Historical Analysis of Social Struggle of Shivaji Maharaj

Pushpa M. Gaikwad
Associate Professor
Department of History & AIC
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad.
Email: pushpagaikwad709@gmail.com

In the Western Indian History, the Establishment of Maratha Kingdom by Shivaji Maharaj in medieval Maharashtra is honorable and inspiring episode of history. In the nationalist (19th and 20th) historiography Shivaji's political career was seen as a native states revolt against the foreign rule of invading Muslim Dominated dynasties.

Chh. Shivaji remained the nationalist symbol of Indian freedom struggle against the foreign ruler (in context to British rule). His achievements' have been widely studied in the medieval contexts with remarkable achievements of him in political and religious arena. Scholars like, S. N. sen Jadunath Sarkar, Shejwalkar, etc. emphasized upon him political struggle against the Mughals in the Indian sub-continent for the formation of his Maratha regime of Hindu-pad-padshahi. However, Shivaji had to struggle against social-caste hierarchy to establish his political status. Although, he is defined as 'Hindu-Swaraj -Sansthapak' among the nationalist/sectarian historians. Yet, his struggle against brahmanical caste hierarchy was largely ignored in historical debates. Dr. Ambedkar, through his historical analysis discusses the social struggle of Shivaji in the caste hierarchy. 1960's onwards the historians' inclination for social history unraveled the social dynamics involved in the political administration and social policies of Western India. The research paper is an attempt to analyze the social history as contemplated by Dr. Ambaedkar through his theoretical analysis of caste history and history and historical past of India, in specific to era of shivaji.

*[**Key words**: Hindu-pad-padshahi, sectarian historians, social history, Swaraj, Ambedkarite Approach]*

In the history of medieval Maharashtra the establishment of Maratha kingdom by Shivaji Maharaj is honorable and inspiring incident for the Marathi man. In the contemporary Muslim dominated states, the formation of Shivaji as a king was a revolutionary incident. And so, his achievement has become model for further world. But all these things comprising his adventure, brevity and caliber has always been put only through political angle, throughout the historical analysis. The political analysis has proved insufficient. The conflict of 'Swarajya' formation was not only political but also a huge blow for the contemporary Varna caste system based institution. Due to the negligence of historians the social aspect of his personality and work has always remained unstudied and unfocused. So it is the essence of the time to study Shivaji Maharaj's social conflict against the Varna-caste dominated social system.

It is seen that, the coronation of Shivaji Maharaj as a king put a blow for contemporary caste-Varna structure and scattered the Brahmin oriented social structure. Shivaji Maharaj started the process of annihilating caste by forming his state with the inclusion of various people from the lower strata of society and also compiling the Brahmin to accept his identity as a '*Kshatriya*' and so, what social formula was behind his Swaraj formation, including people from '*Shudra*' and '*Atishudra*' category. What was the structure of Shivaji Maharaj's social conflict against Varna-Caste? What were the effects of the conflict on the Varna-caste hosed social structure? In this respect the attempt has been made to focus on the structure of Shivaji Maharaj's social struggle in medieval period with Ambedkarite Approach.

The analysis method of social history writing:

In the streams of history writing originated after 1960 s, social history writing stream in considered important. In the existing method, while studying the historical incidents of bygone ages. The historical analysis is made by putting man, society and manmade institutions at the center. In the existing method the pursuit of the effects on the historical incidents on the social institutions like clan, family relations, crime, punishment, religion, economic system, caste system, feudal system, class system, is considered expected. The motive of social history is to

study the structure and processes like this. Institutions are human made due to the interrelation of human being, when these human made processes are studied with social and cultural references in historical circle called social history writing, the definition has been given in the world dictionary of social science.

Romila Thapar says**,** *"In relation of India social history means, the factional study of what was the social interrelation in the society an how was the social structure of society and the search for not only changes in the by gone, Society but also structure of the changes."* (Thaper 1978: 19-20)

On this theoretical background this paper tries to focus Shivaji Maharaj's social struggle with specially reference on caste-varna social structure in medieval Maharashtra, Nature of changing social structure and Shivaji Maharaja's contribution in this changed social structure.

The perspective of Shivaji Maharaj regarding Shudra-Atishudra Castes:

In the age where, the profession was determined by the caste and the profession determined the social states, Shivaji Maharaj collected his companions from each category of society in the formation of Swarajya like Madari Mehtare, Jiva Mahala, Shiva Nhavi, Hiroji Farjad, Tanaji Malusare and also bestowed crucial post. In the administration comprising Bahirji Naik head of spy department; a Ramoshi Maynaik, a Bhandari as head of navy, an untouchable as a head of the fort 'Shibandi'. Due to the understanding policy of Shivaji Maharaj regarding the Shudra castes, castes came from lower category like kunbi, Nhavi, Koli, Ramoshi, Bhangi, Mang, Mahar. A Tavarikhakar of Tarikha-a-Ibrahim khan, says about Shivaji Maharaj, *"The Maratha army was specially composed with castes belonging to the lower castes like Kunbi, Sutar, Vani, and on the other side the southern Indian army belonged to high castes by birth and profession"* (Elliot and Dowson. 1867:262-63)

The Scholars of Maratha History also mentioned that *"Navy, established by Shivaji Maharaj was not contentedly connected, with the support of so called, Kshytriy or Maratha. Shivaji's Navy in charge, was muslim and most of the soldiers belonged to Koli, Sonkoli, Bhandari, Muslim castes. People who lived with the help of sea, Shivaji converted them into soldiers."*

(Kamble. 1982: 186-237) V. S. Bendre has also mentioned that the backward castes and Tribes like koli, Berad and awarding Tribe like Dhangar had also directly took part in the battles in Maratha and Mughal conflict. In the bakhar about written after Shivaji in army short span of time also mentored that Berad, Romoshi, Adekari, People were given jobs according to their abilities. (Joshi. 1960: 23-24)

It shows that Shivaji Maharaj in the establishment, development and severity of Swarajya, promoted people and their courage by giving their opportunity in his Army, who were thrown out of the circle of Brahmin caste system the policy of Shivaji Maharaj was against contemporary religion and its protocols. So the Maharashtriyan Brahmin and high-class people were became opposed to him. Though Shivaji was king, he was considered Shudra by the so-called contemporary Brahmin.

In this regard Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar mentioned crutial point, he says, *"Though Chhatrapati Shivaji was separate emperor state and considered himself as a Chhatrapati, was considered Shudra by the contemporary Brahmin people. In fact Brahmins were also his subjects and also be compelled to take decision accordingly by Shivaji Maharaj but not seen doing this"* (Ambedkar. 1998: 141-42)

It shows that Shivaji Maharaj wills to keep people of all castes and religion as equal. By the thought he also included people who were out of social structure in the work of establishing his state. But all these things were antireligious for the contemporary orthodox Brahmin system and so Brahminical religious obstacles were created to provide him a high social states and disregarding his kingship. It means beside the political conflict he had to go through a social struggle.

The established Vatandar of south and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj:

In the medieval Maharashtra, from the age of Bahamanshahi, Various high Maratha generals families were seen servicing in the 'Shahi'. Shivaji made efforts to join them in the establishment of *Swaraj*. Living this humiliating service but these generals did not show any respect or interest, regarding the policy and work of Shivaji Maharaj. But on the other hand, some blood relative of Shivaji Maharaj like Shivaji Bhosale, Balaji Bhosale,

Parsojiraje Bhosale were seen fighting against Shivaji with Shahiste Khan. These Maratha generals feel satisfied in the humiliating service of various superior emperors rather than the establishment of Swarajya. They felt their personal affairs more precious than Swarajya. Shivaji Maharaj was well acquainted with the selfish Vatandar. Ramchandra Pant Amatya says regarding the rules of their Vatandar of the age of Shivaji *"by starching and suppression these Vatandar has become well established in the graced of Vatandari they transfer the politically secrete matter from one state to another and injustice with their own state."* (Joshi-Bhingare. 1960:27)

Chh. Shivaji in his efforts, to destroy the selfishness of Maratha Vatandar and motivate them in the service of Swarajya. Were invain they neglected and disregarded who was the son of anominated general. Chh. Shivaji while regarding about the humiliating attitude of these Vatandar. About Chh. Shivaji, Dr. Ambedkar says *"while thinking about the social situation of Chh. Shivaji, he was not imported a social reorganization even by his Maratha generals and they all, got together against Shivaji According to them Chh. Shivaji was Shudra, by giving reference of history Dr. Ambedkar explained that Chh. Shivaji was satisfactorily recognized by some high thinking feudal. But on the personal level, they were not ready to make it regular oppression. In royal ceremony Chh. Shivaji Bhosale was not accepted to sit with Mohite, Nimbalkar, Sawant and Ghorpade"* (Ambedkar. 1998: 141)

In the age of Shivaji Maharaj some Vatandar, though they did not possess any kingship considered themselves a king. On the other hand, despite the possession of aspirate kingdom, The Maratha generals were not ready to accept Shivaji as a king, the examples are known from Jawali and Patil from Ranza are popular. When Vatandar a Patil was summoned by Chh. Shivaji for his crime of rape he deviled the order and told the horse rider, "*Tell to your Shivaji, as you are a pseudo king, I am not a pseudo patil"* (Deshpande 1983: 4-5) It is seen that, though Shivaji Maharaj is producer of Swaraj but he was considered subordinate by the contempory vatandar and patils. Although they were the servants of various king's, so in the process of Swaraj formation, Shivaji Maharaj not only had to fight with political enemies but also with orthodox religious tendencies when he tried to prove himself as a

king by using his abilities force wealth, and arranging a coronation ceremony. He had to face several other problems apart from his contemporary Vatandar and patil. The Brahmin religious scholars created a dispute regarding the identity of Shivaji Maharaj as a Kshatriya and created several obstacles before him.

The dispute of Kshatriyatva and the obstacles in the establishment of kingdom:

When Chh. Shivaji determined to perform a coronation to prove himself a separate king of his self-created Swarajya he was opposed by the Brahmin of Maharashtra. According to caste system, on theology the right of king was only imparted to the 'Kshatriya. It was assumed that Kshatriya does not exist in the Kali-Yug and as Shivaji Maharaj did not perform his *upnayan ceremony*. It was decided that time he was declared as '*Shudra*'. Shivaji Maharaj was conscious about the right of deforming Varna of a person possessed by Brahmin. So Shivaji Maharaj provides Gagabhatta a massive wealth acquires Kshtriya identity and performed a coronation ceremony. By this act Shivaji Maharaj showed the hollowness in the Brahmin system which could be controlled on the basis of wealth. In this way he gave a huge blow to the contemporary Varna-caste system. While evaluating the caliber of Shivaji Maharaj Dr. Ambedkar say's *"When Shivaji Maharaj determined to perform coronation disputes were created, regarding his identity as Kshatriya. So he had to perform the coronation bribing a lot of wealth to Gagabhatta; by this act Shivaji Maharaj Provided a huge blow to caste system"* (Ambedkar. 1998: 141-146)

To prove Shivaji Maharaj's identity a Kshatriya, his relation was connected with Shisodiya race of Mewad. By the various historical references, Shisodiya's Kshtriya identity is put in despute.

C. V. Vaidya, who wrote about the history of Shivaji Maharaj quoted some lines from kriset smiths, *"The foreign attacks like shaka or Huna, desolved in the locale society of Rajputana and Gangaghal region. They adopted Hindu religion. The contemporary Brahmin merged these foreign victors in Hindu religion as Rajput or Kshatriya. It is an indisputable truth, most of the generals families and popular Royal Clans at the northern side of India originated from this foreign people, who came in India in fifth and sixth century. In the same way at the southern part of*

India the races like gond, chandel, Rathod and other popular Rajput races has been created" (Vaidya. 1921: 08)

It often created confusion, whether there was any Kshatriya in Maharashtra before Shivaji Maharaj. Because people who called *Kshatriya* assumed their origin from the kshatriya of Rajastan. But by seeing the feudal system of medieval Maharashtra one cannot find a clear cut dividing varna caste system. Brahmin and non-Brahmin are the only two Varnas existing in this period. People who perform spiritual work are priests and the remaining people are and owners and do farming, they are categorized as non-brahmin. In the muslim region even the people like short land owner. Kunbi, shudra, atishudra were provided opportunities for performing their caliber in this period. It shows that kunbi and farmer are at time possess two duties of farmer are fighter. So, what will be placed them in the Varna caste system. Due to this confusion, dispute the lower status in the caste system, people belonged to Kunbi and Shudra, Atishudra castes could achieve an opportunity to acquire high status in the social structure.

Conclusion

In his period Shivaji Maharaj also dared to deconstruct the existing social system by collecting his companions from the lower category of society. In the further age it led to the formation of various royal Maratha families like Mahadaji Shinde, Malharrao Holkar, Gaikwad from Baroda family. These Maratha generals despite their inferiorly in caste system are shown per forming various duties in the administration and battles. These people from Shudra category could establish royal families, and governed various states and also become state owner. It is the result of Shivaji Maharaj's revolution against Brahmin oriented caste system. Study of Shivaji Maharaj's social history writing is understood by thinkers in various appreciative ways. Mahatma Phule considers it honorable through his writing about Shivaji Maharaj as Kulwadi Bhushan and Dr. Amberkar also appreciate his initiative as annihilator of varna caste system.

While writing the history of medieval Maharashtra the struggle of Shivaji Maharaj has always been put with a political and religious perspective disregarding his fight against the caste and Varna system by the scholars and researchers. In fact, while fighting with the central powers, Shivaji Maharaj also had to fight

with contemporary established Varna-caste system. But the traditional history writing did not take in to the account a social Struggle of Shivaji Maharaj. Instead of addressing him as a caste annihilator king or a king against social discrimination, he was modeled as a Hindu state creator or Hindu king. His image of a Hindu emperor has been put before us. In the later age, the history researchers were seen regulating his history of social Struggle.

The stream of social history writing originated after 1965 is helpful in understanding the formula of Shivaji's social struggle. It also helped in solving the dispute regarding the social status of Shivaji Maharaj. The conventional history writing confined Shivaji Maharaj in the circle of political and religious aspects. It totally neglected the anti Varna-caste approach of Shivaji Maharaj and imparts narrowness to this deed? Shivaji Maharaj was not anti-Muslim; he was not anti religion and not only a Hindu king. But he was a king who denied the so-called Varna-caste oriented social system and marginalized the contemporary selfish emperors. While studying the popular historical personality like Shivaji Maharaj with the help of new thought streams which originated today, it is needed to do research on his neglected social struggle of anti Varna-caste system.

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