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**A Century of Consolidation and Resistance:
Caste and education in Maharashtra
1818-1918**

Parimala V. Rao



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A Century of Consolidation and Resistance: Caste and education in Maharashtra 1818–1918*

*‘there were no rights in the Hindu society,
which the moral sense of man could recognise.
There were privileges and disabilities,
privileges for a few and disabilities for a vast majority.
Ranade struggled to create rights.’*

— B.R. Ambedkar.¹

Parimala V. Rao**

Introduction

The social structure of pre-colonial Maharashtra differed from the north Indian one where the four fold division called *chaturvarna* existed. In Maharashtra, the society was divided into two strata called *brahman* and *brahmanetar*; that is, Brahmin and non-Brahmin. This kind of division came into existence after the fall of Buddhism and the strengthening of Brahmanism in the eight century CE by the *Advaita* of Sankara. The Brahmins who formed only 3 per cent of the total population came to control both ritual knowledge and literacy. The actual percentage was only 1.5 as Brahmin men alone had access. The rest of the 97 per cent of the population comprising of non-Brahmins were denied of it. Such an unequal control over knowledge was the causative factor for the rise of protest movements called *bhakti*

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¹ B. R. Ambedkar, *Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah*, Jullandhar, Bheem Patrika, 1964, p. 27.

movement of Vaishnava bhakti saints during thirteenth to seventeenth centuries. The people who protested against Brahmin-centred ritual worship, their control over knowledge and the rigid social stratification — came from all sections of the society. Dnyashwara and Eknath were Brahmins, Tukaram was a Vaisya, Namdeo, a tailor, Gora was a potter, Savta Mali, a gardener, and Chokha Mela was an untouchable. Chokhamela's was perhaps the first dalit voice in terms of interrogating the caste structure.² Janabai and Bahinabai were women.³ All of them rejected the caste system and upheld essential equality of all human beings. Tukaram declared with defiance that 'Vishnu's servants have no caste'.⁴ The *Abhangas* or the poetry of these saints was sung by people belonging to all castes.

The rise of *Dvaita* philosophy in the thirteenth century propagated by Madhvacharya adopted Vaishnava bhakti as a source of inspiration and successfully contested the *Advaita* of Sankara. The local Deshasthas Brahmins, the supposed custodians of caste hierarchies adopted *Dvaita* philosophy and the bhakti tradition. The singing of *Abhangas*, hymns composed by Tukaram, Namdev and Chokhamela, attacking caste system by Brahmins and upper castes, the collective annual pilgrimage to Phandarapur, the formation of large movements by the Mahanubhavi and Varkari sects opposing mindless ritualism and brahmin-mediated worship,⁵ made bhakti—and not Brahmanical ritualism—the dominant tradition of Maharashtra. This egalitarian society further enlarged with the coming of Muslim saints like Varkari saint Shaikh Muhammad who wrote *Yog-Samagram*, and the Mahanubhavi saint Shah Muni who wrote *Siddhant-bodh*. The Bahmani Sultans supported these movements and Shah Muntoji Bahmani, of the ruling Bahmani dynasty wrote five books on the concept

² See, Rohini Mokashi-Punekar, *On the Threshold: Songs of Chokhamela*, New Delhi, The Book Review Literary Trust, 2002.

³ Eleanor Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1992, pp. 3–32.

⁴ Eleanor Zelliot and Rohini Mokashi-Punekar, *Untouchable Saints: An Indian Phenomenon*, New Delhi, Manohar, 2005, p. 27.

⁵ Jayant Lele, *Hindutva: The Emergence of the Right*, Madras, Earthworm, 1995, pp. 70–71.

of bhakti—*Siddhasamket-Prabhand*, *Advait Prakas*, *Anubhav-sar*, *Prakasdip* and *Panchikaran*.⁶ The strong anti-caste bhakti movement comprising of Brahmins, non-Brahmins, untouchables, and Muslim saints effectively challenged the caste consolidation during thirteenth to seventeenth centuries.

The sixteenth and seventeenth century stalled this process of contestations to ritual and caste-based religion. The Mughal attacks on the Deccan and the rise of Shivaji, on the one hand and the rise of the Shaivite Chitpavan Brahmins who had entered Maharashtra a century before, changed the process of contestation and assertion of the caste dynamics. Though the coronation of Shivaji was opposed by powerful Brahmin groups on the pretext that there were no Kshatriyas left after their persecution by Parasuram,⁷ a number of Deshastha Brahmins supported Shivaji and formed a powerful alliance with the Marathas.⁸ In 1713, Shivaji's son Shahu appointed a powerful Chitpavan, Balaji Vishvanath, as his Peshwa Prime Minister, who in a very short period controlled the entire administration and established the *Peshwai* or the rule of the Peshwa. With the newly acquired state power, the Chitpavan Peshwas began to impose stringent caste restrictions upon the society.⁹ This official enforcement of *varnashrama dharma* adversely affected both the Brahmins and non-Brahmins. Peshwa Madhavrao questioned the caste status of the Saraswat Brahmins and declared that they were not entitled to be called Brahmins. He apprehended their lands and redistributed them among the Chitpavans.¹⁰ This resulted in the forced migration of

⁶ Y.M. Pathan, 'Contribution of the Muslim Saints of Maharashtra to the Early Devotional Literature in Marathi', in Monika Thiel-Horstmann (ed.) *Bhakti in Current Research, 1979–1982*, Berlin, Dietrich Reimer, 1983, pp. 295–300.

⁷ Jadunath Sankar, *Shivaji and His Times*, Calcutta, S.C. Sarkar & Sons, 1961, p. 206.

⁸ *The Mahratta*, 4 November, 1906. Kolhapur Affairs Editorial, p. 509.

⁹ Rosalind O'Hanlon 'Cultures of Rule and Communities of Resistance', in H.L. Seneviratne (ed.) *Identity, Consciousness and the Past: Forging of Caste and Community in India and Sri Lanka*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 152.

¹⁰ Uma Chakravarti, *Rewriting History: The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai*, New Delhi, Kali for Women, 1998, pp. 6–7.

Saraswat Brahmins to Karnataka.¹¹ Even Chitpavans were punished for violating caste restrictions. In 1746, a Chitpavan by the name Govind Hari Patwardhan was punished for appointing an untouchable maidservant in his home.¹²

The Peshwa rule controlled the non-Brahmin castes by restricting their religious and ritual rights. Peshwa Narayanrao issued orders that the Prabhus should not perform any *vedic* rituals, they should visit only the temples frequented by Shudras and should not employ Brahmins in their household. They were also told not to oppose widow marriage within the community.¹³ Another regulation issued during the same period, stated that if the *Sonar* or the goldsmith community performed the *vedic* rituals, they were to be arrested and chained. Those belonging to this community, who were well-versed in the *vedic* mantras should be tied to elephant's feet.¹⁴ They were told not to wear *dhotis* single-fold like Brahmins. These restrictions existed not just in Poona but spread also to Satara and Baroda.¹⁵ The Peshwa state also decided the pedigree of weaving communities, weavers of good pedigree were separated, and a certificate was issued to them.¹⁶ The Peshwas declared that the state existed to protect *varnashrama dharma* as *go-brahmina pratipalak*, a protector of cows and Brahmins.

Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, the renowned Sanskrit scholar of nineteenth-century Maharashtra has criticised the pre-colonial *Peshwai* as 'triple tyranny—political tyranny, social tyranny and priestly tyranny or the tyranny of caste'.¹⁷ The pre-colonial Peshwa state

¹¹ Sudha V. Desai, *Social Life in Maharashtra under the Peshwas*, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1980, p. 52.

¹² P.A. Gavali, *Society and Social Disabilities under the Peswas*, New Delhi, National Publishing House, 1988, pp.132–142.

¹³ Sudha V. Desai, *Social Life in Maharashtra*. p. 39.

¹⁴ P.A. Gavali, *Society and Social Disabilities under the Peshwas*, p.112.

¹⁵ N.K. Wagle, 'Ritual and Change in Early Nineteenth Century Society in Maharashtra', in Milton Israel and N.K. Wagle (eds) *Religion and Society in Maharashtra* (Toronto 1987), pp.145–181.

¹⁶ Uma Chakravarti, *Rewriting History*. p. 14.

¹⁷ R.N. Dandekar, 'Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar and Academic Renaissance in Maharashtra', in N.K. Wagle, *Writers, Editors and Reformers: Social and Political Transformation of Maharashtra, 1830–1930*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1999, p. 130.

enforced caste restrictions and punished anyone transgressing them. Therefore, what was a mere custom in other parts of India was legally punishable in Maharashtra.

Pre-Colonial Schools

In spite of the caste tyranny of the Peshwa administration and complete Brahmanical control over Sanskrit, the vernacular education was comparatively inclusive. The Ratnagiri district, for which extensive village-wise data is available, was the home of the Peshwa rulers and a stronghold of the Chitpavans. In 1820 the 2,240 villages in Ratnagiri District had 86 schools, with 1,500 boys. The following is the caste-wise break up of teachers and students in these schools.

Castes	Teachers	Students
Brahmin	33	567
Prabhu, Shenavi, Vaishya, Maratha	40	402
Artisanal castes, Kumbhar, Kasar, Sonar, Bhandari, Mali Teli, Sutar, Navi, Koli, Panchal, Dhangar, etc.	9	441
Muslim	2	65
Jew	2	25
Total	86	1500

Source: Compiled from the tables attached to letter from T.B. Jervis to the Secretary to the Government dated 8 September 1824, General Department 63 of 1824.

The statistics clearly show that the non-Brahmins outnumbered Brahmins both as teachers and students. It is also interesting to note that students from the artisanal castes like the Sonars, Kansars, Bhandaris and Shimpis outnumbered the non-Brahmin upper caste boys. The only two categories missing in the list are girls belonging to all castes and boys of untouchable castes. Except these two groups all others had equal access to vernacular education where ever schools existed. The course of instruction consisted of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Boys between the ages of 7 and 12 attended. Marathi reading

and writing was taught through Hindu mythological stories. Caste and religion were not important factors in determining the functioning of these schools. In the village Pent in Ouchitghar taluka, the school maintained by the Brahmin teacher by the name Baji Pant Marathe, consisted of 1 Brahmin, 1 Shimpi, 10 Bhandari, 4 Sali, 3 Mali, 6 Khatri and 1 Panchal boy. The school was conducted in a shed that belonged to a Teli. Similarly in the village Palee, Amrutrao Bhagwant a Prabhu taught 5 Brahmins, 6 Prabhus, 7 Sonars, 5 Kasars, 4 Marathas, 5 Shimpis, 3 Surekurees, 1 Jangam, 3 Jews along with 7 Muslim boys in the village temple. This school must have been a very popular one as he had 45 students under him which was the highest in that taluka.¹⁸ This shows that Brahmin masters taught students belonging to all castes, and Brahmin boys studied under non-Brahmin masters. Also the presence of Muslim and Jewish boys along with the Hindu boys in schools conducted in the Hindu temple courtyards shows religious tolerance of all the communities in pre-colonial Maharashtra.

The Caste and Education Policies under Elphinstone

Though the Peshwa state proclaimed the superiority of Brahmin caste, in general, and the Chitpavan caste in particular, not all Brahmins seem to have been happy with it. Within a few months of the defeat of the Peshwa in 1818, a Brahmin of Ahmadnagar performed *vedic* rituals in a Sonar household. The Brahmins of Poona excommunicated the Brahmin and demanded that the Sonars be punished for offending the dignity of the Brahmins.¹⁹ Soon Brahmins of Baroda accorded a higher ritual status to the Prabhus. The Chitpavan caste panchayat excommunicated the Brahmins, and asked the British to implement sanctions against the recalcitrant Brahmins.²⁰ Almost simultaneously, Brahmins began to perform religious functions in the Sonar households with *vedic* rituals in many places in Maharashtra. The panchayat of Poona Brahmins ordered the Sonar households not to conduct *vedic*

¹⁸ Letter from Thomas Best Jervis to the Secretary to the Government, dated 8 September 1824, General Department 63 of 1824.

¹⁹ Uma Chakravarti, *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens*, Calcutta, Stree, 2003, p. 115.

²⁰ Uma Chakravarti, *Rewriting History*. pp. 48–50.

rituals, avoid the salutation *namaskar*, instead to use *ram ram*, offer the *pinda* made of wheat flour, not of rice, and wear the dhoti double-fold like the Shudras and not single-fold like Brahmins. Anyone ignoring it was to be fined.²¹ The caste panchayat appealed to the British to enforce its structure which was ignored. These developments point to the fact that within a very short period after the fall of the Peshwa rule, both Brahmins and non-Brahmins were equally involved in dismantling the pre-colonial Peshwa social order. Excommunication in the nineteenth century was a very serious punishment. In a society where the individual property was absent, an excommunicated person lost all rights to the ancestral property or business. He could no longer practice his profession. It was also a social death. The village community as well as his caste broke all social intercourse with that person. His married daughters were often sent back by their in-laws, he and his family were denied access to village wells. There is no way to find out why these priests took such risks to uphold ritual equality as they have not left any written account. One possible explanation could be that they were merely upholding the bhakti tradition of Maharashtra.

The colonial state ignoring the appeals of the caste panchayats to implement excommunication does not mean that it was progressive and supported the opponents of rigid caste system. Mountstuart Elphinstone who was in charge of the incorporation of the Peshwa territories into the colonial state held the Peshwa administration in high esteem. He retained the earlier Peshwa administration of Kulkarnis at the village level and Mamlatdars at the district level and brought them under the supervision of British Collectors.²² Instead of supporting the decisions of the caste panchayats which would have turned powerful castes against the colonial rule, Elphinstone found a sophisticated way of continuing the Peshwa social order.

In 1819, Elphinstone proposed for the establishment of a Sanskrit College at Poona by utilising the entire educational budget of the

²¹ N.K. Wagle 'A Dispute between the Pancal Devajana Sonars and the Brahmins', in N.K. Wagle (ed.) *Images of Maharashtra: A Regional Profile of India*, London, Curzon Press, 1980, pp. 134–135.

²² Sushma Varma, *Mountstuart Elphinstone in Maharashtra 1801–1827*, Calcutta, K.P. Bagchi, 1981, p. 86.

presidency. Francis Warden, a member of the governor's council opposed the policy of limiting education to Brahmins alone. He proposed an alternative institution wherein everyone, irrespective of caste and religion would have equal access. As an admirer of Rammohan Roy, he 'looked to the Hindu College for the model to be emulated'. He procured the document prepared by the founders of the Hindu college and prepared a similar model with minor changes and sent it to Elphinstone. The proposed college was to teach Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Marathi, Gujarati, English and modern sciences and was called 'Model College', meant to serve as a 'model' for future endeavours. In this college both Europeans and Indians were to work as professors and the admission was open to all.²³ Elphinstone opposed it and in turn proposed for the establishment of a school in Bombay 'for higher orders', and insisted that 'to prevent a mixture of ranks, no boy should be admitted until he was approved by the Committee'.²⁴ Warden opposed it and both the projects were shelved as Elphinstone argued that the government lacked the resources required to establish the model college. At that time an amount of 200,000 rupees a year called *dakshina*, earmarked for encouraging learning by the Peshwas remained unused by Elphinstone.

In 1821, Elphinstone used the *dakshina* funds to establish a Sanskrit College in Poona. The admission of students and the teaching positions were open to Brahmins alone. The college was opened on 6 October 1821 with 70 scholarships for the study of the *Shastras* and 30 for the students of the *Vedas*.²⁵ Warden opposed it as 'too narrow' as 'it benefitted only Brahmins' while 'the Bombay College was open to all'. Elphinstone emphasised that 'Poona Sanskrit College would be received with utmost gratitude and satisfaction'.²⁶ In 1823, Elphinstone

²³ Rules for the College of Bombay, 17 July 1821, Public Department, 82 of 1821.

²⁴ Elphinstone's minute n.d., in Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Social Policy and Social Change in Western India*, London, Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 263.

²⁵ Letter to Francis Warden, dated 24 November 1820, Public Department, 10 of 1820.

²⁶ Francis Warden to the Members of the Council dated 22 February 1821 and a Note by Elphinstone n.d., Public Department, 235 of 1821.

proposed a plan of vernacular education by appointing ‘pantojees and maulvis’ as teachers which virtually reserved the post of teachers among the Hindus to Brahmins alone.²⁷ Once again Francis Warden opposed it and insisted on establishing schools to teach Vernaculars, English and modern sciences with access open to all and teachers drawn from all sections of the society.²⁸

In the teeth of opposition from Warden, Elphinstone could not officially announce the policy of limiting education to Brahmins alone. So he established Bombay Native School Society which later became Bombay Native Education Society in 1824. He appointed George Risto Jervis, as its secretary.²⁹ This was supposed to be a private initiative though Elphinstone was its president. The Society acted as the education department until the Board of Education was established in 1840. Jervis through the Society controlled the establishment or closing down of schools, appointment of teachers, curriculum, textbooks, purchase of books to the libraries, and student scholarships. Virtually, Jervis was in complete charge of education in the Bombay Presidency from 1824–1840. Even after the establishment of the Board of Education, Jervis was appointed as its member and he continued to defend Elphinstone’s educational policies until his death in 1851.

In 1824, Elphinstone and Jervis took a decision to establish a teacher training college and select Brahmin boys for training. Francis Warden once again opposed it. An examination was conducted on 18 May 1826, and 14 Brahmins were selected to teach Marathi to boys.³⁰ This was done when Warden was away on a tour in the Deccan. When Warden came to know of it he protested.³¹ Without registering the protest, they were sent to the Native Education Society School to

²⁷ Minute by Elphinstone dated 13 December 1823, Education Department, Vol I, 1825.

²⁸ Minute by Francis Warden, dated 29 December 1823, General Department, 1 of 1824.

²⁹ Bombay Education Consultations, 4 January to 31 December 1826.

³⁰ General Department 114 of 1826, Minute by Elphinstone dated 21 June 1826.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Minute by Warden dated 27 June 1826.

be trained by Jervis in ‘the pedagogy of teaching Marathi language and arithmetic to native students’. These subjects were not new, and the Brahmin and non-Brahmin teachers had been teaching them since medieval times. Moreover what exactly was taught during the course of one month training is not clear. But Jervis indicated that they were taught how to maintain attendance registers and prepare monthly and annual reports for the government. Elphinstone made it mandatory for every school, government or private, to appoint teachers trained by the Native Education Society.³² This act of Elphinstone excluded non-Brahmins from the teaching positions. The Native Education Society trained and sent out teachers, most of them Brahmins with an exception of few Parsees, to all the schools established throughout the Bombay Presidency during 1826–1855.

Of the first batch of 14 Brahmin boys selected, Elphinstone appointed four masters each for Poona and Ahmadnagar at the rate of 6 and 11 rupees each as the monthly salary and two masters each for Dhulia and Dharwar at 15 and 22 rupees each. This monthly salary was fixed on the basis of distance the masters had to travel to take up the positions. The two masters appointed for Satara at rupees 11 each as the monthly salary was refused by the Raja of Satara.³³ Briggs, the British Resident at the court repeatedly tried to convince the Raja and the Diwan, and reported back to Elphinstone, ‘the Raja hardly allowed me to finish the sentence, abruptly interrupted me by saying “the school masters could be of no use here since the people had determined not to allow their children to be instructed by them ...” The Raja is not against education. He has already established a school in his own palace where 15 of his relations studied and another 43 schools across the province where 505 boys studied’.³⁴ Finally these two teachers were sent to Konkan where T.B. Jervis, the brother of George Jervis, was more than willing to accommodate them.³⁵

³² *Ibid.*, Minute by Elphinstone dated 21 June 1826.

³³ *Ibid.*, The 14 brahmin teachers comprised of 10 Chitpavan, 3 Deshasth, 1 Kharada Brahmin. Minute by Elphinstone, dated 28 June 1826.

³⁴ Bombay Education Consultations 1826, Letter from I Briggs, the Resident at Satara to the Governor, dated 12 July 1826.

³⁵ General Department 114 of 1826, from G. Jervis to the Council, dated 24 July 1826.

When the Raja of Satara Pratapsinh Bhosla refused to accept the two Chitpavan Brahmin teachers appointed by Elphinstone, he was in the middle of a struggle with the Chitpavan caste panchayat of Poona which had denied him the status of a Kshatriya. The leader of the caste panchayat was Balajipant Natu, who was ‘risen from obscurity’ by Elphinstone.³⁶ The Chitpavan caste panchayat of Poona led by Balajipant Natu, had sent letters to all leading Brahmins to prevent all non-Brahmins including the Maratha royal family of Satara from using the *vedic* rituals in their household. This directly challenged the claims of Pratapsinh Bhosla as *Chatrapati*. So Elphinstone’s closeness to Natu and the two Chitpavan Brahmin teachers handpicked by Elphinstone must have raised suspicion in the mind of the Raja. A public debate was held in Satara in 1830 in which Brahmins from all over Deccan and southern Maharashtra attended. Majority of Brahmins supported Pratapsinh Bhosla and agreed to the performing of *vedic* rituals by non-Brahmins.³⁷ This betrayal of the cause of Brahmins by the Brahmins meant that the caste panchayats which wielded enormous power during the Peshwa rule were no longer relevant.

The Early Anti-caste Movements 1830–1875

The Chitpavan Brahmins who violated the caste restrictions and supported ritual equality of all castes were not products of colonial modernity. They had not studied in modern schools with exposure to European radicalism. They were priests who belonged to the older school of dissent within the Hindu tradition that was located in Vaishnava bhakti tradition in Maharashtra. Though these Chitpavan Brahmin priests belonged to Shaiva sect and Advaita philosophy traditionally opposed to the Vaishnava sect and Dvaita philosophy, they were able to appreciate and identify themselves with the dominant tradition of Maharashtra. Along with this group, the newly educated Brahmin and non-Brahmin reformers began to attack the remaining edifice of Peshwa rule. The difference between the traditional priests who were willing

³⁶ Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Social Policy and Social Change*, p. 211.

³⁷ Rosalind O’Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth Century Western India*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 32–34.

to risk excommunication to support ritual equality and the modern reformers were two. The reformers used the modern rational arguments and secondly, they attacked both caste and gender inequality in the society. Within two years of the Satara public debate, in 1832, Bal Shastri Jambhekar began to attack gender and caste inequality through his Anglo-Marathi paper *Bombay Darpan* and continued to write in *Dig Darshan*, a Marathi magazine which he started in 1840. He opposed privileges of Brahmins, child marriage and advocated women's education. Dadoba and his brother Atmaram Pandurang Tarkhadkar who belonged to Vaishya caste began to attack gender and caste inequalities through the newspapers *Prabhakar* started in 1841 and *Jnanodaya* started in 1842. Dadoba rejected caste and religious distinctions and condemned *Puranas* and *Shastras* for misguiding the people through his book *Dharmavivechan*. He established Manavadharma Sabha at Surat in 1844 and the Paramahansa Sabha at Bombay in 1849 and strongly advocated the abolition of the caste system and the spread of education among untouchable Mahars and the Mangs.³⁸

Gopal Hari Deshmukh, a Chitpavan Brahmin criticised the monopoly of scholarship maintained by the Brahmins and the denial of education to women.³⁹ He published 108 letters known as *Shatpatre* during 1848–50 in *Prabhakar* wherein he castigated the Brahmins 'for enforcing superstitious beliefs upon the society which kept the society engaged in unproductive activities'.⁴⁰ Because of his tireless and continuous attack on attacked gender and caste inequalities, he

³⁸ J.V.Naik, 'Dharmavivechan: An early 19th Century Rationalistic Reform Manifesto in Western India', in V.D. Divekar (ed.) *Social Reform Movements in India: A Historical Perspective*, London, Sangam, 1991, pp. 62–70.

³⁹ J.V. Naik, 'Social Reform Movements in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in Maharashtra—A Critical Survey', in S.P. Sen, *Social and Religion Reform Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Calcutta, Institute of Historical Studies, 1979, pp. 284–285.

⁴⁰ Y.M. Pathan, 'Lokhitwadi: Pioneer of Rationalism in Maharashtra', in S.C. Malik (ed.) *Indian Movement: Some Aspects of Dissent Protest and Reform*, Shimla, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1978, pp. 215–229.

came to be popularly known as *Lokhitwadi* or public well wisher in Maharashtra. In 1866, Dadoba's brother Atmaram Pandurang and a group of reformers including Lokhitwadi formed the *Prarthana Samaj*. No one could become a member of the Prarthana Samaj unless he was willing to eat bread made by a Christian and drink water brought by a Muslim.⁴¹ Mahadev Gobind Ranade and Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar were closely associated with the Samaj. Chandavarkar argued that 'caste is the greatest monster we have to kill'.⁴²

The Prarthana Samaj adopted bhakti movement as the source of inspiration. One of the important hymns sung at the Prarthana Samaj meetings was by Tukaram — 'the brahmin who flies to rage at the touch of a Mahar; that is no Brahmin, The only absolution for such a Brahmin is to die for his own sin'.⁴³ The members of the Samaj questioned the sanctity of Brahmin priesthood by giving priestly duties to the non-Brahmins in religious activities of Samaj.⁴⁴ The vigorous anti-caste reform movement during 1832–1865 was most effective in Bombay city which can be seen in the student enrolment data of the Elphinstone High School. When the High School was established in 1835, Bal Gangadhar Shastri, a Chitpavan was appointed as a headmaster and was given the task of selecting the first batch of 100 students. An overwhelming majority of students selected by Shastri were non-Brahmins which continued till his death in 1846. The following caste-wise list of students shows how diametrically opposite was Shastri's policy to that of Elphinstone.

⁴¹ J.N. Farquhar *Modern Religious Movements in India*, London, MacMillan, 1929, p. 75.

⁴² L.V. Kaikini, *The Speeches and Writings of Sir Narayan G. Chandavarkar*, Bombay, MGPM, 1911, p. 72.

⁴³ Dilip Chitre, trans. *Says Tuka: Selected Poetry of Tukaram*, New Delhi, Penguin, 1991, p. 115.

⁴⁴ L.V. Kaikini, *Narayan G. Chandavarkar*, p. 44.

Category	Total	Brahmin	Prabhu	Parsee	Bania	Khatri/ Maratha	Artisanal Castes: Sonar, Sutar, Kasar, Goundee, Urga Prabhu and others	Muslim	Jew	Port uguese	East Indian
Assistant Masters	11	3	3	1		1		2		1	
Teaching assistants	10	1	4	2	2	1					
West Scholars	13	3	4	5				1			
Clare Scholars	18	2	4	7	1		2	1		1	
Honorary Scholars	3	1		1		1 Mod aliar					
Un-endow ed Scholars	18	2	5	8			1			1	1
Total no. of students including the above list	619	75	95	255	18	14	70	33	2	52	5

Source: Compiled from *Report of the Board of Education* for the years 1840–1841.

The list of 11 assistant masters was headed by the Portuguese followed by Parsee, Prabhu and Shenoy—the Brahmin master appears in the seventh position. There were 10 teaching assistants with scholarships, of them 4 Prabhus, 2 Parsees, 1 Khatree, 2 Banias, 1 Shenoy. Among the students, there were 13 West Scholars. The list was headed by Prabhu, followed by Muslim, Parsee, Shenoy boys, while the Brahmin students occupied tenth and twelfth positions. Among 18 Clare Scholars there was only one Brahmin in the tenth position. The list was headed by a Parsee. Of the 3 Honorary Scholars attached to the institution, 1 was Brahmin, 1 Modaliar, 1 Parsee. There were 18 boys in the category of un-endowed pupils attached to the classes of assistants and scholars, of them only one was a Brahmin. The total number of students in the Elphinstone Institution in 1840 was 619 (including the above mentioned 62 students). The Parsees with 255

students dominated, followed by 95 Prabhus, 80 from artisanal castes, 52 Portuguese, 34 Brahmins, 41 Shenoyas, 33 Muslims, 18 Banias, 5 East Indians, 2 each of Mahratta, Rajpoot, Jews demonstrated the cosmopolitan character of the institution. Of the 272 Hindu students, 75 or 27.52 per cent were Brahmin, 127 or 46.69 per cent non-Brahmin upper caste and 70 or 25.73 per cent artisanal caste, denoting an overwhelming majority of 72.43 per cent non-Brahmin students. The minimum age of students was seven, while the maximum age was 21. Of these 619 students 332 paid the fee while the rest either held scholarships or were exempted the fee due to their economic status.⁴⁵

The presence of such a large number of boys from an impoverished background particularly from the non-Brahmin castes was disliked by the government. In 1850, the governor of Bombay, Falkland, asserted that there should be 'strict limitation of superior education to the wealthy, who can afford to pay for it, and to youths of unusual intelligence'.⁴⁶ The Court of Directors supporting the governor asserted that 'only a small section of population can be brought under the influence of government education in India', and decided that the section should be the upper classes ... the landowners and Jagirdars, Brahmins, and other higher castes who live by pen, such as Prabhus and Shenavis in Bombay. The Board of Education in its reply stated that

the attempts of Elphinstone and his successors to bolster up a landed aristocracy have lamentably failed; and complete discomfiture has hitherto all endeavours to open up a path to distinction through civil honours and education to a race whom nothing appears to excite but vain pomp and extravagance, or the reminiscence of their ancestors' successful raids in the plains of Hindoostan.⁴⁷

The commercial class and the higher employees of the government were dismissed off for 'not being influential enough to affect the society'. So they concluded that 'the influential class whom the

⁴⁵ *Report of the Board of Education* for the years 1840, 1841, pp. 77–81,

⁴⁶ The letter from the Governor of Bombay to the Board of Education, dated 24 April 1850, *Report of the Board of Education* 1850, p. 13.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

government are able to avail themselves of in diffusing the seeds of education are the Brahmins, and other higher castes. But the Brahmins and these high castes are for the most part wretchedly poor; and in many parts of India the term 'Brahmin' is synonymous with 'beggar'.⁴⁸ Members of the Board noted that if the beggarly Brahmins are freely admitted into the government schools

what is there to prevent all the despised castes—the Dhers, Mahars from flocking in numbers...If education is open to men of superior intelligence from any community and with such qualifications there would be nothing to prevent their aspiring to the highest offices open to native talent,—to judgeships, the Grand jury, Her majesty's Commission of peace.⁴⁹

They also opposed liberal British opinion which urged that 'the government should not succumb to the prejudice, and that an open attack should be made upon the barriers of caste'. Openly supporting the caste hierarchy and the privileges of the Brahmins they argued that,

the feelings that would be roused in England where the head of the House of Percy or of Howard allying himself with a butcher's daughter, however beautiful, accomplished, or wealthy. The social peculiarities on these subjects lie wholly beyond the just scope of government interference.⁵⁰

This clearly shows that the official policy of supporting the Brahmins in the field of education started by Elphinstone-Jervis continued well into the 1850s. Many of these teachers were strong defenders of the caste system.

Education of Untouchable Children

In 1856, a boy of Mahar caste applied for admission to the Government Marathi School at Dharwar. The Brahmin headmaster

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.15.

who was trained at Jervis's Native Education Society School at Bombay refused him admission on the grounds of caste. The boy and his father appealed in vain to the authorities in the education department; they also sent a petition to the government. The Government referred this petition to the Director of Public Instruction and asked for a report. The DPI Edward Irvin Howard admitted that 'the petitioner had reason and justice on his side', but concluded that 'the admissions of low caste boys to the Government schools might do more harm than good'. The Government accepted DPI's views and informed the petitioner that they could not at present interfere on his behalf.⁵¹

When the matter reached the Court of Directors, they favoured the admission of boys of all castes into the government schools and stated that 'the government schools must always be open to all, and if the wealthier classes are opposed to such institutions, they may apply their funds if they think fit to the formation of schools on a different basis'.⁵² They further stressed that

no exclusion solely on the ground of caste should be allowed...the educational institutions of the government are intended by us to be open to all classes; and we cannot depart from a principle which is essentially sound and the maintenance of which is of the first importance. It is not impossible that in some cases the enforcement of the principal may be followed by the withdrawal of a portion of the scholars.⁵³

The DPI of Bombay E.I. Howard stated the government 'resolves that all schools maintained at the sole cost of government shall be open to all classes of its subjects without distinction'. However,

The policy of the Board of education was to confine education to natives of good caste and superior classes; and if they discouraged or prohibited Europeans and half-castes from entering government schools, still less were they likely to

⁵¹ To the Court of Directors of the East India Company from the Governor General in Council dated 20 May 1857, Home/Education, No. 3.

⁵² Home/Education, 2 July 1858, No. 5.

⁵³ Home/Education, 9 July 1858, No.1.

wish for the presence of pupils supposed to be of abject origin, and regarded with abhorrence by the more favoured castes. Low-caste boys as a general rule are dirty and offensive in their persons. It would evidently not be fair to other children to compel them to receive such a fellow-pupil by their side. It would be like intruding a chimney-sweep or crossing-sweeper upon a class of clean well-dressed boys in an English national school. The effect would be to drive away those who are most able to profit by education, for the benefit of those who are least able.⁵⁴

Howard stated ‘the machinery of the grant-in-aid system is exactly applicable to such cases. All who wish to have exclusive schools, from whatever motives, can at once command the aid of the state towards their support’.⁵⁵ During the course of this debate a reference was made to a government school in at Kunhur in Khandesh where the Brahmin master and parents of 60 upper caste children had no prejudice towards the presence of untouchable children in their midst.

In 1868, the admission of an untouchable boy into the High school at Chanda, a Marathi-speaking district of the Central Provinces, created a controversy. This school had 47 boys; however with the admission of a Dhed boy, 26 boys belonging to both upper castes and artisanal castes left the school. The remaining 21 boys consisted of eight Brahmin and 13 non-Brahmin boys. The Chief Commissioner supported the admission of the Dhed boy and the school continued to function even with reduced strength.⁵⁶ The next year a Dhed boy by name Mukunda sought admission into the Khamgoan Anglo-Marathi school. The headmaster Edulji Jamsetji refused admission. Woodhouse, the Assistant Commissioner of Khamgaon directed the headmaster to admit the boy which he complied. Within a month, the strength of the school came down from 118 to 68 as both Brahmin and non-Brahmin parents withdrew their boys. Woodhouse argued that ‘the Dhed boys should be admitted to Anglo-vernacular school at Khamgaon even if few boys of upper caste are withdrawn...as ultimately self-interest will

⁵⁴ *Report of the DPI*, Bombay, 1856–57, pp. 93–94.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁵⁶ *Home/Education* 15 October 1873, A, Nos. 20–21.

very soon overcome such prejudices'.⁵⁷ The DPI of Berar Sinclair refused to enforce the admission. Instead, he suggested that the boy may be sent to an Urdu school. Mukunda had earlier studied in primary schools at Bombay and Akola in the Marathi medium and did not know any Urdu. However the DPI was not ready to consider this issue. He declared that 'my educational policy has been to be "all things to all men" as far as possible'.⁵⁸ Sinclair consulted Peile, the DPI of Bombay, who advised him to send them to 'the school for Mahars and Mangs at Ahmadnagar attended by 80 boys'. Peile also suggested, 'it would be unwise to enforce the admission of the Dhed boys into the schools supported by local funds against the wishes of the subscribers and I think that the best course will be to open special schools for the lower caste where ever a provision is not already made by the missionaries'. In the same year two Dhed boys were refused admission at the Akola government high school. The DPI argued that 'people gradually give up their prejudice and ordered the admission of all boys irrespective of their caste'.⁵⁹

In the mean time a petition dated 28 July 1869 signed by 46 people belonging to Brahmin and non-Brahmin castes comprising of lawyers and clerks (*munims*) was sent to the DPI of Berar. The petition argued that

the admission of Dhed and Mahar children into government school is against the policy of religious neutrality assured by the Queen's Proclamation. Allowing our children to mix with Dhed boys is violation of our religion and we should be provided with separate schools.

The Petitioners threatened to keep their children at home. The Deputy Commissioner and the Assistant Commissioner upon visiting the school the next day found that 'the petitioners were encouraged by a school master'. Both the officials argued that 'the government

⁵⁷ C. Woodhouse, Assistant Commissioner, Khamgaon to R.S. Sinclair DPI dated 26 June 1869.

⁵⁸ Ibid, R.S. Sinclair, DPI Berar to W. Tweedie First Assistant Resident at Hyderabad dated 3 August 1869.

⁵⁹ Ibid., J.B.Peile, DPI Bombay to R.S. Sinclair dated 29 July 1869.

should not give way to such a silly prejudice; and recommended to remove the masters. We should certainly be able to find other Brahmins who would be enlightened enough to gain the people over to commonsense. If the masters only stand honestly by us, the people would be with us too'. Fearing removal, the concerned master submitted through the headmaster Edalji Jamsetji, a statement that he was not opposed to the admission of Dhed boys.⁶⁰

The British Resident at Hyderabad, Saunders, supported these two officials, by stating that 'Brahmins and out-castes are seen standing side by side in the ranks of the regiments of the Bombay Army. Suggested firmness, tempered with patience and reconciliation as well as self-interest must have had effect on it'. The Resident stated that, 'we cannot refuse to allow Dheds or any other section of the community to participate in it and if the Brahmins are so bigoted as to debar themselves from its benefits on caste grounds, they will no longer be adamant once they realise that we are not to be thus coerced into humouring prejudices so unreasonable and groundless as those which have been professed in this matter by a few of their numbers'. He also wrote 'I look to you and to the officers of the department to give effect to the spirit of the above remarks'.⁶¹ These two officers also received support from the Chief Commissioner of Berar who argued that

when a Brahmin thinks it no pollution to travel in the same railway carriage with a man of low caste, because the Railway companies refuse to give in to his prejudice, it would be strange if brahmin boys would not submit to be taught in the same room with Dheds...Brahmin would eventually come to view the matter in a reasonable light.⁶²

He opposed separate schools for low castes as it tends to keep up the separation between the higher and lower castes. He gave the

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., Major W. Tweedie, officiating first Assistant Resident at Hyderabad to R.S. Sinclair, DPI Berar dated 28 September 1879.

⁶² Home/Education proceedings 1870, pp. 1523–1527, Opposition to the Admission of Dhed boys into school.

example of ‘schools in Kamptee, Raepore, Belaspore and Bhundara where Brahmin and Mahar and Dhed boys studied together’.⁶³ This is proved by the fact that the number of untouchable boys went up from 18 in 1872 to 602 in 1874. These boys studied ‘in several schools in every district without objection being raised. The report praised all Deputy Educational Inspectors and several masters who had been very successful in gaining Dhed pupils, owing to their liberal-mindedness, good sense and tact’.⁶⁴

Phule and the *Satyashodhak Samaj*

The debates regarding the admission of lower caste, particularly untouchable children across Maharashtra show that the opposition was not universal but wherever it existed, continued because the local officials were unwilling to enforce equal access to schools. It also points out to the fact that the early reform movement of individual reformers and the Prarthana Samaj had been unable to address the caste consolidation that was becoming stronger through colonial educational policies. At this juncture, Jotirao Phule (1828–1890), a radical reformer emerged on the scene. Phule attacked the caste system in unequivocal terms. He located the caste oppression in Maharashtra to the Brahmin *Kulkarnis*, Brahmin *Mamlatdars* and Brahmin teachers who represented social, economic and intellectual oppression. These were the three categories that were consolidated by Elphinstone. Phule analysed these aspects in his first book *Gulamgiri* (slavery) published in 1873.⁶⁵ He rejected the bhakti as a source for reform within the Hindu society and attacked the caste system from the standpoint of rationality and equality.⁶⁶ He established the Satyashodhak Samaj (society for the search of truth) in 1873. Religious pragmatism and social equality formed the basis of this new social order. The Satyashodhak Samaj, removed the mediation of Brahmin priesthood

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Home/Education, 1875, No. 31.

⁶⁵ G. P. Deshpande, (ed.) *Selected Writings of Jotirao Phule*, New Delhi, Left Word, 2002, pp. 36–99.

⁶⁶ Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: Non-brahmin Movement in Western India 1873–1930*, Bombay, 1976, p. 108.

by introducing simple rituals.⁶⁷ The Samaj began to perform marriages according to their own simplified rites, which resulted in the Brahmins seeking legal redress against the members of the Samaj.⁶⁸

In 1880, the priests of Otur filed a case against one Balaji Kesaji Patil for performing his daughter's marriage without a Brahmin priest. They claimed that they were entitled to a marriage fee, whether or not they had actually conducted the ceremony. Phule and Patil fought the case all the way to the High Court in Bombay. The Chief Justice Charles Sargent and Justice Telang in 1890 decided the case in favour of Phule.⁶⁹ They ruled that 'no Brahmin priest had any right to officiate at the ceremony and no fees were to be paid to him if he was not called to act'.⁷⁰ Telang upheld the right of the Satyashodhaks to conduct ceremonies without the mediation of Brahmin priesthood and categorically opposed 'tyranny of caste and tyranny over caste'.⁷¹

Though Phule rejected bhakti, the very foundation of the Prarthana Samaj, and unequivocally attacked the Brahmins, individual members of both the Samajs assisted each other in attacking the caste system. Telang who defended the right of Satyashodhaks was associated with the Prarthana Samaj, and was himself an anti-caste Brahmin. Sadashiv Ballal Govinde and Moro Vithal Valavekar, both Brahmins joined Phule in establishing schools for low castes. Valavekar was a founding member of the Prarthana Samaj.⁷² In 1875, when Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj visited Poona, his procession through the streets was threatened with violence. Though Phule was against *Arya-Bhat* Brahmins, he and Mahadev Govind Ranade personally escorted

⁶⁷ Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*. p. 302.

⁶⁸ N.H. Kulkarnee, 'Reform Movements' in S.P. Sen, *Social and Religious Reform Movements*, pp. 272–274.

⁶⁹ Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*, pp. 279–280.

⁷⁰ Dhananjay Keer, *Shahu Chatrapati: A Royal Revolutionary*, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1976, p. 226.

⁷¹ *Speeches and Writings of K.T. Telang*, Bombay, K.R. Mitra, 1916, pp. 239–258.

⁷² Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*, pp.110–114.

Dayananda through the streets of Poona and in the process both were attacked with ‘stones and sticks’.⁷³

Nationalism, Caste and Education

Those who attacked Phule and Ranade with stones and sticks, point out to a new breed of anti-reformist pro-caste Brahmins. The caste panchayats, either during the Peshwa rule or during the early colonial period, excommunicated the persons who violated caste restrictions but were not involved in physical violence. However, the new breed of anti-reformist Brahmins had no compunctions in using violence in public space to make a point that came to dominate the public space in Maharashtra in general and in Poona in particular during 1880–1818. The leaders of the pro-caste group were extremely articulate and western educated. First among them was Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar who started the *Nibhandmala* in 1874, one year after Phule started the Satyashodak Samaj.⁷⁴ Chiplunkar was the first to attack Phule’s ideas in his *Nibhandmala*.⁷⁵ His father Krishna Shastri Chiplunkar, a Sanskrit scholar, had advocated admission of non-Brahmins into the Sanskrit College.⁷⁶ Vishnu Shastri opposed his father’s liberal views and declared that ‘the Brahmins alone have the keys to the treasury of knowledge in their waistband and without their help nobody can approach the treasure of knowledge’. He found fault with Phule’s grammar and mocked at his lack of urbanity.⁷⁷ Chiplunkar in his criticism of Phule justified the supremacy of the Brahmins especially the Chitpavans and maintained that no matter what members of other castes might do, the Chitpavans would always be superior.⁷⁸

⁷³ Ramabai Ranade, *His Wife’s Reminiscence*. New Delhi, Publication Division, Govt. of India, 1963, pp. 54–55.

⁷⁴ B.B. Majumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas: From Rammohan to Dayanand*, Calcutta, Bookland 1967, p. 166; Madhav L. Apte, ‘Lokhitwadi and V.K. Chiplunkar: Spokesmen of Change in Nineteenth Century India’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 7, 2 (1973) p. 201.

⁷⁵ J.R. Shinde, *Dynamics of Cultural Revolution*, Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1985, p. 110.

⁷⁶ Uma Chakravarti, *Rewriting History*. p.100

⁷⁷ M.S. Gore *Non-Brahmin Movement in Maharashtra*, New Delhi, Segment Books, 1989, p. 23.

⁷⁸ Madhav L. Apte ‘Lokhitwadi and V.K. Chiplunkar: Spokesmen of Change in Nineteenth Century Maharashtra’, *Modern Asian Studies*, I, 1973, p. 206.

He called upon educated young Brahmins to re-establish Brahminical hegemony in the Hindu society. Soon Chiplunkar was joined by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who singled out Lokhitawadi, Phule and Ranade ‘as destroyers of Hindu religion, culture and society’.⁷⁹ Chiplunkar and Tilak added new dimension to their attack on Ranade, Chandavarkar and Phule by calling them as ‘un-national’ or those who acted against the ‘national interest’. Both of them criticised the colonial rule for providing space for the attack on the institution of caste.⁸⁰ Tilak elevated the pro-caste movement to national movement and equated anti-caste movement to anti-national movement by arguing that only those who had faith in the *varnashrama dharma* alone could be *rashtravadis* or nationalists and others were ‘un-national.’ He also declared that ‘the Hindu religion owed its existence to the caste system’.⁸¹ Ambedkar having analysed the activities of these pro-caste leaders has declared that Tilak and Chiplunkar ‘did greatest harm to the cause of social reform’.⁸²

The new found assertiveness of the pro-caste group played out in a pronounced manner in the field of education. The appointment of Hunter Commission further intensified the conflict between pro-and anti-caste groups. The reformers of the Prarthana Samaj and Satyashodhak Samaj and the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha campaigned for the introduction of mass education. This meant that every child belonging to any caste in the age group of 5–12 had equal access to schools. Tilak opposed it by arguing that ‘the government should not take away a farmer’s boy from the plough, the blacksmith’s boy from the bellows and the cobbler’s boy from his awl with the object of giving him liberal education’. Just as DPI Howard had argued twenty-five years back, Tilak too argued giving education to non-Brahmin children to schools would do ‘more harm than good’. Tilak also

⁷⁹ *The Mahratta*, May 15 1887, p. 2. *The Mahratta*, April 26 1896, p.1, Notes on the Present Activity.

⁸⁰ J.V. Naik, ‘Influence of Junius on the anti-British writings of Militant Nationalism’, in A.R. Kulkarni, et al. (eds) *Medieval Deccan History*, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1996, p. 252, *The Mahratta*, May 10 1891, p. 3. *The Caste and Caste alone has Power*, Editorial.

⁸¹ *The Mahratta*, July 10 1881, p. 1. ‘The Prospects of Hindu Caste’.

⁸² B.R. Ambedkar, *Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah*, p. 17.

suggested that non-Brahmin children should be trained as ‘carpenters, blacksmiths, masons and tailors’.⁸³ Jotirao Phule, in his testimonial addressed the British elitist policies which had led to such a deplorable condition,

Perhaps a part of the blame in bringing matters to this crisis may be justly laid to the credit of the government ... it is an admitted fact that the greater portion of the revenues of the Indian empire are derived from the ryots’ labour from the sweat of his brow. The higher classes contribute little or nothing to the state’s exchequer ... They have educated many children of wealthy men, and have been the means of advancing very materially the worldly prospectus of some of their pupils but what contribution have these people made to the great work of regenerating their fellow-men? ... Have they in any way shown themselves anxious to ... repay philanthropy with patriotism? Upon what grounds is it asserted that the best way to advance the moral and intellectual welfare of the people is to raise the standard of instruction among the higher classes? A glorious argument this for aristocracy...⁸⁴

Phule stated that almost all the teachers in primary schools were Brahmins and they discouraged the education of the lower classes. The Sanskrit scholar R.G. Bahandarkar, supporting Phule stated that though the government statistics showed that there were 47,342 boys in schools under the category of ‘cultivators’ ... I believe the number includes Brahmins and other higher castes and the number of *Shudra* cultivators is very small. The number of sons of cultivators attending the government college is given as eight. But I do not remember having seen any *Shudra* cultivator among the students of Elphinstone college.⁸⁵

⁸³ *The Mahratta*, May 15 1881, pp. 3–4, ‘Our system of Education—A Defect and a Cure’. For a detailed analysis of Tilak’s opposition to non-Brahmin education see, Parimala V. Rao, *Foundations of Tilak’s Nationalism: Discrimination, Education and Hindutva*, Orient BlackSwan, 2011.

⁸⁴ *The Report of the Bombay Provincial Committee*, Calcutta, The Government Press, 1884 pp. 140–145.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 261–264, 271.

The Hunter Commission accepted that the opposition of upper castes to the education of lower castes and untouchables was 'due to the desire of the upper castes to keep the low castes in a state of subjugation and servility'. However it did not recommend mass education as demanded by anti-caste reformers. One of the members of the Commission, K.T. Telang, in his 14 page Note of Dissent, criticised the Commission for neglecting the education of the lower caste and untouchable children.⁸⁶

The pro-caste leaders like Tilak criticised reformers particularly Telang, for betraying caste interest by attempting 'to see all caste distinctions effaced at once', through the admission of Mahar and Dhed children into schools.⁸⁷ Tilak was not the only person to strongly defend the caste system. Narayan Vishnu Bapat organised a large autumn festival called *Hemantotsva* in 1886. The purpose of the festival was to counter 'Brahmin reformers, missionaries and street preachers (Satyashodhaks) attack on caste system'. The speakers declared that caste distinctions were necessary to maintain 'peaceful citizenship'.⁸⁸ Speakers asked the government to establish separate schools for non-Brahmin children where subjects like 'preparing of soil, the tending of bullocks, and the implements of husbandry' are taught.⁸⁹

The Satyashodaks countered such an elaborate organised public display in support of the caste system. They held a large public meeting in Poona in 1888 and conferred the title of Mahatma on Phule.⁹⁰ Soon, Krishnarao Bhalekar of the Satyashodhak Samaj started the Din Bandhu Sarvajanic Sabha Free School in Poona. This initiative was supported by M.G. Ranade, Vishnu Moreshwar Bhide, R.G. Bhandarkar, D.P. Shet, Gangaram Bhau Mashke and Sayajirao Gaikwad, the Maharaja of Baroda.⁹¹ This meeting itself showed that

⁸⁶ *The Hunter Commission Report*, pp. 606–619.

⁸⁷ *The Mahratta*, March 26 1882, pp. 5–6. Admission of Mahar boys into Govt. Schools.

⁸⁸ *The Mahratta*, Feb. 14 1886, p. 5. *Hemantotsava* of the Bombay Hindu Union Club.

⁸⁹ *The Mahratta*, Feb. 21 1886, p. 5.

⁹⁰ G.P. Deshpande, *Selected Writings*, p. 3.

⁹¹ Rosalind O' Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*, p. 285.

despite ideological differences, both the Satyashodhaks and Prarthana Samajists worked together.

By 1890s the pro-caste groups realised that the influence of the anti-caste groups could not be contained by opposing the admission of lower caste and untouchable children into schools. The death of Phule in 1890 and Lokhitwadi in 1892 the two prominent anti-caste leaders around whom powerful institutions like the Prarthana Samaj and the Satyashodhak Samaj had grown did not weaken the power of their followers. Tilak grudgingly accepted that ‘late Deshmukh and late Fulley’s (Phuley) attempt to dispel through the land any reverence that might be felt for the Brahmins, was still strong’.⁹² Krishnaji Keshav Damle a Brahmin poet who wrote under the pen name of ‘Keshavasut’ (1866–1905) declared in his poem *Nava Shipai* (New Soldier): ‘I am not a Brahmin, not even a Hindu. I belong to no sect’. In another poem called *Tutari* (Bugle) Damle ridiculed the agenda of the pro-caste leaders—‘the shadow of a human pollutes other, to remove pollution he bathes. What can be said of such idiots? One human has made the other low. The old is dead, let it go bury it, or cremate it, but let it go’.⁹³ To counter such social and religious radicalism, Tilak and his supporters began to argue that patriotism and nationalism was closely linked to *varnashrama dharma* and the reformers were attempting to ‘kill the caste and with it kill the vitality of the nation’. To be patriotic or nationalist meant to have faith in the caste system.⁹⁴ So a defence of caste system became vital to define the distinct identity of the Hindus, as a nationality and India as a nation.⁹⁵ In 1892, at the second industrial conference in Poona, Tilak read a paper on the industrial aspects of the caste system. He stressed that ‘the caste as an institution would work like a trade union in modern times’.⁹⁶

⁹² *The Mahratta*, April 26 1896, p. 1 ‘Notes on the Present Activity’.

⁹³ V.S. Naravane, *A Cultural History of Modern India*, New Delhi, Northern Book Centre, 1991, p. 148.

⁹⁴ *The Mahratta*, April 26 1891, p. 2. ‘How shall we do it?’ Editorial.

⁹⁵ *The Mahratta*, May 10 1891, p. 3 ‘Caste and Caste alone has Power’, Editorial.

⁹⁶ *Samagra Tilak, Vol. VII*, ‘Hindu castes from an industrial point of view’, pp. 467–469.

While Tilak was defending the caste system as a vital part of the process of nation building in his weeklies and in public lectures, his associates were practically implementing it. Tilak's supporters controlled nine out of 11 municipalities in the Marathi-speaking areas of Bombay presidency. In 1892 the Dapoli municipal president Vishnu Hari Barve, a friend of Tilak refused to let the untouchable children enter the class rooms of the Municipal Board School and made them sit in the veranda of the school. The Mahar and Chambar retired army officers took up the matter with the Commissioner of Public Instruction, who directed Barve to allow the untouchable children inside the classroom in accordance with grant-in-aid rules. The municipality avoided the issue by stating that it would have to expand the classroom first in order to accommodate more children. It conveniently stated at a later date that such expansions could not be made due to lack of funds and untouchable children remained outside the school system during next couple of decades.⁹⁷

Ritual Entitlement and Conflict in Kolhapur

Shahu became the Maharaja of Kolhapur in 1894 and by 1900 he emerged as a new torchbearer of the anti-caste movement. Shahu established the Maratha Education Society to encourage non-Brahmin education. Tilak opposed it by stating that 'the danger is that the Maratha students who come out of this institute would be only so many more competitors for clerkships under government'.⁹⁸ The emergence of Shahu as the leading spokesman of the anti-caste group was resented by the pro-caste group led by Tilak. The latter blamed the British rule for 'actually creating racial jealousy by encouraging non-Brahmins'.⁹⁹ Hitherto the reformers of both the Prarthana Samaj and the Satyashodhak Samaj were led by men with ideals but were short on

⁹⁷ Philip Constable, 'Sitting on the school verandah: The ideology and practice of "untouchable" educational protest in late nineteenth-century western India.' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 37, 4 (2000) pp. 404–406.

⁹⁸ *The Mahratta*, Oct. 6 1901, p. 3. 'The Maratha Education Society', Editorial.

⁹⁹ *The Mahratta*, 21 April 1901, p. 3. 'Non-Brahmin Craze'. Editorial.

actual power to enforce their will with political and economic power. But Shahu, as an important king with vast resources, could actually enforce his reformist agenda.

In 1900, Shahu found out that though the 1830 public meeting of Brahmins had declared the Maratha royal families as Kshatriyas hence entitled to *vedokta* ceremonies, the royal priest Appa Saheb Rajopadhye continued to perform *puranokta* ceremonies which equated the Maharaja with a Shudra. When confronted, Rajopadhye refused to perform *vedokta*, and the Maharaja promptly removed him from the post of the chief priest and confiscated his *inam* lands. A few priests led by Narayan Shastri Bhat supported Shahu and conducted rituals according to *vedokta* and they were ex-communicated by the Rajopadhye's supporters. Ranade supported Shahu's claim. Tilak criticised Ranade for 'advocating wholesale and indiscriminate fusion of castes, and intermarriages by misinterpreting ancient texts'.¹⁰⁰ Tilak upheld the excommunication of Bhat and his supporters and called them as 'the Brahmin slaves of Maharaja's affection'. He opposed the Marathas' right to perform *vedokta* rituals and called 'the demand for the *vedokta* is a fad and mania'.¹⁰¹ Tilak declared if such 'pseudo-religious whims do not go unchecked, we will...bear in course of time even more absurd edicts of the Maharaja than those hitherto issued'. The entire controversy, according to Tilak was 'encouraged by the British government to take over Kolhapur'.¹⁰² He also stated that Shahu had lost 'the balance of mind',¹⁰³ and 'exhibited an irreverent self-assertion, the exhibition of human vanity in its worst form, a patent desire to trifle and tinker with religious questions and a convenient confiscation of valuable estates on prostituted political authority'.¹⁰⁴

The Shankaracharya of Sankeshwar declared in 1905 that the Maharaja of Kolhapur, being a descendant of Shivaji, was entitled to *vedokta* ritual. Tilak criticized the Shankarcharya for not being

¹⁰⁰ *The Mahratta*, Jan. 13 1901, p. 3. Editorial.

¹⁰¹ *Kesari*, Oct. 22 1901, p. 3.

¹⁰² *The Mahratta*, Nov. 1 1903, p. 506. 'The *Vedokta* Affair'.

¹⁰³ *The Mahratta*, Nov. 15 1903, p. 532. 'The *Vedokta* Affair'.

¹⁰⁴ *The Mahratta*, May 7 1905, p. 221.

impressed with the injury and misery caused to Rajopadhye.¹⁰⁵ Tilak declared that he had done so under the threat of confiscation of his estates.¹⁰⁶ Seen from a larger perspective this may not be so because as early as 1830 the Shankaracharya had given his judgement against the appeals of the Chitpavan caste panchayat that the Raja of Satara, the ancestor of Shahu was a Kshatriya—hence a Chhatrapati. At that time there was no alleged threat of confiscation. Again, the Shankaracharya at the time of the Age of Consent supported the reformers without such any compulsion. So, the threat of confiscation was a deliberate construct of Tilak fuelled by personal vendetta as the Shankaracharya had excommunicated him during one of his most crucial campaigns against the Age of Consent. The victory of Shahu in the *vedokta* controversy rejuvenated the anti-caste reform movement.

Caste, Education and the Nation

The early twentieth century gave rise to two important political movements—the Swadeshi and the Home Rule League movement. Tilak and other Maharashtrian nationalists made caste as fundamental to both the movements. Tilak repeatedly argued that secular education has made ‘old rituals, old beliefs drop at every turn’. He blamed the colonial rule for not appointing ‘Pundits and Maulvis to teach their respective religions in the government schools and colleges’.¹⁰⁷ He even asked the government to ‘replace Sanskrit poetry and drama by religious texts like *Smrutis*, *Shastras* and *Puranas*’. Tilak argued that ‘the education system based on religious dogma promoted nationality’ and insisted that the basis of national education was religious education which had its roots in the two fundamental principles namely, the *chaturvarna* and the theory of rebirth.¹⁰⁸ Gokhale criticised the nationalist defence of the caste system particularly their opposition to

¹⁰⁵ *The Mahratta*, July 30 1905, p. 361. ‘The *Vedokta* Affair’ Edn.

¹⁰⁶ *The Mahratta*. Nov. 15 1903. p. 532. ‘The *Vedokta* Affair’. Gail Omvedt also accepts this view. ‘Cultural Revolt’, p. 126.

¹⁰⁷ *The Mahratta*, March 17 1901, pp. 4–5. ‘Moral and Religious Instructions in Schools’.

¹⁰⁸ *The Mahratta*, July 3 1904, p. 313, ‘Religion Education Suggestion Towards a Practical Scheme’. Editorial.

imparting education to non-Brahmin and untouchable children by declaring that

It is absolutely monstrous that a class of human beings with bodies similar to our own, with brains that can think and with hearts that can feel should be perpetually condemned to servitude and mental and moral degradation.¹⁰⁹

Bhandarkar singled out the nationalists controlled municipalities like Satara and Karad for opposing the admission of untouchable children into regular schools while making no efforts to start separate schools for them.¹¹⁰ Gokhale refuted Tilak's argument of achieving political freedom before social and educational reform by questioning 'will a shoemaker ever be able to rise in India no matter how gifted he might be?'¹¹¹ In 1908, Gokhale urged the government to abolish school fees so that the most underprivileged could attend the school.¹¹² For these and similar such efforts the nationalists called Gokhale 'the spokesman of the British'.¹¹³ It was in this atmosphere of intense antagonism and hostility that Gokhale introduced his Elementary Education Bill in 1911. Gokhale argued that

If you want to increase the wage earning capacity of the workmen, if you want the peasant to grow stronger and healthier and take better care of himself and understand his dealings with money lender and understand better the benefits of sanitation and agriculture, than compulsion alone had been proved effective in spreading education.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ B.R. Nanda, *Gokhale, Gandhi and the Nehrus*, London, George Allen and Unwin 1974, p. 46.

¹¹⁰ *The Mahratta*, Sep. 25 1904, pp. 461–462. 'The Hon. Bhandarkar's Speech'.

¹¹¹ *Speeches of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, Madras, G.A. Natesan, 1920, p. 898.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 627.

¹¹³ *The Mahratta* Aug. 30 1908, p. 415; *The Mahratta* (Editorial), Feb. 17 1907, pp. 77–79, *The Mahratta* (Editorial Notes), May 17 1908, p. 231.

¹¹⁴ 'Elementary Education Bill Objections Answered, Hon. Mr. Gokhale's speech', *The Mahratta*, July 30 1911, pp. 367–369.

The supporters of Tilak opposed it and made a counter proposal that 'graduates attached to government schools at the district and sub-district level should travel from village to village and give religious education to the masses aiming towards imposing the uniformity of religious beliefs. Since everybody loves to write his name, he should be taught to do so'.¹¹⁵ Beyond this the supporters of Tilak argued that the people did not require education. The Maratha Education Conference comprising of non-Brahmin leaders like Vitthalrao Sakharam Zende, Khaserao Pawar, and Brahmin reformers like Raghunath Purushottam Paranjape and Ramakrishna Pant Bhandarkar supported the Bill. In Berar, 2,500 untouchables held a public meeting to support the Bill.¹¹⁶ The Bill was defeated by the supporters of Tilak like Gangadhar Chitnavis, M.B. Dadabhai and the members of the Muslim League like Nawab Abdul Majid and Mian Mohamed Shafi. N. C. Kelker, the editor of *Mahratta*, criticised 'the Brahmin reformers for encouraging non-Brahmins to attack the caste system'.¹¹⁷ Tilak in his interpretation of the Gita emphatically upheld the caste system as 'a dynamic social philosophy' and necessary for 'the welfare of society' and ultimately for 'universal welfare and spiritual salvation'.¹¹⁸

The rise of Home Rule League movement gave fresh impetus to politically defend the caste system. Tilak in his Home Rule speeches explained that Indians had to ask for Home Rule, to defend *chaturvarna*, because the British rule was responsible for its decay.¹¹⁹ Arguments were put forth that '*varnashrama dharma* is the highest embodiment of federalism in Religion, Sociology and Politics, while Home Rule is but an application of it to politics alone'. And demands were made for

¹¹⁵ 'A Supplement to Primary Education', *The Mahratta*, May 14 1911, pp. 234–236.

¹¹⁶ *The Mahratta* Jan. 3 1915, p. 11, The Maratha Education Conference, *Speeches of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, p. 669.

¹¹⁷ *The Mahratta*, April 11 1915, p. 119, 120, 'Scourge of Maharashtra'.

¹¹⁸ B.G. Tilak, *Srimad Bhagavadgita Rahasya or Karmayoga Sastra*, B.S. Sukthankar (trans.) Poona, Tilak Brothers, 1971, p. 927.

¹¹⁹ Speech at Kanpur on Jan. 1 1917, V. Grover (ed.) *Political Thinkers of Modern India, Vol. IV, Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, New Delhi, Deep and Deep Publications, 1990, pp. 311–315, Jan. 1 1917.

‘separate representation for the followers of orthodox Hinduism’.¹²⁰ Supporters of Tilak like G.S. Khaparde argued that under Home Rule the National Education comprised of teaching ‘the theory of *Karma* and the existence of God’ and the pedagogy would be limited to ‘the method found in the Puranas’.¹²¹

Resistance to the reassertion of *varnashrama dharma*, came from Bhaskarao Jadhav, the founder of the Maratha Education Conference and the Deccan Ryot Association, Valchand Kothari, a Satyashodhak and Anna Babaji Latthe of Southern Maratha Jain Association opposed the Home Rule League movement. They were reacting to Tilak’s statement that ‘the artisans should stick to their professions and leave politics to Brahmins’.¹²² The demand for separate political representation for the pro-caste groups during the Home Rule League movement resulted in the Lingayats, Marathas and Jains asking for separate representation.¹²³ N.G. Chandavarkar presiding over the first All India Depressed Classes Mission Conference in 1917 countered the pro-caste Home Rule League leaders by arguing that ‘a sense of nationalism could never spring in the hearts of those who have been treated worse than filth ... for national self-respect, it is essential to remove untouchability’.¹²⁴ Tilak attended the second session in 1918 and declared that ‘the *Dharmashastras* did not support the notion of treating any class of human beings as untouchables’.¹²⁵ Tilak’s participation in the Depressed Classes Conference did not convince the anti-caste leaders. G.D. Naik and Anna Babaji Latte and Walchand Kothari continued to oppose Tilak’s Home Rule League.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ *The Mahratta* Sep. 23 1917, p. 456.

¹²¹ *The Mahratta*, Apr. 14 1918, p. 178.

¹²² Richard Cashman, *The Myth of the Lokmanya: Tilak and the Mass Politics in Maharashtra*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975, p. 201.

¹²³ *The Mahratta*, Oct. 7 1917, p. 478, ‘Caste Representation’.

¹²⁴ Speech at the All India Depressed Classes Mission Conference, N.G. Chandavarkar Papers, NMML.

¹²⁵ *The Mahratta*, March 31 1918, p. 146. ‘Home Rule is our Birth Right’.

¹²⁶ *The Mahratta*, Sep. 22 1918, p. 455, *The Mahratta*, Oct. 6 1918, p. 490.

The Inter-caste Marriage Bill:1918

Tilak's attendance at the All India Depressed Classes Mission Conference has been represented by the nationalist historiography as a progressive stand. By 1918, had pro-caste Tilak changed his stand and became a reformer? Answer to this question can be found in his stand on the inter-caste marriage bill. In 1918, Vithalbai Patel a liberal reformer from Gujarat introduced the historic Inter-Caste Marriage Bill in the Imperial Legislature which proposed to remove restrictions on marriage between various castes and sub-castes.¹²⁷ Patel had earlier opposed the caste system and the Nationalist's attitude towards education by stating 'educate the person you call depressed and he will soon make it impossible for you to dismiss him with contempt'.¹²⁸ While placing the Bill, Patel argued 'the strength and self respect of people and self-reliance and progress of the nation depended on this Bill. Hitherto only the marriages between persons belonging to the same caste were valid. This had caused a great deal of hardship to persons who had opted to marry outside the caste, as these were not recognised by law'.¹²⁹ Vithalbai Patel quoted several instances where the boy and the girl suffered throughout life as their marriages were not legally recognised. He gave the example of a Rajput boy who had married a Brahmin girl. The girl was taken away from her husband's house and not allowed to return to her husband. The husband filed a suit for the restitution of conjugal rights. The court ruled that as the parties did not belong to the same caste, there was no marriage according to the law and the husband was therefore not entitled to restitution of conjugal rights.¹³⁰

Tilak and his supporters opposed the Bill by stating that 'the marriages between the Brahmins and the shudras are invalid according

¹²⁷ *The Mahratta*, Oct. 27 1918, p. 517.

¹²⁸ Ravindra Kumar, *Selected Works of Vithalbai Patel 1918-1919, Vol I*, N. Delhi, Mittal Publications, 1995, p. 3.

¹²⁹ R.K. Nayak et al. (eds) *Vithalbai Patel, Patriot and President*, New Delhi, National Forum of Lawyers for Legal Aid 1976, p. 103.

¹³⁰ H.M. Patel, *Vithalbai Patel*. New Delhi, Publication Division, 1982, p. 50.

to the Hindu law.¹³¹ They asked the Shankaracharya to interfere and stop the Bill from being passed which elicited no response. The Shankaracharya did not comply. A series of public meetings were organised and presided over by N.C. Kelkar. He ridiculed the Shankaracharya: ‘Dharmagurus living on public charity and not doing anything for the religion.’¹³² Vithalbhai Patel argued that ‘since the caste system was the cause of national degeneration the Bill would assist in national awakening’. Nationalists criticised the Reformers for upholding individual freedom while political subjugation continued.¹³³ They stated that

The Bill wants to unify these mysteriously bound people by the thick bond of blood if possible. The Bill does not boldly sound the national bugle to assemble the Hindu nation under a single flag...(but) raise the question of national amalgamation by intermixture of castes. Consequently, the question arises whether the original institution of caste system, which was meant to be a convenient arrangement for social welfare, does really strengthen or weaken national solidarity.¹³⁴

The Maharashtrian nationalists condemned ‘the audacity of the person who can see nothing but caste-system as the cause of political subjugation’ and criticised Vithalbhai Patel for ‘lack of historical insight and prejudicial judgement’.¹³⁵ The Bill was referred to a Select Committee, which submitted its report in March 1920. By this time Patel had resigned from the Council in compliance with a directive from the Congress. No further progress was made.¹³⁶ After this, Tilak died and his associates like Kelkar joined the Hindu Mahasabha.

¹³¹ *Samagra Tilak*, vol. 7, p. 890, Tilak to Khaparde dated Sep. 9 1918.

¹³² *The Mahratta*, September 28 1919, p. 461, *Shankaracharya* and the Patel Bill I. Need of Religious Organisation.

¹³³ *The Mahratta* October 5 1919, pp. 475–476. ‘*Shankaracharya* and the Patel Bill II’.

¹³⁴ *The Mahratta*, October 12 1919, p. 487. ‘*Shankaracharya* and the Patel Bill III’.

¹³⁵ *The Mahratta*, 12 October 1919, p. 488. ‘*Shankaracharya* and the Patel Bill III’.

¹³⁶ H.M. Patel, *Vithalbhai Patel* p. 51.

Resistance to caste-based privileges and inequality has a history of almost seven hundred years in Maharashtra. This resistance was carried out by every section of the society—from Brahmin Eknath to untouchable Chokhamela. The period from the fall of the Peshwa rule in 1818 till the debates on the Inter Caste Marriage Bill in 1918, Maharashtra witnessed a determined caste consolidation and an equally determined and vigorous anti-caste resistance movement. In 1818, a Chitpavan priest dared to defy the powerful caste panchayat of Poona to give ritual equality to a family belonging to Sonar caste, while by 1918, another Chitpavan nationalist made caste privileges as the very foundation of Indian nationalism. The period between these two incidents spanning over a century saw four distinct movements. The early anti-caste movement leading to the establishment of the Prarthana Samaj, Phule's radical Satyashodhak movement, the non-Brahman movement led by the Maharaja of Kolhapur and carried forward by the Maratha Education Conference and finally the pro-caste movement led by B.G. Tilak. During this period, the site of conflict continued to be not just ritual entitlement but extended to access modern education.

This situation was initially brought about by the British in general and Elphinstone in particular in strengthening the hands of the pro-caste elements in the society through the educational policies. Limiting teaching profession to Brahmins was Elphinstone's initiative successfully carried forward by Jervis until 1855. The statistics available for pre-colonial Maharashtra blows the myth first created by Elphinstone and later consolidated by the Hindu nationalist leaders like Chiplunkar and Tilak that traditionally Brahmins alone were teachers and thereby they were alone entitled to education.

By the end of this vibrant century, Maharashtra awaited B.R. Ambedkar, who took the anti-caste movement to new heights. Ambedkar successfully challenged M.K. Gandhi's attempt to give spiritual sanctity to the *varnashrama dharma*. Their battle on the issue of caste changed the nature and direction of the debates from Maharashtra-centric to all-India level.

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Glossary

abhangā—poetry of the bhakti saints which contains both devotion and social critique

advaita—non dualist philosophy propounded by Shankaracharya

bhakti—devotion

bhandari—toddy tapper

chitpavan—Brahmin from Konkan region

desastha—Brahmin belonging to Deccan

dhangar—shepherd

dhed—an untouchable caste

dvaita—dualist philosophy propounded by Madhvacharya

go-brahminapratipalak—protector of cows and Brahmins

goundee—a caste involved in construction of buildings

inam—tax-free land given as gift

kasar/kansar—coppersmith

koli—fisherman

kulkarni—hereditary village accountant and record keeper

kumbhar—potter

mali—gardener, also vegetable, fruit and flower growers

mamlatdar—revenue collector of a district

navi—barber

panchal—carpenter

pinda—offering in death rituals

prabhu—also called *chandraseniyakayasthaprabhu*, an upper caste

puranokta—rituals performed according to *puranic* tradition

ryot—peasant

shaiva—the tradition developed around the worship of siva

Shankaracharya—the name of the teacher of *vedanta* philosophy, also applied to the heads of institutions called *maths* founded by him who became arbiters of Hindu religious debates

shimpis—tailor

sonar—goldsmith

sutar—carpenter

teli—oil presser

vaishnava—the tradition developed around the worship of vishnu

varnashrama dharma—religious/social system based on caste stratification

vedokta—rituals performed according to vedic tradition limited to the three upper castes, however, limited to only Brahmins in Maharashtra