JYOTIBA PHULE

Indian political thinkers and philosophers left their imprint on various socio- political issues of the state. Most of these thinkers were influenced by the European thinkers political philosophy and thinking. But they had developed their own concepts on the basis of Indian context. However, along with these main stream thinkers, some social activists or more correctly some social scientists also played a very significant role as reformist thinkers in India. Actually the emergence of Dalit politics in India specially in 80’s and 90’s of last century created an atmosphere to give due recognition to the ideas and concepts developed by thinkers like Jyotiba Phule against Brahminical and upper caste domination. The movement against this caste ridden society took place in Maharashtra and Tamilnadu in 19th century as a radical social movement . Jyotiba Phule played a significant role in this regard and influenced the contemporary Dalit movement .

Phule was born at Pune in 1827. Their traditional business was gardening. His family’s financial condition was stable. Thus he got the opportunity to study at a Missionary school. A very liberal atmosphere prevailed in the School. He came in touch with Thomas Paine and George Washingtons’ writings. Life of Sivaji Maharaj also influenced him a lot.However, his thinking got a concrete shape when he was experienced some ill effects of casteism in his own life.

However He was not in favour of embracing Chiristinity but aimed at to reform the Hindu religion and society from its core.Here he had faced tremendous pressure from the upper starta of the society and thus became more and more conscious about the Varna System and determined to carry on his movement against Brahminical tyranny.

RADICAL CULTURAL REVOLUTION :

J. Phule with a view to raise the standard of lower caste people called for a social change in the society. He was in favour of passing laws by the Govt. against Polygamy, child marriage and prostitution system. He gave a call to establish equal rights for women and untouchable section of the society. He played a very important role to create a meritorious group of untouchables who would carry on movement against the upper class people. He had mentioned in his essay ‘’Gulam Giri’ that the educated lower caste people after getting appointment in various Govt. jobs would work positively for the all round development of their brethren.

His main aim was to fight against the hegemony of upper caste people by creating permanent antagonistic cultural revolution against them. He was aware of the fact that Hindu religion is very much in favour of continuation of Brahminical domination to control the poor helpless lower caste people.With a view to face this situation he advocated the revival of so called non arayan religious tradition among the lower caste people. Thus he used the folk culture as a weapon to fight against the upper caste people.With a view to spread the movement among masses he even seek help and assistance from other religious communities and gave the name of his universal idea as’’Nirmik’’.Mainly the downtrodden people belonging to labour class embraced his concept of Nirmik.

Satya Sodhak Society :-

J.Phule established SatyaSodhak society in 1873 to gave his radical socio-political movement a permanent shape. It was an organization of lower caste educated and intellectuals.This society was mainly responsible for organizing the people belonging to lower ladder of the society who would fight for their rights.At that time the Maharashtrian society was divided into two antagonistic group that is the majority who gave their labour and create opportunities for the upper caste minorities who were dominating the administrative set up of Maharashtra.

Satya sodhak society adopted number of measures to educate the lower caste people and to create the way for their all round development. In the meantime a social reformation movement had started at Pune where large number of people belonging to Shudra community were join hand in hand to revive the culture and tradition of their ancestors and there was no role of Priest in their movement.

In the first meeting of the samaj the members resolved to free the Shudras’ from the Brahminical tyranny.They asked their communities to avail the opportunities created by the British Government regarding the spread of education.Education is the only means to free them from the bondage of mental slavery. This society gave stress mainly on education of women and children.

They also put forward certain suggestions for the upliftment of their community. These are :-

1.To believe that God is one and omnipotent.

2.To give up the habit of drinking

3.To be self-confident and help their poor brethren as far as possible and to educate children and create awareness among them regarding their rights.

4.All the members were asked to donate their one day income to the Satya Sodhak Society. The society would perform its activities following democratic procedure.

This society had established its branches through out the Pune city and adjacent villages. Branches also found in Maharashtra and Madras. Books written by Phule against casteism were distributed among the masses.Sabitribai Phule wife of Jyotiba Phule took the responsibility for spread of education among women. Jyotiba Phule died in 1890 but his idea spread far and wide even after his death.

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