

## V. R. SHINDE: ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALTERATIONS AMONG UNTOUCHABLES

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### ABSTRACT

*Untouchability had been prevalent from ancient era in Indian Society. The lives of this community's people became intolerable due to untouchability. Many efforts of reformation in the social milieu of India had been undertaken during British rule. Untouchables were relentlessly endeavouring for the upliftment of the society. Amidst these circumstances, V. R. Shinde promoted the organizational reformation of the untouchables. Ideologically he was an avant-garde. He was prominently associated with Bramho Society and Prarthana Samaj (Prayer Society) and endlessly worked for the upliftment of untouchables. He established 'Nirashrit Sahyakari Mandal' (Board for Assistance to Orphans) for the betterment of untouchables. He endeavoured to pave the way for social, religious and political development of the untouchables. His deeds helped to foreground the work of Dr.Ambedkar. V. R. Shinde and Dr.Ambedkar's paths regarding the betterment of untouchables were radically ununiformed as there was fundamental ideological difference in their modus operandi. But, V. R. Shinde stout-heartedly placed it on national level and dedicated his youth for humanizing the wretchedness of untouchables. His remarkable deeds are still buried in the graves of history. So, present research article is an attempt to unearth his deeds regarding untouchables.*

**Keywords:** V.R. Shinde, PrarthanaSamaj, BramhoSamaj, Untouchability, Depressed Class Mission, Dr.Ambedkar.

### Introduction

Contemporary society was so dumb and silent though they were witnessing how humans enslaved other humans. This community had been denied social, religious and political rights. Any efforts made for bringing untouchables into mainstream were considered as the violation of religious principles of Hinduism. So, no one had dared to educate and reform them due to the resistance from the orthodox people until the emergence of Mahatma Phuley. Mahatma Phuley opened first school for the untouchables and opened the frontiers of their all-pervasive development. Mahatma Phuley started the process of social dissemination by initiating Satyashodhak (Truth-seeker) movement in Maharashtra. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj continued the work after Mahatma Phuley in Maharashtra. Thereafter, V. R. Shinde executed organizational work for the upliftment of the untouchables. The leadership of Dr.Ambedkar was emerging from untouchables during the same era. Shinde belonged to Maratha community so he didn't bear the brunt of untouchability. He hadn't experienced the agonies of untouchability. But, Dr.Ambedkar's path of abolition of untouchability was

different from V. R. Shinde as he had personally experienced it. In short, present research paper shed light on the social and political works of V. R. Shinde for untouchables.

### Early Life

Vitthal Ramji Shinde was born at Jamkhandi in Karnataka on 23rd April 1873. His ancestors were the heirs of Sinda of Mandali dynasty during Twelfth Century. They were the barons of Surapur province during the second half of Eighteenth Century in Vijapur district (Shinde V. R., p. 236). It was the land where Marathi and Kannada languages were flowing together in a stream. Vitthal Ramji Shinde's father was in lead in flourishing Bhajani Sect of Jamkhandi Pandharpur. As a result, hymns were regularly sung at their home. He approved that these hymns significantly contributed in his religious development (Shinde V. R., p. 17). Thereafter, their economic condition deteriorated gradually. Amidst this crucial time, his mother painstakingly sheltered their family and courageously handled the situation. She bore the brunt at mother's house which made her capable to endure and tackle all these circumstances (Pawar G. M., p. 83). They had

to reel under miserable familial condition due to father's joblessness and losing their agricultural land. Amidst this crucial condition, he got admission in Ferguson College, Pune for B. A. on the basis of scholarship (Paswan & Pramanshi, p. 116). His passage which was written in his diary dated 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1898 while educating in Pune shows his willingness for the betterment of untouchables. It was noted, "Today the Founder President of Maharashtra Village Education Society namely Kalaskar from Baramati has come to our hostel. I was listening to his remarkable deeds and selflessness. He has shown his solicitude for the extremely lower-castes like Mahar-Mang. Brooding over these facts, I heartily feel so ashamed of myself and repulsive too" (Shinde V. R., p. 265). It clarifies that he had fervour of the upliftment of untouchables since he had been a student. He admitted in Mumbai University for Law in 1899 after completing his graduation from Pune. Thereafter, he admitted in Manchester College after getting Unitarian Scholarship. Sayajirai Gaikwad Maharaj of Baroda Province financially assisted him in his decisive days. Prarthana Samaj appointed him as its campaigner when he returned to India in 1903. Afterward, he downrightly dedicated himself in social service. Shinde's participation in Prarthana Samaj disappointed Maratha community's people. According to Maratha community's people, Shinde had completed his education from the fund of Marathi community and foreign expenses were also funded by Baroda's King. So, it was inappropriate to participate in the service of Prarthana Samaj instead of serving for Maratha community's people. But, Shinde endeavoured to correct the misconceived notions in the mind of his community's people. If the King doesn't confine himself in the service of selective people, how could his disciple be ideologically different from him? (Shinde V. R., p. 179).

#### **Advocators Of Prarthana And Bramho Samaj**

Shinde was very devoted by nature as he had been influenced by the sacraments of Warkari sect. He got engaged with Prayer Society when he was educating in Pune. Shinde was copiously influenced by the speech of

Mr. Kashinath Balwant Marathe of Prayer Society (Shinde V. R., p. 110). He entered into Prayer Society in 1898 and he took ordination of this society. He endeavoured to get scholarship given by 'British and Foreign Association'. The prominent motive of this scholarship was to reciprocate ideas and religious principles of the generous institutions like Prayer and Bramho Societies in India (Kadam, p. 66). He admitted to Manchester College in Oxford for theological education in 1901. As per the norms of Unitarian Scholarship, it was mandatory to devote himself for religious preaching and campaigning till the end of life (Shinde V. R., p. 142). Shinde returned to homeland after concluding his foreign journey in 1903. Thereafter, he commenced his philanthropic work as one of the campaigner of Prayer Society (Shende, p. 52). As an able preacher and campaigner, he devoted himself by taking responsibility over himself to invigorate, functionalize and competently spread Prayer Society's principles among common people. The principles of Prayer Society and Bramho Society were analogous in nature. So, he also intermingled with Bramho Society. In this regard, he remarked, "I become a reformer not because of I have entered in Bramho Society. I was a reformer so I come to Bramho Society. I have observed that the structure and principles of Bramho Society is meticulously analogous with the pictures of human life that I have intermittently portrayed in my mind as per my generous nature. Moreover, I have assimilated with it too early and completely dedicated himself for its work as I am so enthusiastic" (Shinde V. R., p. 149).

Shinde initiated innovative policies for campaigning Prayer and Bramho Society. He established a significant association namely 'Young Bramho Association' in 1905. He precisely prepared the rules for the memorandum of the association to prepare the youths, who participated in the Prayer Society, for ardently observing the principles of the association (Shinde V. R., p. 161). The prominent motive behind the establishment of this association was to incline them for worship by uniting the youths of Bramho family to increase harmony among them and

campaigning for the religion, brotherhood and world peace (Kadam, p. 69). As well as, he started the reading of various scriptures by beginning 'Liberal Scripture Reading Classes' in temple. He had remarkably done the job of distribution of millions of posters and booklets among the people who weren't the members of this society through 'Postal Mission' and spread awareness among the people (Shinde, p. 52). 'Central Postal Mission' of London had taken cognizance of his remarkable work and British Foreign Unitarian Association's Secretary had passed a congratulatory resolution on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1904 for successfully running the work of Mission through Prayer Society (Shinde V. R., p. 175). Mr. Kisan Fagu Bansod, a youth from Mahar community, residing at Mohapa near Nagpur, inclined towards Prayer Society by reading some liberalistic books of Society's Postal Mission in Mumbai. He was present in Annual Festival of Prayer Society in 1905. Due to this participation and acquaintance, the movements regarding self-upliftment in Mahar community fascinated Prayer Society's campaigners and attracted them towards it (Shinde V. R., p. 210). Shinde endeavoured to inculcate the principles and values of Prayer and Bramho Society in Indian society. He strove hard to prohibit Bramhin religion by relentlessly endeavouring to ameliorate Prayer society (Kurkure, p. 7). Shinde travelled across India for three times during 1903 to 1906. He delivered a talk before 'Social Reform Association' at Mumbai in 1906. He systematically presented the issues of outcastes in India, region-wise population of outcastes etc. (Pawar D., p. 453). Thereafter, he established 'Depressed Class Mission' by focussing on the issues of outcastes. He emerged as an exponent of untouchables. But, he everlastingly left the work of Mission after Dr. Ambedkar dived into social work.

Shinde again inclined towards Bramho Society after abandoning Mission. He relentlessly travelled to Madras region during 1924-25 as an all India campaigner of Bramho Society. He refrained to the untouchables from converting to other religions. As well as, he performed ordination of the people who left Hinduism and had been converted to other religions (Shinde

V. R., pp. 247-248). The condition of Bengal was radically different from that of Madras during contemporary years. While rationalizing it, he remarked, "Untouchables opened and ran all the schools in Bengal from many years. The prominent reason behind this difference was the high-class standard of the untouchables in Bengal. Education department of Bengal province and Calcutta University's democratic policies are prominently responsible for the rapid development of untouchables in higher education (Shinde V. R., 1976, p. 251).

Shinde started studying Buddhism during 1925-26 because he wanted to experience Buddhist lifestyle by travelling in Myanmar. He also studied Pali language for it. Maghotsava (Festival of the Brahmos) of Bramho Society was held during 24<sup>th</sup> January to 6<sup>th</sup> February 1927 in Calcutta. In this meeting, Shinde said, "I am Buddhist." Missionaries were so flabbergasted by his assertion. Taking cognizance of the disputable situation, Mr. Gurudas Chakravorty, President of the Conference, tried to edify the members. He illustrated Shinde's opinion in following words, "Try to understand the spiritual sense of Shinde. Bramho Society is all-comprehensive and Shinde is an epitome of it. He is going to Myanmar to observe Buddhism. The people of Myanmar and Bramho Society will be certainly benefitted by the liberalistic nature of Bramho religion" (Shinde V. R., pp. 370-371).

#### **Establishment Of Depressed Class Mission**

V. R. Shinde perceived various severe issues of the untouchables when he was roaming across India. According to him, Indian untouchability is not only local or religious but also casteist or national and perpetual in its manner (Shinde V. R., p. 10). Shinde wrote on 'The Issue of Indian Untouchability' and elaborated five prominent causes of the origin of untouchability (Kshirsagar, p. 21). Untouchability is an independent human organization. Shinde believed that it had its origin at the very outset (primary stage) of the human species (Shinde V. R., p. 12). Three symptoms of Indian untouchability i.e. caste-based untouchability, communal boycott, and everlasting negligence of law are still prevalent in Indian society (Kshirsagar, 1994, p. 9).

Ordination during Muslim reign had abolished untouchability to some extent because Islamic principles never endorsed Hindu traditions and customs. But, British-Hindi government was so coward and insidious in this regard (Shinde V. R., p. 11) because Shinde alleged that British never enthusiastically came forth for the abolition of untouchability.

Untouchables came forward with the issue of untouchability and established mini organizations to confront with their issues at the outset of twentieth century. Ex. 'Somvanshiy Society' in Pune headed by Shivram Janaba Kamble; 'Lower Caste Organization' in Nagpur headed by Kisan Fagu; Shrimantrao Thorat led 'Somvanshiy Welfare Society' in Nagar etc. organizations were actively working for the betterment of untouchables. Shinde was brooding over to establish an organization for the comprehensive welfare of untouchables. His pragmatic and conscious role behind the establishment of the organization was that if every organization works individually and independently, gradually these organizations will wane according to the passage of time (Pawar D. , p. 453). So, he determined to establish all India level organization to collectively venture for humanizing the untouchables. As per the census of 1901, India's population was 29,43,61,056 out of which the population of untouchables was more than five crore. It means untouchables constituted one-sixth of India's population (Shinde V. R., p. 92). So, Shinde focussed on how Mahar (an untouchable caste) community's people are running the movement as untouchability is the major issue and how the awareness is spreading among them. At the same time, Mahar community's people ran a movement through 'Somvanshiy Society' for the upliftment of their community in Ahamadnagar. Shinde went to Ahamadnagar to know about the works, to get familiar with its activists, and to interact with them (Khairmode C. B., p. 226). Shinde organized a meeting at Bhangar village which was four miles away from Ahamadnagar in 1905. He read the content in a pamphlet issued by Kisan Fagu Bansode's 'Somvanshi Hitchintak Samaj' in the meeting. Shinde read the most ethical lines

in the pamphlet: "Though untouchables have tolerated the injustice and exploitation by upper-caste people, they should endeavour for their own upliftment without hurting the sentiments of upper-caste people." Shinde inspired for the work of upliftment and determined to dedicate himself to this work after reading that content in the meeting (Shinde V. R., pp. 215-216). Thereafter, Shinde decided to establish a mission to execute it systematically. But, he had to face financial crisis for that reason. Shivram Kamble, a person from Pune, visited Dr. Santuji Ramji Lad, an honest activist of 'Truth-Seeker's Society', to overcome the financial problem. Dr. Lad was well-acquainted with Damodhardas Sukhadwala who was a well-known shroff in Pune. He gave one thousand rupees on advance for the work. In 1906, Shinde established 'Association for Aid to Destitute' in Mumbai from that donation and commenced his work for the welfare of untouchables (Navalkar, pp. 31-32). The main motive of this association was to provide education, jobs, equal and benevolent treatment, preaching liberal perspective regarding religion, behaviour, health and citizenship to the impoverished and lower-caste communities like Mahar, Mang, Blacksmiths, Dhed, Pariya etc. as well as assisting them for self-upliftment and development through various means (Shinde V. R., p. 212).

Shinde endeavoured to associate Depressed Class Mission with Bramho religion's ideology. As per stated by him, Bramho religion is nothing but the incorporation of all religions. But, it stresses on the significance of sanctity of the mind and 'Association for Aid to Destitute' ran the work of social equality with same sanctity of mind (p. 9). Shinde believed that untouchability can be abolished on the basis of liberal religion and a program on the comprehensiveness of all factors of the society. If upper-caste and untouchables come together, it will help to eliminate prejudices about each other. Furthermore, it will help to civilize and cultivate the minds of lower-caste offspring in the vicinity of upper-caste people (Pawar D. , p. 455). These people came forward for executing home-sacrament for those untouchables who had adopted this

simplified ideology of the religion. In 1910, after four years of the establishment of 'Association for Aid to Destitute', Vitthal Ramji Shinde renamed this association as 'Depressed Classes Mission' (Shinde V. R., p. 218). Though Arya Society and Prayer Society had started the movement of untouchability abolition, the issue got more relevance after the establishment of Depressed Classes Mission (Bansode, p. 2). Dayaram Giddmal donated hundred rupees per month to start home for destitute at the beginning of the mission. This donation continued for only three years. But, the donation was stopped at the end of June, 1910. Vitthal Ramji Shinde somehow continued the work of Mission by initiating rupee fund, rice fund, clothes fund, Box fund to overcome the financial crisis (Shinde V. R., pp. 241-242). Rich people from Hindu, Christian, Parsi, Muslim etc. communities were coming out to financial aid the noble work of the organization. Government personnel were also compassionate with the organization. Miss Violet Clark, daughter of Sir George Clark, Governor of Mumbai, actively supported the work of organization (Khairmode C. B., p. 227).

Shinde studied the issues of untouchability. He considered that untouchables should be educated for the abolition of untouchability. The main motive of Mission behind opening of the schools was not only to teach reading and writing but also to civilize the minds of the students and their parents (p. 9). So, he stressed on the educational awareness among untouchables and the establishment of schools and hostels for their children (Kharat, p. 15). He started hostels for the students in Pune, Nagpur, Mumbai and Madras by opening an institution namely Depressed Class Student Mission (Gore & Limaye, p. 19). The association aimed at campaigning for the jobs for untouchables along with educational awareness, resolving their social problems, cultivation of universal religion, individual morals, and citizenship (Pandit, p. 19). With the same motive, Depressed Class Mission opened 24 schools and 5 hostels in the 14 branches at Mumbai, Pune, Satara, Mahabaleshwar, Dapoli, Thane, Malwan, Mangrul, Madras, Hubali, Akola, Amravati,

Bhawnagar, and Indur. As well as, total 55 teachers and 1100 students were taking education in twelve other institutions of the Mission. The expenditure of Mission increased upto 20,000 rupees per annum (Shinde V. R., p. 216). Many old organizations were merged with Depressed Classes Mission due to acute financial crisis. Out of which, one organization was from Southern-India. It was an organization established in 1896 by Rangrao at Mangrul for the upliftment of the untouchables. He endeavoured to establish schools and hostels for the untouchables. Moreover, he also strove hard to establish independent colonies. He got 75 acres of land from the government for the work. He reserved 35 acres of land for the colonies of untouchables and remaining land was used for farming. Thereafter, this organization was merged with the Depressed Classes Mission in 1922 as it was economically relegated (Moon, p. 97). In this way, the work of Shinde's Depressed Classes Mission work became comprehensive.

Shinde's many upper-caste colleagues were handling the administration of Depressed Classes Mission after Mission flourished widely. But, Shinde's colleagues lacked the fervency which Shinde had about the untouchables. It led towards the mobocracy in the administration of Mission. The anarchism in the administration of Shinde's Mission caused discordance between Shinde and Dr. Ambedkar (Moon, p. 101). Furthermore, Depressed Classes Mission failed in extensively promoting and proliferating education among untouchables. It led towards the disappointment among untouchables. In 1921, Shivram Kamble came forward and established 'Untouchable Upliftment Association' (Asprushya Sudharak Mandali) in Pune (Navalkar, p. 43). Various untouchable communities had discordance among them. These communities were envious with each other. Bramhin and Non-Bramhin allegedly criticized Shinde in their news papers for his discriminative nature among untouchable communities. It was said, "It is natural to be enraged with Mr. Vitthal. He strove hard for Mahar community's people. Why didn't he work hard for Matangs? Why didn't he appoint Matang community's maid instead of Mahar?"

(Naik, p. 87). This criticism caused dilemma in the minds of other community's people regarding his work. Furthermore, some of the untouchable leaders, involving in the executive body, were suspicious that Shinde's organization was working in favour of a particular community though Depressed Classes Mission worked hard for the betterment of untouchables. So, various communities' people including Mahar, Mang and Chamars protested in a meeting against the discriminative Shinde policy (Moon, p. 126). As per Shinde's open invitation on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1923, many leaders of ostracized community had participated with their disciples in a meeting held at Depressed Classes Mission, Bhokarwardi, Pune on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1923. But, Shinde's colleagues prohibited these people from entering in the meeting and the meeting was organized in a closed room. So, these people gathered in Sir Padamji ground for meeting. Mr. Gholap was the chair-person of this meeting. Mr. Tatya Narayan Shinde, a person from Chamar community, proposed a resolution that ostracized people wouldn't support any activities of Shinde and Patode, organized through Depressed Class Mission on the name of betterment of untouchables. As well as, government and well-wishers should understand that the meeting organized by Shinde is unlawful. Mr. K. K. Sakat, a person from Matang community, affirmed the resolution (Moon, p. 100). Thereafter, Shinde's colleagues and social activists from upper-caste severely criticized him. However, he continued his work till 1925-26. But, he was disappointed as there was no previous enthusiasm in the work and he gradually detached himself with the Mission (Khairmode C. B., pp. 45-46).

### V. R. Shinde And Indian National Congress

Rashtrasabha (National Congress) was gradually shaping as the representative organization of all Indians in the political sphere of India. Shinde hoped that various classes in India should participate in the organization and make it more advanced and powerful. Shinde spread awareness among untouchables through Mission. During the same era, Bramhin-Non-Bramhins, mainstream-untouchables like groups were

emerging in the society. Shinde felt that this newly emerged Non-Bramhinism is detrimental for the national integration (Shinde V. R., p. 286). Majority of Maratha community resides in Maharashtra and it is the backbone of Maharashtra. Shinde expected that the awareness should be spread among Bramhins to untouchables. He consistently advised National Congress to deal with the issues of untouchables to assimilate and involve them in national movement. If the leaders of National Congress show sympathy about the abolition of untouchability, it will give impetus to the social reformation with their participation. As well as, untouchables will incline towards National Congress which will help to increase its strength. In 1917, Shinde passed a resolution in a session in Calcutta saying, 'Atrocities are meted out to untouchables since ages, it should be stopped immediately' (Pandit, pp. 23-24). Shinde was active in Congress. He started to organize a conference on various social issues in the same village where the Annual Session of Congress was held in. This move upheld the issues of untouchables in political sphere. Many people thought that Congress should not only focus on the political demands but also it should strive hard to eradicate social evils (Surana, p. 18). A district level conference of Congress was held at Lonawala. Mr. Shankarrao Lawate insisted to put forward the resolution of self-government in the conference. Shinde expressed his opinion that the conference should put forward the resolution of untouchability abolition first. Thereafter, they should pass the resolution of self-governance. Taking cognizance of the discordance, Lokmanya Tilak upheld the side of Shinde. Shinde felt that the work of untouchability abolition can be easier if national leaders support with similar spirit (Pawar D., p. 463). Shinde relentlessly strove hard for it.

Shinde stepped forward for All India Untouchability Abolition Conference which was held in Mumbai under the aegis of Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1918. In his presidential speech in the conference, Gaikwad highlighted that it is legitimate to give independent status and rights to the untouchables (Warkhede, p. 28). A draft

had been prepared of the declaration made in the conference. It was written in the declaration that, "I undersigned hereby declare that I will obey the conditions written in the declaration and also relentlessly endeavour to be obeyed by others too" (Shinde V. R., p. 294). More than 300 prominent leaders had signed the declaration. But, Lokmanya Tilak avoided signing on the declaration. Shinde wrote a letter to Tilak on 2nd June 1918 enquiring about his motive behind it. Tilak replied to the letter saying, "At the end of your manifesto, some responsibilities were assigned to the individuals to implement. So, I can't bear the new responsibilities due to increasing responsibilities. Therefore, I couldn't sign the declaration. Sorry for the inconvenience" (Khairmode C. B., p. 255). In spite of that Shinde compelled Tilak to say that untouchability doesn't exist in Hinduism (Shende, p. 56). It clearly indicates Shinde's strong determination regarding the abolition of untouchability.

In May, 1918, three subsequent conferences had been organized in an important meeting at Vijapur. Conference on Untouchability Abolition was decided to hold on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1918. But, Mahatma Gandhi would be there for the regional political conference which was held the day before of it. So, the organizers of the conference shifted social conference on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1918 at 10:00 p.m. as the people participated in social conference wanted to listen Mahatma Gandhi's address. In the Presidential address of the conference, Kamat praised Shinde's work of the upliftment of the untouchables and suggested every Hindu for financially supporting for this noble work. A resolution was to be put forward regarding the approval of untouchables to Lucknow Pact between Congress and Muslim League. Mahatma Gandhi stepped up to put forward the resolution and thrice asked, "Is there any untouchable? But, no one replied positively. Taking the cognizance of the situation, Gandhi said, "How can I term this conference as the conference of Depressed Classes? The resolution which I am going to present here says that the untouchables participated in the conference are in support of the pact signed between Congress and Muslim League. But, I

deny putting forward the resolution as there is no untouchable in the conference. At the same time, Kamat who was the President of Conference stated and clarified, "This conference not for the untouchables. It is for the upper-caste people regarding how to behave with untouchables." Thereafter, Mahatma Gandhi approved to put forward the resolution. Kamat proposed the resolution and Shinde gave consent to his move (Khairmode C. B., pp. 256-257). It clearly indicates that many resolutions were passed on the name of untouchables though very few untouchables were participated in such social conferences. The perspective of Congress towards the movement of untouchables has been clarified through the non-cooperation and boycott movement initiated by Gandhiji. Mahatma Gandhi's movement affected school-colleges and lawyer-ship in the court. National schools also stopped receiving government grants. Shinde upheld the question whether the National Congress or other organizations help the schools of Mission if it participate in the movement or give up government grant. Many people had advised him that it would be wise not to participate in non-cooperation movement as well as he should receive the grant for the schools (Shinde V. R., pp. 322-323). So, Shinde's Mission didn't participate in the movement. A resolution had been passed in the session of Indian National Congress on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1920 stating that 'Regional Legislature should immediately devise a program for backward community's people' (Mitra, p. 216). These types of resolutions had been regularly passed in the sessions of Congress.

Shinde came closer to Congress Party when Dr. Ambedkar participated in political sphere of India. Ramswami Naykar started passive resistance at Viacom in Travancore province. Mahatma Gandhi also backed this passive-resistance. Karmaveer Shinde also participated in this passive-resistance (Keer, p. 64). Shinde was actively participating in the agitations of Congress. He promoted and proliferated Civil Disobedience movement which was initiated by Congress in 1930. He was imprisoned with grievous labour for six months on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1930 (Shinde V. R., p. 401). Mahatma Gandhi's

influence on Shinde can be traced by an interview given to 'Hindu' newspaper. Shinde said, "There is no difference in spiritual religion, basic familial improvements and eminent politics. I know that Mahatma Gandhi is a prophet, sent by the God" (Parikh, p. 102).

Shinde never allied Mission with any political party from the beginning and only focused on the welfare of backward communities. He established All India Untouchability League in Pune to independently run Mission's educational activities which should be distinct from the politics (Shinde V. R., p. 291). Afterwards, Mahatma Gandhi focused on the untouchables after signing Pune-Pact with Dr. Ambedkar. He decided to establish 'All India Anti-Untouchability League' to run this work efficiently. But, Shinde opposed this move as he had already established an organization with the similar same before several years. Finally, an organization had been established in English and local languages namely 'All India Untouchable Service Association' (p. 58). In reality, Shinde's Mission had already done massive work regarding the abolition of untouchability. Thereafter, he abandoned the work and aligned with Congress Party. It is still a mystery that why Gandhi didn't run already existing Untouchability Abolition Association headed by Shinde instead of establishing new association for it? Abolition of untouchability became national program when Mahatma Gandhi dived into abolition of untouchability. Thereafter, Congress ruled regional governments passed various laws in the council in the guise of untouchability abolition. Reacting on the issue, Shinde said, "No matter how many resolutions and bills are passed by the Congress in the Council, the work on these problems cannot be said to be over unless the selfishness, sacrifice and affection of the untouchables and the tolerance and cooperation of the untouchables increase (Shinde V. R., p. 228).

### **V. R. Shinde and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar**

V. R. Shinde had run the movement regarding the upliftment of untouchables through Depressed Classes Mission. He spread Mission across India after some of his successful

endeavours. He selflessly started painstaking journey of the betterment of untouchables. His efforts had been generously supported by many promoters of avant-garde. Shinde's selfless work deepened the faith of on him among untouchables. Moreover, the government consulted him regarding the betterment of the untouchables if it devised any plan of their welfare (Pagare, p. 22). Dr. Ambedkar's emergence in the social sphere played significant role during this era. He felt that the issues of untouchables couldn't be solved by their upliftment; it could be solved by the abolition of untouchability. The nature and path of Dr. Ambedkar's work was predetermined. So, Shinde was criticized by Dr. Ambedkar.

In the seventh session of 'Central Province Berar Mahar Conference' which was held on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1917 in Amravati, Shinde advised in his speech that 'untouchables shouldn't participate in political movement' (Moon, p. 116). But, he presented an application to the government through Depressed Class Mission to appoint political representatives of untouchables in legislature and they should not be selected by the governor or the organizations of the untouchables (Keer, p. 47). Moreover, a delegation under the leadership of Sir Narayan Chandawarkar and Vitthal Ramji Shinde had visited Montague for the political demands of the untouchables in 1917. Most of the social activists from untouchables worked as per suggested by Chandawarkar, President of Depressed Classes Mission and Shinde as they had dominance over them. As per their suggestion, Mr. Ganesh Aakaji Gawai and Kisan Fagu Bansode presented a memorandum to Montague through 'Depressed India Association' regarding the demands of untouchables (Moon, p. 8).

In 1918, Montague, the Secretary of State for India and Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy of India, travelled in various regions to discuss with the political leaders in India when British Government had positively signalled for the political reforms to India. Shinde's Depressed Classes Mission had taken advice from the King of Kolhapur Province regarding Mont-Ford Committee (Kavlekar, p. 64). Thereafter, a delegation of untouchables visited the committee under Shinde's leadership and

demanding the political rights for untouchables (Pandit, p. 16). In 1918, Mont-Ford report had been presented. As per the report, British Parliament sent a Franchise Committee under the presidency of Lord Southborough in India. Dr. Ambedkar painstakingly got an opportunity to uphold the political demands of the untouchables before Southborough Committee. Shinde and Dr. Ambedkar put forward the demands of untouchables before the committee from different perspectives (Moon, p. 8). Shinde demanded to the Southborough Commission to bestow the voting right to those untouchables who had passed fourth standard and had Rs. 144 annual income (Pawar J. V., pp. 40-41). Whereas, Dr. Ambedkar proposed for the voting rights for untouchables, right of contesting elections, independent constituency for untouchables, and representation as per the population of untouchables (Khairmode C. B., pp. 277-278). The ability which Shinde proposed before Southborough Committee regarding voting right couldn't be found among few untouchables. If it were found among several untouchables, they would elect the associates of Shinde. Untouchables would be politically enslaved like social, religious, and economic slavery of upper-caste people if the representatives of untouchables were not elected. In other quarters, upper-caste Hindus were trying to impose exploitation and national slavery on untouchables. Taking cognizance of the situation, Dr. Ambedkar declared that the statement given by Shinde through Depressed Classes Mission is detrimental for the untouchables (Moon, pp. 8-9). Thereafter, in 1920, first conference of untouchables was organized at Mangaon in Kolhapur province under the presidency of Shahu Maharaja. Shahu Maharaja declared that untouchables got their true leader while talking about Dr. Ambedkar in this conference (Pawar D., p. 462). All India Ostracized Conference was organized at Nagpur in May 1920. Shinde's Depressed Classes Mission was severely criticized in the conference and a resolution had been passed in the conference showing distrust of untouchables on Depressed Classes Mission (pp. 8-9). Thereafter, the importance of Shinde's Mission rapidly deteriorated. Untouchables accepted the leadership of

Dr. Ambedkar and commenced the movement under his leadership. Shinde's colleagues in Mission as well as social activists from mainstream society brutally criticized Shinde still he continued his work till 1925-26. But, he got disappointed when he didn't get response from the people. Thereafter, he gradually detached with the Mission and he started working in Bramho Society as the representative of Maharashtra (Khairmode C. B., pp. 45-46). But, it didn't affect his ideological base. On 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1928, Dr. Ambedkar, as a member of a Sub-Committee, clearly and responsibly stated before Simon Commission, "There is no relationship between untouchables and Hindus. They are independent minorities. So, everyone should treat them accordingly." Shinde opposed this move and demand of Dr. Ambedkar to some extent (Shinde V. R., p. 148). He believed that untouchables were a part of Hindu religion. So, he disapproved the minority status of untouchables. He also opposed independent constituency for untouchables given as per 'Communal Award'. He thought that untouchables should always live indiscreetly with Hindus. He never abandoned this stand regarding it. So, he had to everlastingly bear the enagement of the untouchables.

Shinde had no other means of earning livelihood so that his family had to lead miserable life for many days. Sayajirao Maharaja gave monthly compensation to Shinde when he came to know about his miserable condition (Khairmode C. B., pp. 45-46). He suffered from severe paralysis attack in 1935. Shinde dedicated his whole life for the betterment of untouchables. Moreover, he had to bore the enagement of his own Maratha community's people and led further life in the locality of untouchables. Finally, he died on 2nd January 1944 bearing disappointment, sorrows and miseries.

### **Conclusion**

Mahatma Phuley's comprehensive and audacious struggle initially brought metamorphic changes in the social and political sphere of Maharashtra. Rajarshi Shahu Maharaja significantly contributed in Truth-

Seeker Society's movement. Thereafter, social and political struggle couldn't become comprehensive so far in Maharashtra. Shinde strove hard to sustain the comprehensiveness of Mahatma Phuley's movement. As far as the annihilation of caste is concerned, Shinde's perspective was radically different from that of Mahatma Phuley as Shinde was heuristic in approach (Kamble, 1909, p. 12). It was desirable and beneficial for Untouchables to lead life gently during contemporary era. Shinde frequently said, "The life of poor, untouchables and Dalits is burning and alighting. It is my duty to extinguish this fire by serving them with the love bore in my heart. Humanism lies in it" (Shende, 1981, p. 53). In 1903, when Shinde returned to India after completing his study of Comparative Religion and Sociology in Oxford University, he worked as a promoter of Bramho Society. He experienced the miseries of socially, educationally, and politically ostracized untouchables who were deserted by Indian society. Shinde rationalized this issue in his book entitled 'Issues of Indian Untouchability' and determined to dedicate himself for the welfare of untouchables. He prominently focussed on the education, sanitation of untouchables and other social reformations. He was never rebellious. But, he shrewdly gained the sympathy of upper-caste people with his conscious mind to solve the issues of outcastes (Shende, 1963, p. 56). He directed two night schools of untouchables while working as a promoter of Prayer Society. He suggested mainstream people to maintain harmonious relations with untouchables. He established 'Depressed Classes Mission' with the help of Narayanrao Chandawarkar amidst this crucial situation. It was the first organized effort of the upliftment of untouchables (Keer, 1989, p. 27). He opened schools and hostels across India for untouchables. Khairmode, biographer of

Dr.Ambekar, mentioned his as a first iconoclast who lived and worked with untouchables (Khairmode C. B., 1991, p. 39).

Shinde socially organized untouchables through Depressed Classes Mission. He put forward the issue of untouchables in National Congress. He compelled Congress to focus on the issue of untouchability in the country. Untouchables became socially and politically aware due to Shinde's social conferences with the Sessions of Congress. It indicates that Shinde's efforts foregrounded the work of Dr.Ambedkar (Pawar D. , 1993, p. 450).

The concept of social reformation through spirituality left behind and the struggle for dignity commenced after the emergence of Dr.Ambedkar in social sphere. It side-lined Shinde's focus from social and political spheres. Shinde ended-up his youth for the upliftment of untouchables. This sacrifice would certainly mould a generation. But, Dr.Ambedkar determined to mould thousand generations of untouchables. The perspective of Dr.Ambedkar and Shinde was radically different in the context of untouchability abolition, upliftment of untouchables and annihilation of caste. It led towards the conflict between them. Harmony would never prevail in Hindu religion and nation until untouchability is abolished. Dr.Ambedkar was damn sure about it. So, he determined the path of the emancipation from untouchability. Dr.Ambedkar's demand for the reserved constituency for the untouchables was a part of this move. But, Shinde opposed for the separate constituency for the untouchables. It culminated into gradual decrease in Shinde's fame among untouchables. It compelled him to abandon Mission. However, Shinde's sacrifice for the upliftment of the untouchables is inspirational for forthcoming generations.

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