class was established in Kanadi on occasion of Dusshera. Rohidas Library is opened at Akola with 60 books only. This library get copper tank for storing water, 10 wall watches, etc. by Vidarbha Women Boarding, Akola. This boarding provided as much help as they can.

Dr. Joglekar, Dr. Khapali Vaidhya, Dhondse Vaidhya (Washim), Dr. Kashikar, Ramabai Kelkar (Akola), Kamlabai Bhagwat etc. distributed medicine to tribal people. Facilities were provided to 65 patients.

Bhakre admitted 9 members of Harijans in Shri Vinkar School. Omkar Bhangipura and Mangipura Medicines Babhulgaon, dist. Akola. Shri Dinkarrao Jahagirdar distributed medicine among 50 patients. Shrimati Durgatari took voluntary retirement from Vidarbha Prant Harijan Seva Sangh. Shri Karnik was selected for the place. ‘Harijan Parishad’ was held on 14th of April 1936 at Mahagaon in Yavatmal district. Adv. Mahajan chaired the meeting. The meeting passed the following resolutions:

1. Death of Government appointed Harijan member Shri Barde was condoled.
2. Institutions encouraged communal fights should be boycotted.
Nehru Harijan Boarding was established on 30th June 1939 at Paratwada.\textsuperscript{68} Boarding was opened for Harijan students. ‘Harijan Chhatralaya’ was started at Akola inaugurated by Seth Kisanlalji Govindka.\textsuperscript{69}

Some Harijan localities faced the problem of scarcity of water. Rajesaheb Laxmi Nivasji Jahagirdar made the well water available for all Harijans at that time.\textsuperscript{70}

The admirable work had been done by Harijan Seva Sangha. The improvements in the development of Harijans highlighted through the admirable work done by Harijan Seva Sangh. It was cleared from the reports maintained by this Sangh. Harijans were allowed to enter in all temples was the first step in the revolutionary activity started for overall development of this group. It was the greatest victory in the path of the rights of the depressed sections.\textsuperscript{71}

The work started by M.K.Gandhi in Berar region for establishment of Harijan Seva Sangh promoted sympathy among untouchables of same race and creed. It got impetus within a very short time-span. It helped to decrease the feeling of untouchability among people.

\textbf{7.7 Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and Dalit Movement:-}

Dalit movement began prior to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in Berar. Janoji Khandare, Kisan Faguji Bansode, Ganesh Akaji Gawai, Kalicharan Nandagawli etc started initial movement. They created awareness among Dalit by working in religious, social and political fields. Janoji Khandare started hostel for students in front of Kholeshwar temple in Tajnapeth at Akola. It was the first hostel for backward communities in the district and proved immensely helpful to reach benefit of education. It was held as the valuable gift for youths in Dalit communities. The trust also received a plot of land in adjacent area of the hostel to start a technical school. The people from established sections opposed the demand. But they could not succeed. Janoji Khandare first established the Boarding in 1895 without taking assistance either from the government or the society.\textsuperscript{72} He started for Dalit students from different untouchable communities. It was one of the first and initial institutions in complete Berar and Maharashtra. It was the source of inspiration for the youths of down trodden communities. It boosted the educational and cultural graph of the backward communities.

Like Janoji Khandare, Kisan Faguji Bansode established Chokhamela School in 1907. With the help of Ganesh Akaji Gawai he established Chokhamela hostel in 1914. Its branches were later opened up in Amravati, Achalpur, Yavatmal and Chikhali.\textsuperscript{73} Ganesh Akaji Gawai also
worked for emancipating down trodden communities. He established Mahar Sudharana Mandal in 1909. It worked to educate boys and girls and different social works like stopping child marriage, allowing marriage in sub castes etc.

7.7.1 Thugaon Mahar Convention, 1911:-

Some of the conventions of Mahar communities was held at Shugaon in Amravati district. The convention held in 1911 was important one. Total 2500 representatives from Berar region attended the convention. N. A. Dravid, Pune, Vitthalrao Shinde (Mumbai), Janabai Shinde were specially invited for the convention. The office bearers and workers in Mahar Communities from Akola, Achalpur, Dhule etc were invited for the convention. Chinhaji Aakaji Gawai, Shugaon presided over the programme. The convention discussed the issues of child marriage, dowry, simple marriage ceremonies putting aside extravagant expenses, reliving of hatred among different castes and passed these resolutions. The sixth important resolution passed in the convention was that the government should make primary education free and compulsory without any fee structure and other regulations from the down trodden castes.

The impact of the convention was noticed on Dalit community in Berar. They started efforts to become self dependent. A feeling of self reliance was getting appreciated and adopted and shunned dirty works. Thus, Dalit Movement began in Berar. Different congregations and conventions of Mahar community were growing held. Effort was started to awaken the Dalit communities. The education was hailed and accepted as the solution. Its impact was growingly seen. Its impact was increasingly felt on the society. Different Mahar congregations and conventions were organized. The meeting of Berar Mahar Council was held on May 29 and 30,1921 at Badnera. Its main objectives were as follows:

1) To obliterate social and religious restrictions and discrimination imposed on Mahar, Mang, Chambhar, Dohar and other backward communities.

2) To demand equal political rights,

3) To demand reservations and facilities for backward communities.

Different conventions and meetings were held to create socio-political awareness and seek reservations for the society.

These conventions and public meeting propelled the backward communities that they should not follow caste restrictions and live amicably. They became gradually awakened and made aware of their rights. It created fear among the upper classes. The government also did
injustice to the Mahar Baluta and Jagle. There were made deprived of their employments. The Mahar people who were meted out injustice started organizing. They complained the Governor of the Central Province. A gradual awareness was seen among Mahar communities to fight against the injustice.

They came to understand that they should fight for their own rights as it was almost uncertain to achieve their freedom and right if they depend on other sections of the society. Untouchables should come to understand the need of unity by coming together forgetting their sub castes and other differences. They understood that it would increase their power and no other should attempt to harm their interests and rights. Mahar community in Berar gradually became self aware of their rights. They began to think that the heinous treatment they get at the hands of the upper castes should not be tolerated. Therefore they started uniting themselves.

When Montague had arrived in India, a delegation of the depressed communities led by Sir Narayanrao Chandawkar and Vitthal Ramji Shinde met him and presented their plight to him. Sir Narayanrao Chandawkar was the chairman of the Depressed Classes Mission and Vitthal Ramji Shinde had control on these classes and these classes used to work as per their directions.

**7.7.1.2 9th convention of Mahar Council of Central Province & Berar at Chikhali, District Buldana, 1920:**

The ninth convention of Mahar Council of C.P. & Berar was held at Chikhali, Dist Buldana on Feb 7 and 8, 1920. Vishramji Shivramji Sawaiitul Talwale, Nagpur presided over the two day convention. Around 2000 representatives including 50 women had come to attend the convention. Some of Brahmins and Muslims also graced the function. Baburao Daitabrao Yadav from Kolipur, R. Kamble and R. Shinde also attended the meet.

The convener of the convention Mr Bansod threw light on the spread of the Mahar Council. The president read out his speech. He appreciated the government’s initiatives for upliftment of the Backward community and different reforms for the community were discussed. R B Damle, Buldana also delivered his lecture. The resolutions passed at the convention include appreciation of the declaration of the King and demanding reservation in Government Services, education. It included demands of appointing Mahar representatives at Municipality, district board, law councils. The resolution also sought caste wise reservation at Village Panchayats and Maharki Vatans.
Similarly such conventions and meetings were also held at different districts to propagate the works of Mahar Council.

7.7.2 **Bhartiya Bahishkrut Parishad, Nagpur, 1920:-**

The convention of Bhartiya Bahishkrut Parishad was held at Nagpur on 31 May and 1 June, 1920. It was historically important as it was the first national convention held on backdrop of the political rights of the backward communities. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Kolhapur presided over the convention while Kalicharan Nandagawli was the convener of the convention. Ganesh Akaji Gawai and Kishan Kaguji Bansod were the secretaries. Around 500 representatives from Madras (Chennai), Mumbai, Khadakpur, CP & Berar attended the convention. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, C. N. Shiwatkar, S. G. Kamble, Kadam, K. G. Kale, Aidale, Bhosale from Mumbai came to attend the convention. It passed the resolutions including following demand and points

1) They should get representation in legislative council as against their population.
2) A separate department to be formed to ensure social and economical upliftment of the depressed classes.
3) A resolution for free and compulsory education.
4) A need was stressed for compulsory education of girls.
5) Legislative Council to have non Brahmin Education Minister.

Dr. Ambedkar’s work in the convention was great to shape the future political rights of the depressed communities. Dr Ambedkar was yet to involved in Political activities. But as a spoke person of the depressed sections, he utilized the opportunities to stress the demands for political freedom.

Dr. Ambedkar also did an exemplary of eradicating the feeling of untouchability even in sub castes of the untouchables by organizing joint feast for people of depressed sections for the first time.

7.7.3 **Impact of the convention of All India Dalit Congress held at Nagpur in 1930 on Berar:-**

The convention All India Dalit Congress was held at Nagpur in August 8 and 9, 1930. It was held at Vyankatesh theatre, Nagpur. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was the president of the convention. His address was important and thought provoking. Its lasting impact was felt on the downtrodden people in Berar.
The following resolutions were passed in the conventions.

1) The first resolution tabled by Dr Ambedkar asserted that National Congress’s objective of complete freedom was not acceptable stressing need of colonized independence.

2) The second resolution includes a) better representation in legislative councils, b) special Act allowing reservation for candidates of depressed classes in Government jobs, c) right to make complaints about educational dereliction directly to the secretary of States in reforms act.

3) The third resolution welcomed the decisions in Round Table Conference. Similarly, the convention also passed a resolution of declaring Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar as the only leader of the depressed society by voice vote.

The convention of Dalit Congress held at Nagpur had special political and historic importance. It was the first all India level National convention by bringing representatives of depressed sections of society on one platform. Secondly, leaders of the depressed sections accepted leadership of Dr. Ambedkar and put their demands before the government. It also selected Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar as their representative for the Round Table Conference to be held in Great Briton. Fourthly, it finalized All India level organization. Fifthly it laid foundation of the future politics of the depressed sections. In brief, the first page of nationwide Dalit movement was written in the first National Convention of the Dalit Congress.

Depressed sections in Berar accepted leadership of Dr Ambedkar. It also brought fore regional leadership in the province. It also gave impetus in making tradition of young, resolute, principled and devoted workers.

7.7.4 Impact of Mahad Chavdar Lake Agitation on Berar:-

The socio-political scenario in India was rapidly changing. But the depressed classes, which were in chain of age old caste based slavery, understood that their slavery and inhuman treatment could not cease by depending on upper castes Hindu. Their dry sympathy could not solve their problems.

The depressed sections had required a strong leadership. During the same phase, Dr. Ambedkar was taken into the Bombay Legislative Council. The influence of Dr. Ambedkar was felt on the mindset of the depressed sections. His mouthpieces Muknayak and later Bahishkrut Bharat created awareness among the down trodden people. Dr. Ambedkar sparked a spirit of
revolt and self dignity among the down trodden people. Freedom as it was declared to be birth right of Brahmin, it was also of Dalit. With this awareness, Dr. Ambedkar took up his struggle for social freedom and declared Satyagraha for Mahad Chavdar lake in 1927. Following it, a great congregation of Untouchables was held at Mahad on Dec 26.\footnote{81} It also was attended by Brahmins and non Brahmins as well. The first resolution stressing equality by birth among all Hindu was passed. It passed declaration of Equality among all Hindus. Its consequent step was decided to burn Manusmriti that orders social discrimination and abate injustice among Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudras. The second resolution was tabled by G. N. Sahastrabuddhe, a Brahmin and supported by P.. N Rajabhoj, a cobbler. Then at around 9 pm, copies of “Manusmruti” were burned at the hands of untouchable ascetic.\footnote{82} Thousands of untouchable men and women participated in the agitation. The upper castes Hindus bitterly opposed the social rights of the untouchables.

After the successful agitation, different depressed sections in Berar also made different agitations to achieve their dignity.

On Tuesday July 26, 1927, a meeting was convened at the bungalow of Dadasaheb Bagwe to think about entry of untouchables in the temple of the goddess. R. Dasaheb Patil presided over the meeting. R. Gawai, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh etc were chiefly present at the meeting.\footnote{83} The meeting passed the following resolutions.

Last year an application was made to the trustees of Ambadevi temple seeking entry of the depressed sections into the temple. But no satisfactory answer was received. Mahatma Gandhi and other political leaders have also started campaign to remove the blot of untouchability from the society. Further meeting of Hindu Sabha held at Morshi had decided to make open all public temples and wells for the down trodden. The meeting observed that if untouchables sought entry into the temple, they would not be opposed by Hindus as they were also Hindu by births. But it decided to send a notice to the trustee committee of the temple to understand their views. The responsibility was entrusted on the president. It was decided to wait for positive reply for 15 days. It was expected positive reply from the trustees. But in view of the negative reply, depressed communities should be prepared for a stringent agitation. The meeting was adjourned after the president’s speech till 8 pm next day.

On Nov 14, 1927, a programme was organized by depressed classes to felicitate Dr. Ambedkar at Amravati. At meeting held at 7 am, the organizing committee warmly felicitated Dr
Ambedkar. A photograph of students with local leadership and Dr Ambedkar was taken. Addressing the students, Dr. Ambedkar called on to develop their characters that would help to wash out the stigma of untouchability. The meeting was started at 8 pm in the evening. But the news of Shri Balaram Ambedkar demise came by telegram. Everybody felt sorry. In such a delicate situation, Dr. Ambedkar’s resolute posture left a lasting impression on the audience.

The meeting passed the following resolutions.

1) The first resolution was condoled the death of Shri Balaram Ambedkar. The working was stopped for 10 minutes.

2) The second resolution though accepted the demand of postponing the agitation for the temple entry decided on fifteen of the month; it decided not to accept any restriction that disallows entry into the temple. G. S. Khaparde, senior leader and member of Council of State and president of Ambadevi Sansthan trust and Gawai, MLC and president of Satyagrah samiti sought time for consideration. It was also decided to make agitation collectively.

Both the resolutions were passed by majority.

The trustees of Ambadevi Santhan at Amravati were given notice for the satyagraha scheduled in Aug 1927 for entry of the untouchables. A mutual understanding was formed but it later fell short. To give thrust to the issue, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh, Gawai and others called a convention at Amravati. Dr. Ambedkar was appointed president of the convention. Along with Dr. Ambedkar his associates Deorao Naik, Shivatkar, R. R. Kambli, D.V. Pradhan came to attend the meeting. It was held at Indrabhuwan theatre. Barrister Tidke, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh, Chaubal Wakil, Gawai, MLC, Keshavrao Deshmukh, Dr. Patwardhan were chiefly attended the meeting. Dr. Ambedkar delivered his erudite and fierce lecture. The Berar Untouchables Council chaired by Dr. Ambedkar was held on Nov 13 and 14, 1927. As a president he delivered an ardent address.

The Dalit movement got momentum with the growing awareness among the depressed sections to lead a respected and humane life by opposing age old imposed social slavery. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar opened up a well at village Paturda in Buldana district on May 29, 1929. A meeting held at Paturda passed a provoking resolution that untouchables should embrace Islam. Its positive impact was felt as the upper classes opened up four public wells for the depressed sections. Along with the depressed classes, Upper Classes also took water from the
Similarly, family based “Pan Supari” programmes of allowing lower classes were also started openly. The members of the depressed communities were often invited for family programme. After wells were made opened, Mahar community men started taking water from some 100-125 wells situated at farm. Hindus were annoyed at the announcement of embracing Islam. Some of Mahar people had embraced Islam. But its second positive impact was felt in the mind set of Hindus who were inclined to allow water to the denied sections. In fact, they sent a resolution to four district councils and 18 Municipalities that public wells are open for people of all castes and religions and asked the administration put such board at the public wells.

Its impact was seen when the doors of Dantdarbar at Elichpur were opened by the upper classes on July 31, 1929. The event was celebrated by the Untouchability Eradicating Committee of the National Congress. It was declared the unanimity of the trustees of the temples over opening of the temple’s doors for people from all communities. A plate informing free entry for different castes was unveiled at the hands of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj. He also entered the temple along with 50 members of the depressed sections of the society.

A feeling of equality was started generating in the depressed sections. They began to support Dr. Ambedkar to represent the depressed sections at the Round Table conference. With the same view, C.P. & Berar Mahar Council was held at Wardha in 1930. L. K. Ogale, MLC presided over the meeting. The council passed the following resolutions.

1) Dr Ambedkar should be invited as the representative of the depressed classes.
2) Congratulation for successful satyagrah at Pune, Nashik and Sachindram.
3) Support to All India Dalit Congress to be held Nagpur.
4) Government should provide needful scholarships for students from depressed sections.
5) To take back Mahar community men into the caste who had had relation with Matang caste.
6) Appointing a delegation to discuss the resolutions with the government authority etc.

The leadership and workers in the depressed classes gave momentum to political movement. They started taking gradual steps to ensure complete change in their social life.

Simon Commission, though, started taking objective picture of the plights and agonies of the depressed sections, it was not complete. It felt the need of giving constitutional protection to
the depressed sections. But actually the depressed sections neither received fair treatment nor justice.

Therefore, the Dalit leaders in C.P & Berar supported the thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar and accepted their leadership. A confidence was created among Dalit about the role of Dr. Ambedkar. They were gradually aware of the injustice meted out at the hands of the upper castes.

**7.7.5 Round Table Conference and Political Scenario in Berar:-**

The Round table conference began in 1930. Dr. Ambedkar demanded provincial independence. He demanded a declaration on fundamental rights of the depressed sections in India. He also demanded sufficient representation to the members of the depressed section into the regional and central legislature. Dr. Ambedkar’s performance in the Round Table conference was important and in accordance for the interest of depressed section.\(^{90}\)

The conference had undeniable impression of fearless, firebrand and brilliant character of Dr. Ambedkar. While demanding political rights to the depressed sections, he was not a least short to national Brahmin leaders.\(^{91}\)

The round table conference undeniably left its impact on C.P. and Berar. The second All India convention of Indian Dalit Congress was held at Kamthi, Dist Nagpur. Hardas L N was the convener. The main objective was to convene All India council of Dalit Congress.

The conference was important in two points as it accepted resolution firstly on thinking of the contract of Minorities and secondly on establishing All India level Central Organizations.

Dr. Ambedkar and Raobahadur Shriniwasan gave a detailed briefing about the Minority contract at the Round Table Conference. M. S. Raja and Ganesh Akaji Gawai were given special invitations for the conference.\(^{92}\)

Many noted personalities from Berar attended the meeting. Lakshman Krusnaji Agole, MLC (Amravati) was vice president of the conference.

The council declared the formation of All India Depressed Classes Federation. The regional representatives were appointed on the representative committees. It is as follows

1) T. C. Sakhare, MLC
2) L. N. Hardas
3) D. L. Patil
4) A. K. Agole, MLC
5) V. D. Makekar
6) R. M. Borkar

The working committees of All India Depressed Classes Federation and Central Province Depressed Classes Federation were selected. The members from C.P. & Berar were included into it. The second convention held at Kamthi put a remarkable step in the political history of Dalit communities. In 1930, depressed communities had put complete faith on Dr Ambedkar and selected him unanimously their leader. Dr Ambedkar and Raobahadur Shriniwasan fought for the rights and dignities of the depressed classes at the Round Table Conference and made a contract to receive separate constituency for the Backward Communities. His great contribution for the upliftment of the down trodden created a sense of confidence and optimism. Dalit Congress accepted the second convention. All the leaders and workers present at the convention unanimously selected Dr Ambedkar as their leader.

Some resolute Hindu leaders attempted to cause split in the leadership of Dr Ambedkar by creating scene against the issue of separate constituency for the depressed sections. Hemachandra Khandekar and his few supporters protested by showing black flags. P N Rajabhoj, a member of depressed class, who later joins the federation, also attempted create some disturbance.

After the second All India level convention of Dalit Congress held at Kamathi on May 7 and 8, 1930, different conventions, public meetings were taken throughout the country and supported leadership of Dr Ambedkar.

The third convention of Amravati district Council for Untouchables was organized at Amravati. Daulatarao Barse was present as the president while L K Ogale, G M Gadge, Gadling, Tambakhe, Thrat, Ingole, Ganvir etc were chiefly present on the occasion. Daulatrao Barse delivered his presidential address. He congratulated the mental caliber of Dr Ambedkar and called on the workers of depressed sections to unite. He further said that the time of freedom from the socially imposed slavery. He called on the members to strive for their unity in view of the next visit of Dr Ambedkar.

T C Sakhare, MLC (Nagpur) delivered his lecture at Patipura in Yavatmal on April 4, 1933. Tulshidas Janwe presided over the function. He briefed the forthcoming Puna Pact, the next policy of Dr Ambedkar and the work of the committees set up to eradicate the stigma of untouchability.
Shankarrao Meshram, secretary for propagation of C.P & Berar Dalit Federation took public rallies at different places in the province and formed the branches of the federations. Public meetings were held at Hinganghat (Dist Wardha), Umared (Nagpur), Badnera (Amravati), Malkapur, Talni etc and the branches of the federation were formed.

Thus, Dalit Federation did the ground work for creating social awareness about the rights and dignity of Dalits. Different public meetings were held to educate people about the age old atrocities committed against the Dalits. They propagated the message of social equality. They gradually became aware of their rights. Looking at the rapidly pervading movement, upper caste Hindus had some fear.

7.7.5.1 Impact of Pune Pact on Berar:-

After the British Government declared a separate constituency for the depressed sections of the society, Mahatma Gandhi launched his indefinite hunger strike. It was indispensable for the upper caste Congress leaders to discuss the issue with Dr Ambedkar. Congress leaders started taking relentless efforts. The situation was serious. Dr Ambedkar had dual problems one firsthand the life of Mahatma Gandhi and on the second hand political rights of the depressed sections. Mahatma Gandhi said to Dr Ambedkar that his life is at the hands of Dr Ambedkar. Dr Ambedkar had to respond to the call by Mahatma Gandhi and had to sign Pune Pact ensuring the crippled political rights for the depressed sections.94

After the Puna pact, the incidents of atrocities against Dalits were growingly occurred in CP & Berar. One such incident at Borgaon in Amravati district occurred when upper class person beat a Mahar community man for simply putting gandh on his forehead. But when injured Mahar attempt to retaliate, members of upper class Patil community attacked Maharwada. They had to leave the place and sought government’s mercy. Even police did not intervene in the matter. It is only due to the effort of Lakshmanrao Agole, MLC the families of Mahar Community could come back to their locality. Such many incidents occurred in Berar.

On Sepr 24, 1933, Pune Pact Day was celebrated at Yavatmal. A rally of the photographs of Mahtma Gandhi and Dr Ambedkar was taken out. Around 700 to 800 people participated in the procession. After the rally, a public meeting was held in front of the office of Dr Ambedkar Seva Dal. Mangal Chintaman Ramteke presided over the meeting. Diwalu Kanhu Thekedar and Tulshiram Domaji Chavan delivered lectures on the work of Dr Ambedkar.
A Berar Cobblers’ Council was held at Kapus Talni. Similarly, public meetings were also held at Malkapur, Warora, Wardha and other places. The meetings congratulated the works of Dr Ambedkar and supported his participation in the Joint Parliamentary Committee at London. The depressed classes in Berar backed Dr Ambedkar and satisfied with his arduous work. In 1933, the British Government appointed following persons as honorary Magistrates. They included G M Thawre (Nagpur), Raghwendrarao Borkar, president of Tarun Mahar Sangh, Shivcharan Andel (Bilaspur), Paikuji Meshram (Balaghat), Baraghobadu Ghodichor (Bhandara), Pralhad Dongre of Dogaon in Chandrapur, Pachore (Wardha), Sadashiv Telang and Vitthalrao Makesar Wani Distt. Yavatmal and A K Ogale and P K Bhatkar from Amravati.

In 1933, different public meetings and conventions were held at Wardha, Elichpur, Malkapur, Buldana, Amravati, Yavatmal, Loni and complete trust and confidence was expressed on the leadership of Dr Ambedkar. Similarly, resolutions of these conventions requested the government to allow employment to the educated and eligible youths of the depressed sections in the government services. These meeting also put the problems in education fields. It also regretted the cancellation of grants of Janoji Boardings and requested the government to restore the grants.

Thus, different public meetings, rallies and conventions served as platforms to exhibit their demands and social, political and educational problems before the society at large and the government. It naturally gave boost to the social mobility. Dalit movement receives impetus with the able and foresighted leadership of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar.

7.7.6 Bill allowing entry into temples and Berar: -

On March 24, 1933, Ranga Iyyar presented the bill allowing people in depressed classes’ entry into temples in the central legislature. It was brought in view to remove the inhuman customs imposed on the depressed sections. Bigoted Hindus had greatly opposed the bill.95 An open letter in Marathi opposing the bill was released by the bigoted Hindu leadership in Berar in dailies on Dec 17, 1933. It cited the names of Balshastri Ghatre, Keshavrao Tamhne, Krushnashastri Ghule, similarly educated Brahmin, Raje Ragujirao Bhosle and his knights, traders, Marwari etc who opposed the bill.96 It pointed out following resolutions:

1) The present text and provisions in the temple entry bill are not acceptable to the untouchables.

2) Constant support to Pune Pact and leadership of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar.
3) Complete confidence of people of All India Dalit Federation.
4) At least one employee of a depressed class to be appointed in the government offices and Bench Magistrate Court.

7.7.7 Dr. Ambedkar’s Announcement of religious conversion and Berar:-

Dr Ambedkar within the Hindu fold led the agitation of social freedom of the depressed sections for the period of 6 years. But the upper caste society and bigoted Hindus declined to support the cause of the down trodden. The bill allowing entry of the depressed communities’ men into the temple was brought in but with recurrent flaws. It was not acceptable for Dr Amebedkar. Then, Dr Ambedkar declared to denounce Hindu faith in one of the conventions.97

Dr Ambedkar’s announcement of the conversion started receiving comprehensive support to his initiative. Many of them felt that period of four to five years too long. The depressed sections were greatly awaiting their release from the age old brutal system of social slavery. With the announcement, their latent aspirations found new paths. The Berar Regional Council for untouchables went at many places in Amravati districts and supported the initiative of the religious conversion.98

7.7.7.1 Berar Regional Untouchables Council, 1935:-

Berar Regional Untouchable Council’s meeting was held under the aegis of Dalit Federation at Patipura in Amravati on Dec 29, 1935. Patitpawan Das Maharaj, president of Nasik Satyagrah Samiti chief presided over the meeting.99

Around 1000 persons came from different parts of Berar attended the meeting. After the speech of the president, Sambuji Khandare put the resolution of the conversion. It was supported by S T Wankhade, ST Chandur Railway. H D Behad, secretary of CP & Berar Society also supported the initiation. Many leaders from the depressed classes spoke on the occasion. Dr Sabnis, P K Deshmukh Wakil and other persons from upper sections of the society spoke on the occasion. Some Muslims and one Sikhs also spoke on the occasion. G A Kurhade and others suggested the depressed classes to wait for another five years which was turned aside by the leaders of the depressed sections. The resolution was passed with voice vote.100 Later, the council supported the views of Dr Ambedkar and D K Bhagat presented before Hemand Commission.
Sikh attempted to attract Dalit sections to them. On Aug 26, 1936, a meeting was convened at Akola. It was chaired by Budhsingh. Durgatai Joshi, K V Sahastrabuddhe, Gadgil were chiefly present on the occasion. Gyani Navrang Singh of Amritsar and Sardar Amarsingh of Nagpur were the chief speakers at the meeting. He informed some examples who have converted to Sikhism since last 10 years and relieved from humiliation. Sikhism came when incursion of Islam was on made on tip of sword, he added. He also informed that Guru Nanak had started the religion with four untouchables.

Zabu Sahu Sirsat and Shambhu Ansu Khandare also represented their views as spokespersons of the depressed communities. 30 Dalit persons attended the meeting.

This way Dr. Ambedkar attempted to attract Dalit towards himself. Like Sikhism, Islam and Christianity tried hard to woo the depressed classes.

On Aug 28, 1936, a meeting was held at Akola. Zabuji Shirsat presided over the meeting. The meeting was attended by around hundred men and women including individuals from Muslim community. S.B.Manvatkar from Kamthee was the main speaker. The meeting passed the resolution of thanks giving for the British Monarch and also congratulated S.A.Khandare for his nomination on Akola Municipal Committee. He was requested to help the Community. The resolution also included support to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar’s decision of religious conversion.

A meeting was held on Aug. 28, 1936 at Malkapur in Buldhana district to support the issue of religious conversion taken by Dr. Ambedkar. The announcement of religious conversion received spontaneous response in Berar. People were fed up with the atrocities committed by upper caste Hindus on the untouchables. Awareness was created among the untouchables about the atrocities. They found the part of religious conversion better option to regain the individual and social rights snatched by Hindu community. Political rights are equally important with social and religious rights. They understood that the issue of conversion would lead them towards progress. The untouchables understood the upper castes in Hindu would not allow even their basic human rights. They came to know stubborn attitudes in Hindu which would never allow giving them their basic rights.

7.7.8 Formation of Independent Labour Party and contribution of Berar:-

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar established Independent Labour Party in Mumbai on Aug 15, 1936. To establish its branch in Berar, R W Fule, workers’ leader in Nagpur wrote letter to
establish its branch in CP & Berar and requested his consent. After Dr Ambedkar gave the consent, R W Fule interacted with L N Hardas and Dr Panjabrao Deshmukh and consequently meeting of the followers was held on Nov 5, 1936. S G Naik, LMC Amravati presided over the meeting. The meeting established the branch of Independent Labour Party and its working committee was elected.

The manifesto of the Independent Labour Party was published in English. Dr Ambedkar gave a new direction to the political aspirations of the depressed classes. According the newly adopted constitutions, 20 seats were reserved for the depressed classes from CP & Berar province. Out of these 20 seats, 9 seats were given in Marathi speaking area while 11 were given in Hindi area of the Central Province. The first primary elections were held on Dec 1, 1936. Dr Ambedkar, president of the Independent Labour Party declared the names of candidates for the reserved and the general seats in a letter dated Jan 14, 1937. These names include

1) Sambhu An sui Khandare (Akola-Balapur Rural)
2) Yadavrao Pawar Chikhalikar (Chikhali-Mekhar)
3) Sampatrao Ganapatrao Naik (Elichpur-Daryapur-Melghat)
4) D K Bhagat (Yavatmal-Darvha Rural)
5) Dr Panjabrao Deshmukh (Amravati tehsil constituency)
6) Vitthal Banduji Chaubal (Berar East Constituency)
7) Vimalabai Deshmukh, BA (Akola-Amravati Women Constituency)

The independent Labour Party had contested 15 seats out of which five candidates won the election while other members were defeated in Berar. The following candidates were elected from the reserved seats

1) L N Hardas, Nagpur-Kamathi
2) Raghobhaji Ghodichor, Bhandara-Sakoli
3) Dewaji Bhiwaji Khobragade, Chanda Brahmpuri
4) D K Bhagat, Yavatmal-Darvha, and
5) Sitaram Patil, Nagpur-Umred

The political party also contested the general election. The Independent Labour Party had given tickets to the candidates irrespective of their caste, religion and their creed. But the later the party had come across some bitter experiences leading to the formation of All India Scheduled Caste Federation.
7.7.9 Formation of Indian Scheduled Caste Federation and Berar Region:-

The second convention of All India Depressed Classes Council was held at Nagpur in 1942. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, N Shivraj and large number of dignitaries from different parts assembled for the convention. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar stressed the need of forming federation for the scheduled classes while elaborating initiative in Cripps Commission. The meeting accepted the following resolutions.

1) Cripps commission report was declared unaccepted.
2) Approval to the constitution was made binding.
3) The recommendations in the new constitutions were declared.
4) Decision on rural set up.
5) The formation of All India Scheduled Castes Federation.

The convention passed the five resolutions. On the occasion, Dr Ambedkar was warmly felicitated by dedicating a citation to him. The citation glorified the immense work of Dr Ambedkar who had launched a stringent agitation for twenty years for the development of the depressed sections; and by uniting depressed sections; he led the agitation demanding their political and social rights. He was also congratulated for his selection as the member of the Viceroy’s Council.

7.7.10 Formation of All India Scheduled Caste Federation:-

Dr Ambedkar understood the need of central political organization to give impetus to political movement of depressed section. Thus with the view to have central political organization, it was decided to form All India Scheduled Caste Federation. It was appealed to all organizations working towards the end of development of the depressed classes to include themselves into the Federation. The authority was given to the draft committee selected to form the constitution of the Federation. The committee had to present the draft before the provisional council of the federation which had the authority to accept the constitution.

Raobahadur Shivraj was the president of the provisional council of All India Scheduled Caste Federation. Three members were selected from CP & Berar. They include R.V.Kawade, K.H.Shendre and H.L.Kosare. The strong body of All India Scheduled Caste Federation was formally established at Nagpur in 1942. The federation following its principles of Justice, Fraternity and Equality worked for the emancipation of depressed sections.
unit of All India Scheduled Castes Federation for CP & Berar was established at the meeting held in 1943 at Nagpur. Dadasaheb Gaikwad, MLA Nashik presided over the meeting. P N Rajabhoj, general secretary of the Federation established the regional branch. The members of the Provincial unit of All India Scheduled Castes Federation were declared on the occasion. The office bearers of the new body were as follow:

- President - G. T. Meshram
- Vice President - D. L. Patil, MLA
- General Secretary - H. L. Kosare
- Secretary - P. Gajghate
- Secretary - R. V. Kawade
- Cashier - S. B. Hadke

With the foundation of the scheduled caste federation, the people of the depressed sections came to know about the positives steps being taken to ensure their development. The communities understood the stupendous problems in the task of creating social conducive atmosphere to ensure their development. They felt the need of social organizations based on the principal of social equality. Its direct result came in the form of the first council of the provincial unit of All India Scheduled Castes Federation, which was held at Akola on Dec 9 and 10, 1945. Dr Ambedkar attended the meeting. The meeting was attended by members and workers from Buldana, Amravati, Yavatmal, Akola and the CP. 75000 people attended the meeting. The meeting guided the people about the forthcoming elections. The leaders appealed the attended assembly to elect the members of All India Scheduled Castes Federation. The strong and resolute leadership of Dr Ambedkar evoked a sense of optimism and strong confidence in the depressed classes. The large gathering established the fact that the federation was the only representative of the depressed sections.

The depressed sections became aware with the strong movement launched by Dr Ambedkar throughout Maharashtra and the state of CP and Berar. A sense of annoyance was created in the scheduled castes people about the grave injustice done to them. It gave rise to increasing demand of political right along with the social right. The doors of education were made open to the depressed sections during the British regime. Few of the depressed class members became educated. Dr Ambedkar called on people to educate them and to organize. Thus, he propelled the depressed sections to fight for their human rights.
7.8 Awareness of Women:-

The condition of women during Pre-British era was suffocating. She had negligible position in the male dominated society. She had to bear stiff injustice done to her in society. Different restrictions were put on women. The condition of women was feeble with different restrictions and inhumane traditions of child marriage, marriage wild aged, Sati custom, ban on marriage of widows, polygamy etc.

During British regime, the western education was propagated in the society. Slowly but steadily women were educated. She started coming out of her house. Household choirs did not remain her world alone.

In Berar education of women was initiated with the foundation of Government Girls School in 1867. It was the first ever Girls School in Berar. In Later period, educated women started teaching at these schools. Education made them self reliant. The British government passed the law prohibiting Sati and Child Marriage. For the proper implementation of the act, it was necessary that women should be educated. A feeling of self dependency was generated in women due to education. She came to realize the different bondages and restrictions put on her by the society. Western Education, intellectual awakening, women education, welcome of new thoughts, increased in scientific outlook were got impetus during British regime. Newspaper also created public awareness. Its impact was also felt on social workers here. They understood education as only solution to improve the condition of women and bring out her from her age old drudgery. Thus women reform movement received impetus. Prevention of Sati Act was made in 1814. Ishwar chand Vidyasagar took efforts to pass the Re marriage of Widows Act. It was passed in 1856. The legal options for women property (Stree Dhan) were started looked into more seriously. Balshastri Jambhekar propagated the new reforms of widow remarriages, women education and spread of education which were against the social acceptability. Gopal Hari Deshmukh established Vidhawa Punarviwah Utejak Mandal to propagate remarriage of child widows. Dadaoba Pandurang Tarkhatkar established Dnyan Prasarak Sabha to propagate social awareness and widow remarriage. Mahatma Fule and Savitribai Fule were active social workers. They did not stop simply by speaking. They took actual steps. They started the first school for girls to start the social reforms. He advocated remarriage of widows and started orphanage for abandoned girls.
Social Reformers from Mumbai Province started coming to Berar for the purpose of their government services. The percentage of education in Berar was very low. Sir Moropant Joshi, V M Mahajani, Deorao Vinayak Digambar took in hand the work of women education. Suryabhan Aade started a schools of Girls at village Keliweli in Akola district in 1883.\(^{108}\)

To promote girls education, the British government appointed women teachers. They declared different scholarship schemes and special prizes were given to them for their attendance. To train women teachers, Government Teachers Training schools were opened up at Amravati and Akola. Manutai Bapat started Ladies Home Class for women. Along with imparting education, she also increased their appetite for handicraft skills.

7.8.1 The dawn of women institutions in Berar region:-

Women came to know problems in society through education in Berar region. Society had forcefully imposed restrictions of child marriage, dowry system, social ban on widow remarriage, sati, adult marriage, etc. The British government introduced law against child-marriage. Social institutions tried to spread this law to the lowest strata of society. Women member of Berar education came to know that if a lady of this lowest level became literate, then only she became independent and society will change. It needed platform through which Women groups and Institutions will establish, thought women of Berar society.

Sir Moropant Joshi’s wife Yashodabai Joshi and other elite personality of Amravati established Vanita Samaj for women in 1883-93 at Amravati.\(^{109}\)

The objectives of Vanita Samaj were to develop the condition of girls as well as women of the society without any discrimination in caste, sect, and religion, to improve the condition of household women who stayed in four walls by broadening their views about society and to teach them techniques of how to handle their family life properly while doing jobs.

Social institutions were established by women in Berar region. Women started to come together through these institutions and started to discuss about their conditions. Through the exchange of thoughts new ideologies started to take place.

In 1897, the 13\(^{th}\) National Congress Conference was held under the leadership of Sir Shankaran Niar at Amravati.\(^{110}\) The exhibition of artificial and country-made things made by these women was organized in this conference where they got praise and encouragement by the people which led to increase the confidence level of these women. Vanita Samaj tried its best to
spread education to the lowest level of society to provide high school education for girls. They submitted their petition to the Commissioner of Berar region to help them in this purpose. These efforts bore fruits in 1916-17 by starting high school and hostel for girls in Amravati. Women education got impetus because of these efforts. Beside, marriage-age of girls also increased. The work to spread women education was continued by Vanita Samaj. Women took interest in social activities. They started to know that number of problems was still there in our society besides the four wall of our house and to remove it we had to take firm steps. Society would not progress if problems were not uprooted. For this education for women was necessary.

Women conference was held on 18th Feb. 1921 at Ganesh Theater in Amravati where Women society was established. Parvatibai Patwardhan and Chandrabai Shelke presented their views on non-co-operation movement and rights of women in it. The work of Women Society was run in Brahma Vidya Mandir at Jog square. Teaching classes and exhibitions were held with the help of Smt. Bayabai Mule, who was very efficient in her work. Rashtriya Kirtan, Speeches, etc. were organized by this society every year as well as Ganesh festival also celebrated with great enthusiasm. The horizons of work increased as the number of educated women started to work with this society. Women come together and started to exchange their views on the progress of society. The involvement of educated women started to increase in social work. They participated in debate and speech competition and proved their presence of mind. They became self-dependent through the mediums like making artificial things, weaving, toy making, making household things, etc. They started to give economic help to their family.

Like Vanita Samaj, Ladies club, Ladies Home Class, etc were established in Berar region. Vimlabai Deshpande, Shantabai Gokhale, Tarabai Randive, Sitabai Brahma, Shantabai Bhat, Manutai Khaparde worked for Vanita Samaj. In 1941-42, Amravati Women Society merged in Vanita Samaj. Women became self-dependent with the help of different social societies. Women step forward to prove their individuality in men-dominance culture.

Sharda Samaj was established in 1932 in Akola. It provided short term jobs as weaving, pre-primary schools, libraries etc. for women. It arranged small activities for girls and boys included games and sports, drawing, rangoli making, music, speech competition etc. every year. Institution ran by Shanta Padsule and Smt. Indrabai Dixit. It provided education to women in each field. Like Akola and Amravati, number of institution started to establish in Buldhana and Yavatmal with the objective of society development. The need of women education started
to spread far and wide. Women got knowledge of various fields. They acquired skill in weaving, embroidering, making flowers of papers etc. It helped them to become self-dependent. Society started to gather such skillful women at one place. Such institutions started to uproot the problems from society related to social, cultural, religious, lack of knowledge in economic field, injustice, etc. by thinking deeply over it. The formation of women groups tried to uproot the problems faced by the whole class of women.

Sharda Samaj celebration was held on Oct 23, 1939. Sharda Samaj organized the football tournaments on Dec 18, 1938. The best programmes of Shard Samaj included exhibition of Handicrafts at Akola. It also helped women for their recreation and help in health related issues of their children. Cultural programme of dance and singing was organized by Rashtriya Mahila Mandal at New Plaza Talkies at Akola on May 10, 1944. Sharda Samaj members requested the women members to do charity for Health campaign for women.

The educated women were gradually aware of their deprivation in the economic, religious, social and political fields. They understood the fact that unless they themselves took responsibility and come forward, their conditions could hardly be changed. The development can hardly be achieved sans freedom; therefore, their participation in political struggle was also stressed upon. To take steps in the same direction, Tara Mashruwala and Pramilatai Oke convened a meeting at Sami Narayan Dharma Bhuwan for setting up of the unit of Rashtriya Mahila Mandal (National Women Forum) on July 1933. 30 to 35 women attended the meeting. One temporary committee was formed to select the office bearers of the final working committee. The office bearers of the temporary committee included Radhadevi Goneka, as president, Ambutai Mahajani, vice president while secretary as Sushila Joshi, Tara Mashruwala and Pramilatai Oke. The members of the working committee included Durgatai Joshi, Radhabai Oke, Kakutai Gadre, Rukminibai Goenka, Ladubain Bhatia and Subhdarabai Joshi.

The Rashtriya Mahila Mandal organized swimming competitions of women on April 5, 1939. Radhabai Oke, Chief of Rashtriya Mahila Mandal was the convener of the tournaments.

7.8.1.2 Women in Berar and their participation Satyashodhak Samaj, Brahmanetar Samaj and Dalit Movements :

Educated women in Berar region started to participate in social activities. The meeting of women held on 5th of Nov.1920 in the Compur garden of Manjulibai Sonar. Janabai Mehere, Maltibai Wankhade, Shantibai Chaudhari, Shevantabai Sonar, Shevantabai Korde expressed their
views on education. Total 230 women belonged to Mali and Kunbi communities were present at the meet. Open meetings of various castes were held with help of Satyashodhak workers. Discussions on traditions, culture, religion, physical education alongwith the programme of women like haldi-kunku were held in it.

Regional Mali women 14th council was held at Yavatmal on 17th May 1924. Discussion was held on the topics like Women education and nourishment. From the beginning, thought of development of women put forth in Satyashodhak Revolution. The impact fell on the class of women in Berar region. The mentality to take part in Satyashodhak revolution began to take shape. It became mandatory for the women to crack the shackles and develop themselves. It got momentum through Satyashodhak revolution. Not only few women but the whole class came to know about their rights of equality, citizenship, personal values, equality in justice, etc. Society started to know the need of women not only in house but also in building the strong society. Individual development of men and women started to take shape in each citizen. Open Women council started to held from 1886 at Belura, dist. Amravati in Berar. Mali-Kunbi women’s open meeting started from Karajgaon expressing their views on social problems from 1919. It became uniform in 1923.

All India non-Brahmin women council was held under the leadership of Laxmibai Naidu in 1925 at Amravati. All non-Brahmin women came together and started to think about the development of the society. Women participated in Dalit revolution in large number. They gave their gold ornaments for the development of Dalit. They went to Dalit locality to make their area clean. They distributed clothes to their children and made them bath. They celebrated the programme of seas am and jag jerry with untouchable women. They also celebrated the women programme of haldi-kunku with Harijan women.

Like this women had participated in Dalit movement to bring development into the neglected sections of the society. Women will develop herself only when the thoughts like don’t make her slave, she is also a part of our society will spread all over.

7.8.1.3 Women’s Public meetings and Conventions in Berar:-

Women in Berar started participating in social activities. They were becoming more organized and started taking active participation. With the view to propel women to participate in social and political activities, different public meetings and conventions were held in Berar.

7.8.1.4 The First convention of Vidarbha Women Council, 1931, Amravati:-
The first convention of Vidarbha Mahila Parishad was held at Ganesh Theatre at Amravati on Oct 24, 1931. Dr Kamlabai Deshpande from Satara was the president of the convention while convener was Yashodabai Joshi. Around 500 women representatives from different strata of society participated in the convention. The convention passed the following resolutions.

1) women’s property right in the estate of her husband
2) suppressed women’s right to divorce
3) Act to restrict second marriage by men

These resolutions were passed at the convention.

Berar Women Conference was held at Akola which was presided over by Anusayabai Kale (Nagpur) at Akola on Oct 25, 1936. Mathurabai Dravid, wife of Panjabrao Deshmukh, Mayadevi Bhalchandra (Amravati), Anandibai Damle (Yavatmal), Durgatai Joshi, Manutai Bapat, Manutai Kolhatkar, Kamlabai Sohani, Ambutai Mahajani, Pramilatai Oke (Akola) etc noted women were chiefly present at the conference. Different resolutions were passed on the occasion, of which important resolutions are as follows:

1) Hindi should be the national language and circulating libraries should be opened to spread Hindi among women and it should also be taught in schools.
2) Girls in schools should be examined medically at regular intervals and reports of such examinations must be sent to the parents.
3) All delegates of conference should consider it their duty spread literacy among women.
4) Systematic physical training should be made compulsory in all schools for boys as well as girls.
5) Government was condemned for not supporting the Bill of Mrs Ramabai Tambe in the council.
6) Opposition was scolded to men marrying for the second time during the life time of the first wife.
7) Sympathy was expressed with the women who were subjected to violence in railway compartment and at the same time railway authorities were condemned for not taking any steps to put an end to such incidents.
8) Sympathetic treatment was pleaded for cases of infanticide committed by young widows.

9) The necessity of birth control was advocated.

10) The women should use Swadeshi cloths.

11) Support was given to Dr. Deshmukh’s bill in the Assembly urging women to have property rights.

Thus different resolutions were passed to increase the status of women in society. Durgatai Joshi (Akola) was appointed in the women constituency of Congress Parliamentary Board. The above resolutions pointed out the fact that women came on social front and started raising her voice against different wrong customs and practices. Different seminars and conventions were held in Berar which are as follows:

1) The first convention of Berar and Central Province Women Congress was held at Akola in Dec 1926. Vidyagori Mehta was the president while Durgatai Joshi was the convener of the convention. It put different demands to the government.

2) The second convention of All India Women’ Council was held at Yavatmal in 1929.

3) Vidarbha Pratink Parishad was held at Amravati on Aug 26, 1931. Yashodabai Joshi presided over the meeting while it reviewed the work of Vanita Samaj.

4) The third convention of Vidarbha Prantik Mahila Parishad was held at Akola on Nov 3,4,5 1933. Rani Lakshamibai Gawler was the president while Manutai Bapat was the convener. It passed different resolutions. Chief among them are: 1) Education of women, 2) Sharda Samaj Act, 3) Property rights, 4) eradication of untouchability 5) abolition of Devdasi custom and 6) Birth control etc.

5) Vidarbha Mahila Parishad, Yavatmal, 1935. Kamlabai Kibe was the president. It passed following resolutions: 1) question of property rights to women, 2) issue of literacy and 3) poverty etc.

6) Berar Regional Women Congress, Akot, district Akola. Oct 12, 1946. Venutai Sathe, Nashik presided over the meeting. The meeting passed two resolutions 1) women should have right to divorce and 2) wrong practices should be abolished.

7) Berar Regional Women Congress,1932. Ramabai Tambe was the president. Jankibai Kanitkar was the convener. It discussed on women awareness.
8) Amravati District Women Congress, Amravati was held on Sept 17, 1932. Mathurabai Dravid was the president. It passed the following resolutions; 1) congratulation of Ramabai Tambe for establishing Lady Joshi College for Women, 2) provisions for women to take music courses and home sciences, 3) ban on Vegetable ghee, 4) promotion to Swadeshi and 5) help was sought in women education from Municipality and district Board.

9) The second convention of All India Women’s Congress was held at Akola on Dec 28, 1946. The convention was attended by the outgoing president Hansa Mehta and Kulsum Sahani, Hyderabad, secretary of All India Women’s Congress, Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade, Gwalior, Kamaladevi Chatopadhyay, queen of Faltan, Masum Husain, Miss Swinay Malini Sukhatankar, Anusayabai Kale, Ammu Swaminathan, Maniktai Bhide, Tarabai Randive, Durgatai Joshi, Radhadevi Goenka, Pramilatai Oke, Brijlal Biyani, Sir Moropant Joshi etc dignitaries attended the convention. A standing committee was appointed to draft the manifesto of women’s Rights at the convention which included Kamaladevi Chhatopadhyay, Kitty Shivrao etc. The conventions stressed women’s economical, social, political, industrial and educational rights. These topics were discussed at the conventions and the resolutions were passed.

On Dec 27, 1946, an exhibition of Swadeshi and Handicrafts was held during the convention. Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade, Gwalior inaugurated the exhibition. The convention also threw light on the problems of rural parts and discussed different social problems.

Thus, number of conventions and public meetings were held in Berar on women’s issues. Women started coming out of the four wall of home and they started working for their emancipation from the age old shackles. With extension of education and increasing media presence, she became aware of her social and legal rights. The large attendance of women to these conferences and public meetings showed the positive sign of women awareness and their organization. Women were on forefront to make awareness about the Sharada Act. They started demanding their economic and other rights. Though she started attending public meeting, but the work of taking women’s education to grass root level in Berar was far from significant attainment.
Women in rural areas were still deprived from the fruits of education. They were still incapable to stand against wrong practices, ignorance and atrocities. Only awareness was made to some extent among women in urban parts. They came to understand that social awakening and national work are the sides of the same coins. The women who had some education started working to create awareness among women in rural parts. Mahatma Gandhi brought the concept of women empowerment during different political movements of non-co-operation, Quit India movement etc. He appealed women to participate in the freedom struggle, women vigorously participated in it and expressed their patriotism. Women from CP & Berar province were also on forefronts.

7.8.2 Berar Women and Their culture Work:-

Women education in Berar started upliftment of women. Artistic inclinations and talents were stressed upon. Women also utilized the new opportunities and excelled in whatever education she received. It created a feeling of self respect in them. The thrust was put on such education that would make women more self reliant and independent.

In 1914, a musical programme of women was held at Ganesh Theatre. Middle school Girls and women had participated in the programme of Jalasha held at Amravati Female High School. It was made possible through the effort of Indirabai Kane. The earning of the Jalasha was used for charity purposes.

Different women public meetings, conventions and seminars were held in Berar. Along with social awareness programme, thrust was also given to boost their natural talents. Dance competitions were organized by Sharda Mandal. Kamalabai had distributed the prizes of gold and silver to the winners.

During pre British era, the doors of educations were completely shut to women. During British era, the doors of educations were formally opened for women. But women still did not came on their own to educate themselves. But gradually women’ inclination towards education and cultural activities, including art, music, dance, paintings stated. Women started acting in plays. The feeling of equality started gaining ground. The inferior attitude towards women was gradually changed. However, it was the mere beginning of women orientations.

Emergence of women leadership was the positive and important points in the history of women in Berar. Tarabai Randive, Sakhubai Patil, Kamalabai Sahani, Durgabai Jog, Radha Goenka, Subhadra Joshi, Manoram Mudholkar, Pramilatai Oke, Durga Joshi, Yashodabai Joshi,
Manutai Bapat, Jankibai Kanitkar, Tarabai Mashruwala etc women came on scene and led the women movement and also participated in freedom struggle keeping shoulder to shoulder with men.

In brief, women forums gave thrust on tender feminine virtues of aesthetics through handicraft and other arts. Pramilatai Oke from Akola worked as editor of Matrubhumi newspaper. She wrote different articles and other books. Durgabai Joshi also wrote more than 40 books to create public awareness.

Thus, women in Berar also laid their imprint in cultural sector. These movement attempted to make women self reliant and showed path of her development.

7.8.3 Participation of Women in Berar in National Agitation:-

Women in Berar took participation in social activities. When they were organizing themselves, they noticed different social problems from the first hand. While understanding the deep rooted social problems, they also knew the hardship the nation was facing during the British rule. They proved their caliber by showing their skills, intelligence. They proved that women also served as best teachers and administrators at schools. They also participated in the freedom struggle against the British regime.

Berar had seen numerous tours of Lokmanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi. Women started attending to the meetings of Lokmanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi. Through these public meeting, they understood the urgency of independence. They started chanting slogans during the meetings. The national leadership also propelled women to participate in the agitations. The number of women gradually increased in the national movement during 1921 to 1929. Meanwhile, number of women participating in the national movement increased. The work areas of women leadership was also increased. Women came forward and took part in the agitations. Their best organization skills were noticed during the national movement. Along with urban and educated women, women from rural areas also participated in the agitation.

Mahatma Gandhi started non cooperation movement in 1920. The movement also received impetus in Berar. Veer Wamanrao Joshi guided people about the agitation. The thought that the people should not cooperate with the government got momentum. Parvtibai Patwardhan and Chandra Shewde started their campaign in women. They played a major role in creating public awareness.
In 1921, Tilak Jayanti was celebrated in Amravati district. Leelabai Talegaonkar, Mrs Brahman, Durgatai Lokhande, Maniktai Bapat, Ganagabai Khaparde, Sawitribai Bhat, Parvatibai Patwardhan participated in the programme. Parvatibai Patwardhan and Chandrabai Rokde took a public meeting at Ganesh Theatre at Amravati delivered speeches on non cooperation movement and the duties of women.

Tarabai Kanetkar took out tours in Buldana district and took public meetings to create awareness about the non cooperation movement. She used to deliver free lecture, collect donation for Swarjya Funds, propagate Swadeshi, boycotts on foreign goods etc. Indirabai Gadhe, Indumati Deshpande, Shalinitai Deshpande and Pimprikar etc participated in the task. Awareness was created in women about the non cooperation movement. They not only participated in the agitation but also took out stringent campaigns.

In 1930, civil disobedience was started. The regional Congress Committee handed its rights to Berar Regional War Forum on Mar 16, 1930. The forum had given complete authority to Veer Wamanrao Joshi of Amravati and Brijalal Biyani of Akola. Durgabai Joshi and Taraben Mashruwala from Akola were included in Provincial War Forum.

Women in Berar actively took responsibility and used to usher it with success. The work of women in civil disobedience was great. Women dedicated their lives in freedom struggle. Women’s participation in the national freedom struggle drew attention of the complete world. They were entrusted with different responsibilities.

During the salt satyagraha, Durgatai Joshi and Pramilatai Oke worked with courage. The district committee of National Congress staged demonstrated before the district office. Ramabai Kelkar, Durgatai Joshi, Champutai Bansod, Durgatai Deshmukh etc participated in the demonstration.

Women in Berar participated in the Salt satyagra, Jungle Satyagraha. They also boycotted the foreign cloths. They also served in propagating Khadi. They took out morning and evening marches to guide people. They also worked to spread Congress by making people member of Congress. They collected funds for Congress and helped the freedom fighters. The real powers within women were recognized.

During the agitation, 300 women were put in jail. They were detained for some time and later released as the jails were full with other freedom fighters. Many women also suffered cane charge. It was thing of pride for women freedom fighters. Men appreciated their contribution.
Durgabai Joshi was not only president of district committee for satyagraha but was the president of Provincial War Forum. Some women directly participated while large number of women encouraged their family to participate in the national agitation. Saraswati Mehre a women agitator in the group of Durgatai was arrested for supporting some violence act, she refused to be government witness. She also warned her husband that she would commit suicide if any information regarding whereabouts of revolutionaries passed to the police. On Aug 10,1936, Congress brought National Women Forum into practice. Its main objective was the financial independence of women and eradication of casteism. The forum had three secretaries Pramilatai Oke.Taraben Mashruwala, Sushilabai Joshi. Durgatai Joshi and Radha Oke were the members of the working committee.\textsuperscript{142}

Women took Charkha to villages. They delivered fierce patriotic speeches. Their dedication, courage and resistance was not less compared with men. It was decided by senior leaders that women should keep themselves out from salt satyagrah as it would be hard for them. But they pursued leadership and participated in the satyagraha as ably as men.

Pramilatai Oke, secretary of Congress Women unit of Berar division and editor of Matrubhumi decided to launch satyagraha in vegetable market in Akola on May 22, 1940. Her rally was started from her residence at 8 am and reached the place of her demonstration. A great gathering was gathered to welcome her. She delivered a speech on the policy of the Congress party, politics, duties of Indian people. She shouted slogans against the British Imperialism. Police rushed and arrested her under protection act. Its impact was felt. She was sentenced 4 months simple imprisonment.\textsuperscript{143}

Radhabai Oke made satyagraha at Shri Ram Mandir at village Dongargaon in Akola district on May 20, 1941. She delivered a speech and shouted slogan against war. She went to Umari and guided a public meeting held during night. She was also arrested.

Dr Patwardhan and Parvatibai Patwardhan resigned from the CP & Berar Provincial Council as they had some disputes with other members.

A public meeting was held at Undri in Buldana district on May 12, 1940. Veer Wamanrao Joshi, Brijalal Biyani and Pramilatai Oke guided the meeting. She said that the country is of Hindus and no cooperation should be made with the government till it gave the freedom. She also appealed people to be prepared for the next Satyagraha.
Shantabai Champalal Mewade made stayagraha by going door to door. She was arrested and given imprisonment of eight months. Women in Berar fought like warriors during the agitation. Their sole aim was independence. Their integrity and thorough dedication came up through the agitation.

Mahatma Gandhi gave the slogan of Do or Die for the Quit India Movement in 1942. Subhadratai Joshi delivered a lecture at Akola on July 20, 1942. She briefed the idea behind the Quit India Movement. The propagation drive for the agitation was launched. British government imposed its rigid stance and started arresting national leaders. The government also arrested the Congress workers. Durgatai Joshi arrested on Aug 11, 1942. Police had kept close watch on Pramilatai Oke. She led a protest march of around 15000 people. It was the biggest ever march for the city which was led by a woman leader. Sushilabai Khatri, Vimlabai Deshpande, Dayabai Dahikar, Radhabai Bhatia, Prema Anis, Subhadrabai Gawande and other congress workers assisted her. Pramilatai Oke was arrested.145 Krushnabai Rangari of Amravati who was in the march to install National Flag of Congress was martyred. Women workers helped to protect the underground leaders. Jinji Deshpande and Anandibai Damle played a major role in the agitation of 1942 at Yavatmal.

Women in Berar made a stringent agitation and made it difficult to curb for the British. Their participation in the agitation put forth a glorious epoch and their work was inspiring.

Women exhibited their great power of tolerance during the agitation. They fought for fulfilling their aim. They did not show mere feeling of patriotism but actually participated in the movement. Women in Berar played a major role in the freedom struggle. It did prove her powers. She was no more held as week and feeble. She helped in braking shackles of British slavery.

Education of women was started in British rule. Education created awareness of the different rotten customs and traditions prevailed in the society. It also gave push for a social change. Satyashodhak Samaj, Brahmanetar and Dalit movements cast its impact in social change. The society was gradually awakened about their rights. Women were also on forefront in different social movements and they raised their voice against the prevailed social ills. Upper caste men, who were inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, worked to eradicate untouchability. Dalit movement also took grounds in Berar due to able and foresighted leadership of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. Women became educated she became aware of the atrocities committed against her.
They were organized by forming different women forums throughout in Berar. She played major role in freedom struggle by taking spontaneous participation in freedom struggle. It was during British rule the society was organized with awareness of its rights and capacities.

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