



CONTRIBUTION OF PUNEITE UNTOUCHABLES IN DR.BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR'S MOVEMENT

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Abstract:

After Mahatma Phule Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar dynamically accelerated the movement of untouchables. His main motive behind this movement was to eradicate the practice of untouchability and to achieve the human rights for untouchables.

KEY WORDS:

human rights , financial problem , emancipatory movement .

INTRODUCTION-

Due to emancipatory movement started by Shivram Janba Kamble and Maharshi V.R.Shinde, untouchables in Pune district had become aware of their rights. That's why they took active part in Dr.Ambedkar's movement.

As he himself bore the pains of untouchability, Dr.Ambedkar was very sensitive about the problems of untouchables. Hence he started "Mooknayak" news paper on 31/01/1920 to raise the voice of downtrodden. But due to financial problem the publication of this paper was stopped. He again started new paper named 'Bahishkrut Bharat' on 03/04/1927. Ramchandra Krushnaji Kadam of Bhavani Peth, Pune took utmost efforts to collect funds for this paper. After that 'Samata', 'Janata' and 'Prabuddha Bharat' news papers were started by Dr.Ambedkar and they became mouthpieces of Dalit Movement.

An assembly of Mahar community was held at Rahimatpur of Satara district in May 1926 under the chairmanship of Dr.Ambedkar. Many untouchable activists from Pune attended it. Krushnarao Kadam, M.S.Gaikwad, Janardan Ranpise, Dharmaji Savant, etc. were the prominent participants from Pune.¹

On 01/01/1927 Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar visited the Victory Monument (Vijaystambh) of Bhima Koregaon near Pune alongwith Shivram Janba Kamble and other untouchable followers from Pune. The 'Vijaystambh' was built by British in

memory of Mahar soldiers who fought fiercely in determining battle against Peshwas in 1818. Since then the followers of Dr.Ambedkar visits this place every year on 1st January to pay tribute to the martyred Mahar soldiers.

Dr.Herald H. Mann, Retired Director of Agriculture Deptt. was felicitated and presented a memorandum on behalf of Mahar community On 09/10/1927, in a function presided over by Dr.Ambedkar at a hostel of 'Dipressed class mission'. In his speech Dr.Mann narrated how he could succeed in the work of emancipation of untouchability with the help of Shivram Janba Kamble. He further advised that the untouchables should unite under the worthy leadership of Dr.Ambedkar and make progress.²

Some Dalit activists of Pune organized a student conference at 'Ahilyashram' to acquaint them with Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar and his bright work for the downtrodden community. The main intention of the conference was to bring the talented untouchables in Dr.Ambedkar's organization and to motivate them to work for the society. While speaking Dr.Ambedkar said, 'the future of the society depends on how the students follow their duty and responsibility. The literate women in untouchables should contribute into the progress of society.'³ Mr.Rajbhoj, Dr.Solanki also delivered speech in the conference.

A bill regarding right of untouchables to fill water on public water-holes was placed in Mumbai council in 1923 by C.K.Bole and it was passed. In spite of the bill no untouchables were allowed to fill water from public lakes and wells. Mahad Municipal Corporation in Colaba district opened its public water-holes, schools and charitable rest houses (Dharmshalas) to the untouchables by passing a resolution (Mahad Municipal Resolution No.67, 05/01/1924) on 24/01/1924. Still the upper caste Hindus were opposing the untouchables to fill water from 'Chavdar Tale' (Lake). First Colaba district Bahishkrut (ostracized) conference was held in Mahad on 19th and 20th March 1927. Untouchable leader P.N.Rajbhoj from Pune participated in this conference. On 20/03/1927 Dr.Ambedkar alongwith his thousands of followers entered the 'Chavdar lake' and claimed his right by drinking the water. In spite of this the untouchables were not allowed to take water from 'Chavdar lake', in the meeting held at the office of 'Bahishkut Hitkarini' in Mumbai on 15/09/1927 Dr.Ambedkar decided to hold agitation at Mahad on 25th and 26th December 1927. This time also P.N.RajBhoj participated in the agitation. He also supported the idea of burning the 'Manusmriti' which was the code of draconian laws depriving the women, Shudras and Atishudras (untouchables) of their human rights. The collector requested to adjourn the agitation as the case filed by the upper caste Hindus was pending in the court and owing to the request Dr.Ambedkar adjourned the agitation. In the meeting of thanks giving P.N.Rajbhoj gave a speech. After this meeting a rumour was deliberately spread in Mahad town that the untouchables are going to enter and pollute the temple of 'Vireshwar'. As a result upper caste people started beating the untouchables wherever they find them. P.N.Rajbhoj also sustained injury in the attack.

On 20/07/1927 Dr.Ambedkar held a meeting in Mangwada of Pune and discussed about the issues among Mahar and Mang community. The meeting was presided over by Dr.Navale, Editor of 'Dinbandhu' News paper. Around 300 uppercaste and untouchable people including Dr.Solanki, Subhedar Ghadage, P.N.RajBhoj, K.M.Jadhav, Krushnaji Patade, M.S.Gaikwad, Salwekar, Ingale, S.B.Landage, K.K.Sakat, Waydande, Anandswami, Pandharinath Patil, Dhundiraj Thengadi, Aryasevak Ogale, Shankarrao Potnis, Deshpande were present for the meeting.⁴

On 03/03/1930 Dr.Ambedkar started agitation for entry to untouchables in Kalaram Temple at Nasik. P.N.Rajbhoj was one of the members of committee formed for this agitation. Apart from Rajbhoj Subhedar Ghadage of Pune also participated in the

agitation.

Untouchables had a very bitter experience of upper caste Hindus during the agitation of Nasik. P.N.Rajbhoj criticized the behaviour of upper caste Hindu communities and its leaders and appealed untouchables to unite. His views in details are published in the Times of India news paper of 21/04/1934.

Pune District Untouchables council's first conference was held at Narayangaon, Tal.Junnar on 23 and 24 May 1931 under the chairmanship of Dr.Ambedkar. About 5 to 6 thousand people from different parts of Pune district had gathered for this conference. S.N.Shivtarkar, Lotekar, Bhosale, Adarekar and Ganpatbuva etc. were some of the main leaders of untouchables from Mumbai. Munshisheth, Devidas, Ramchandra Anaji, Butte; Honorary Magistrate and president of Taluka local board Junnar, Dashrath Panduji Bankar; Member district local board Pune, Gajanan Raoji, P. Bhujbal; Vice-president of Taluka local board Junnar, Bhimaji Genuji, P.Khabade, Dumbare, Pate, Tambe, Shinde, Mistri, Bhujbal were the local and Subhedar Ghadage, Thorat, Gaikwad, Choure, Chandanshive, Ghogare, Madhale, Ranpise etc. were prominent leaders from Pune. Apart from this some leaders from Mang and Chambhar community also participated in the conference.

In the beginning Devaji Dagaduji Dolas thanked people for attending the conference and explained the historic importance of the place of the conference. He also appealed the participants to unite and forget internal communal differences for building a strong organization and to improve the economic status. Then S.A. Upsham, General Secretary read out the messages received. On the request of M.S.Gaikwad and Kondaji Ramji Master, Dr.Ambedkar was elected as the chairman of the conference. In his speech Dr.Ambedkar appreciated the work of untouchable leaders of Pune i.e. Kondaji Ramji Master, Shivram Janba Kamble, Thorat and Ramchandrarao Kadam. He asked the participants to unite and fight for dignity and right. Though Mahar community helped the British to win the battle of Koregaon Bhima which helped to stabilise their government in Maharashtra, they denied senior posts and other posts in army to Mahars only to please the upper caste Hindus. But now the situation is changing and the untouchables are being offered posts in Police force. It is the need to unite and fight for our self esteem and progress. After the speech of Dr.Ambedkar local, educational, economical and political resolutions were passed. Especially the work of Dr.Ambedkar and R.B.Srinivasan at the Round Table conference at London was appreciated and they were felicitated. Shivtarkar, Haribhau Rokade, Gaikwad, Kamble, Darule, Ozarkar, Phulpagar, Kalokhe, Vitthal Upsham, Ghogare, Madhale, Ranpise, Thorat, Shishupal, Amondikar, Dhotre, Thosar, Choure, Chandanshive, Adarekar talked on various resolutions.⁵

On 22 May 1938 second conference of Pune district 'Vatandar Mahar Council' was held at Ghodegaon. Dr.Ambedkar presided over the conference. R.R.Bhole, K.R.Madhale, Revaji Dagaduji Dolas, R.R.Borikar, Shankar Mohanji Mistry, Gajoba Dudhavade and from Pune V.B.Bhalerao, Gaikwad Master, Maruti Sabaji Gaikwad and Walhekar attended the conference. Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar explained the 'Mahar Vatan Bill' to everyone and the council backed the bill and passed resolution in support. Also a resolution about opening boardings in Pune district was passed in the conference.⁶

After dissolving 'Independent Labour Party' Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar founded 'All India Scheduled caste Federation' in 1942. He also founded 'People's Education Society' in Mumbai on 08 July 1945. From beginning R.R.Bhole of Pune was there with Dr.Ambedkar in his political and educational activities. As per the pre-announcement in 1935, Dr.Ambedkar converted to Buddhism alongwith his followers in 1956 at Nagpur. Many Puneite untouchables followed him. Thus in his social, political and religious

journey Puneites always stood firmly behind Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar.

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