

THE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION OF SHIVARAM JANABA KAMBLE IN UNTOUCHABLE MOVEMENT

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Abstract:

Inspired by thoughts and work of Mahatma Phule, Gopalbuva Walangkar and other social reformer, Kamble started writing articles in newspapers, convened conferences, founded Organization, published book and put grievances of the untouchables before the ministers of India and make people aware about oppressions

Introduction:

The Pioneer who vehemently attacked the Caste System, social, inequality and worked for the uplift of the untouchables and lower classes and of women and their education was Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. He was the first reformer to open the school for both girls as well as the untouchables, in 1948 and 1954 respectively.⁷⁸ It was Jyotiba Phule whose awakening, inspiration and motivation gave rise to Dalit movement organised by the Dalit themselves. He was the 43 teacher, mentor and source of inspiration for the untouchables. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar the emancipator and *Masiha* of the Dalits regarded Mahatma Phule as his Master and revered him from the bottom of his heart.

English education and the inspiration from Jyotiba Phule led the untouchables to study the religious scriptures critically. They awoke from the age-long deep slumber. They rose with confidence and energy never before. They started denouncing the practice of untouchability publicly for the first time in the history. They started periodicals, published books and organised their brethren for their liberation.

Work of Shivaram Janaba Kamble

Inspired by the thoughts and work of Gopalbuva Walangkar for his untouchable brethren, a youth from Poona came forward with zeal and solicitude to play his part in the Untouchables' movement. His name was *Shivaram Janaba Kamble*. Kamble read the books and the articles of social reformers such as Prof. Rajaramshastri, Lokhitwadi, Baba Padamji, Agarkar, Jyotiba Phule etc. and formed his own views about the uplift of his untouchable

brethren. He started writing articles in newspapers. His first article was published in „*Maratha*“ and „*Deenbandhu*“ from Kolhapur in 1902.⁹²

At Saswad, Poona, Kamble convened a conference of Mahars from some 51 villages, On 24 November 1902.⁹³ The object of this conference was to discuss and request the government to consider, the demands of the untouchables. Kamble prepared an petition requesting the government that the untouchables be recruited in the Military and Police services and that the government should spend for the education of the untouchable children, and with the signature of about 1588 Mahars on it he sent it to the government. ⁴⁹ This is the first petition sent to the government by the untouchables themselves.⁹⁴ However, the petition was refused flatly.

Shivram Kamble with the support of his colleagues founded „*Shree Shankar Prasadik Somvamshiya Hitchintak Mitra Samaj*“ in 1904, in Poona. He also opened a reading room by name „*Shree Sachchidanand Vachangraha*“.⁹⁵ On 1 July 1908, Kamble also started a monthly, „*Somvanshiya Mitra*“ to express his thoughts on the emancipation of the untouchables. This monthly was the mouthpiece of Kamble’s movement. He wrote many articles on the educational, religious, social and economic emancipation of the untouchables and published the accounts of his movement through it.⁹⁶ He also wrote severely against the evil customs and practices prevalent among the untouchables.

Shivaram Kamble published a book titled as „*Suchipatra*“. In this book he depicted the real picture of how injustice and oppression were inflicted on Mahars while working for government and for the villagers. For that he collected several real incidents of injustice and oppression, and enumerated in that book. To make the people aware about these oppressions Kamble get this book printed and circulated its copied from villages to villages. ⁵⁰

Kamble also fought vehemently against the evil practice of *Murli* which was then prevalent in the untouchables. He wrote prolifically on the issue for awareness among the people. However, some anti-social atheists opened a campaign against him which led to tension in the community resulting in the closure of the monthly.⁹⁷

Seeing that the people from the untouchable community were not fully prepared for the social reforms, Shivaram Kamble and his colleagues convened a second conference at Jejuri, on 5 April 1910. This conference was presided over by a pensioner Subhedar Bhaddar Gangaram Krushnaji Bhatankar.⁹⁸ The resolutions passed in this conference laid down an outline of the program to be implemented by the government for improving the conditions of

the untouchables. However, when these resolutions were sent to the provincial as well as the central governments they neglected them.

On this Kamble decided to put the grievances of the untouchables before the then minister for India and some members of parliament. Accordingly, he sent a petition to the Minister for India on 14 December 1910. He also sent the copies of this petition to the important members of the parliament, member of India House and to the different newspapers in India 51and aboard. The chief demand in this petition was to get the untouchables recruited in the lower positions in the civil, police and military departments. The petition also complained about the very little improvement in the conditions of the Untouchables despite the 125 years of British rule.⁹⁹

The dedication of Kamble to his mission was tremendous. The courage he shown for the establishment of the rights of untouchable brethren and the zeal he put in for the improvement of their conditions were extraordinary. His views on the need of the movement of the untouchables were very clear and firm. Talking about his movement for the untouchables Kamble says, „*We have been subject to severe oppression and injustice for thousands of year in the name of religion. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to organise a movement for our own uplift and for the welfare of our nation.*”¹⁰⁰

Thus, the contribution of Shivram Janaba Kamble to the Dalit movement at its initial stage is very significant.

References:-

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