



RESEARCH ARTICLE

GROWTH OF NON BRAHMIN MOVEMENT AND PARTY

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ABSTRACT

In this Research paper an attempt has been made to review Non- Brahmin party, its role in framing its policies particularly in council politics and attempts and made were to revitalize the party from time to time. The term Non- Brahmins includes all those castes that were denied due status and various human rights in the then existing social hierarchy also that deprived of the fruits of progress. It included in its fold the Lingayats, Marathas, and all other Non-Bahmin classes. No doubt, Non-Brahmin political role in Bombay Presidency was rather a slow process as compared to that of Justice Party in Madras Presidency.

The Non-Brahmin manifesto was published in 1916, which mainly posed the question of overwhelming majority of Brahmins in all spheres of Political, Social, Economic and Religious life of the community. It proves with necessary statistics that the Brahmins with a negligible fraction of population in the Madras presidency was far ahead of other communities in the field of Education, Government services, Legislative Councils and Municipal and other Services that enjoyed highest in the society, tied down with old established traditions other communities were struggling to emerge in the society in spite of numerous obstacles in their path.

The manifesto posed important question? why a small class which show a larger percentage of English-knowing men should be allowed to absorb all the governmental appointments great and small high and low; though some of the Non-Brahmin community had produced men of distinguished attainments and unquestioned eminence. The manifesto defined the attitude of important Non-Brahmin communities towards "Indian Home rule Movement."

It also suggested some important measures to be adopted to equalize all the communities on a level. It remarked that future Indian constitution should be broadened and deepened so that representatives of every Class, Caste and Community should be given fiscal freedom and legislative autonomy affecting domestic policy and economic position of India. At the end of manifesto appealed to the leaders of the the Non-Brahmin communities to create strong public opinion regarding the existing pathetic conditions to provide educational facilities,

sponsor a well conducted news paper as their bulletin and contribute in the "National building on the ground of self-respect and perfect equality." 1 The Non-Brahmin movement was not communal in its attitude.

In this respect, V.R. Kothari wrote. "The aim of the movement was the socio- educational uplift of the Non-Brahmins and the downtrodden. But our opponents used to accuse us as haters of Brahmins." 2 In Many societies there are differences like rich and poor, Knowledgeable and ignorant. The differences like Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra are there in Hindu religion. But such birth based social divisions are very rarely found in the societies of the world in Christianity, Buddhism, Christianity and Muslim religions also. Since these differences and divisions are the same and similar in all religions, one may think that division like Brahmin and Non Brahmin cannot be found elsewhere.

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INTRODUCTION

In this Research paper an attempt has been made to review Non- Brahmin party, its role in framing its policies particularly in council politics and attempts and made were to revitalize the

party from time to time. The term Non- Brahmins includes all those castes that were denied due status and various human rights in the then existing social hierarchy also that deprived of the fruits of progress. It included in its fold the Lingayats, Marathas, and all other Non-Bahmin classes. No doubt, Non-

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It also suggested some important measures to be adopted to equalize all the communities on a level. It remarked that future Indian constitution should be broadened and deepened so that representatives of every Class, Caste and Community should be given fiscal freedom and legislative autonomy affecting domestic policy and economic position of India. At the end of manifesto appealed to the leaders of the the Non-Brahmin communities to create strong public opinion regarding the existing pathetic conditions to provide educational facilities, sponsor a well conducted news paper as their bulletin and contribute in the "National building on the ground of self-respect and perfect equality."¹

The Non-Brahmin movement was not communal in its attitude. In this respect, V.R. Kothari wrote. "The aim of the movement was the socio- educational uplift of the Non-Brahmins and the downtrodden. But our opponents used to accuse us as haters of Brahmins."² In Many societies there are differences like rich and poor, Knowledgeable and ignorant. The differences like Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra are there in Hindu religion. But such birth based social divisions are very rarely found in the societies of the world in Christianity, Buddhism, Christianity and Muslim religions also. Since these differences and divisions are the same and similar in all religions, one may think that division like Brahmin and Non Brahmin cannot be found elsewhere. There were many peoples' movements in Europe. The prominent among them were the king versus people, the Pope versus reformers and rich versus poor etc. But the Non-Brahmin Movement cannot be compared with the movement in Europe. The reason for this is that the issues on which the movements in Western countries had stood were not the same on which the Non-Brahmin movement had stood. The problem of Non-Brahmin movement is peculiar to Hindu religion only because its seeds are there in Hinduism itself and these are that, the division among the Hindus is based on merits and demerits of

individuals. In addition to this, caste- wise division is another factor in Hinduism. These divisions are not found in any non-Hindu society.

If the division based on economic conditions is made, the two divisions rich and poor can be found in all societies. But the limit of dividing the society in case of non-Hindu society ends here only. But it is not the case with Hindu society. In Hindu society, divisions like rich Brahmin, rich Mahar, poor Brahmin poor Mahar, Brahmin Labour, Mahar Labour, etc. can be made. There is no scope to divide non- Hindu society in this manner. In other societies the divisions are artificial, in which if a poor man improves his economic condition, his division can change. But this cannot happen in the case of Brahmin, Non- Brahmin Group. These groups are castes and the man in Hindu society brings his caste with his birth. This is an unchangeable social status of a man that is given to him by his parents. Therefore, what is applied to the division in other societies cannot be applied to the Brahmin Non- Brahmin divisions in India.³

According to Rig-Veda, Lord Brahma gave birth to Brahmins; these Brahmins built a wall of division around them first.⁴ The division of Brahmins and Non-Brahmins took place at that time. This division replaced the earlier division based on merit and demerit. They established the system of division of castes. In course of time, this process reached to the non- Brahmins also and the caste divisions took place among them too, each division claiming some Rishi as its progenitor. The non-Brahmins also formed various castes among them. It would have been alright if the purpose of fortification was only to show that each division is different from other division, but the Brahmins who did this fortification first wanted to show that they were superior to others. The non- Brahmins, also followed the system of fortification of Brahmins, developed the feeling of inferiority and superiority. Each caste developed the feeling of being different from other castes. Not only this, each caste felt that it is superior to other castes in some respect. Thus, high and low by birth is the system of Brahmanism in India. The Non-Brahmins had started the struggle against Brahmins since the ancient days. But the intensity of the struggle was not so strong. These castes were meritorious and superior by birth. However, nobody should think this merit and demerit of inferiority or superiority business is a God ordained or Fate accomplished.

The inferior or lower castes remained backward and degraded because they were prohibited to improve their condition by law. These laws were created by Manu in his Manusmriti. The social pattern was disturbed in British era. Even among the Brahmins, low calibered people were born while well educated and talented people were found among the Non-Brahmins. The merits and monopoly of Brahmins were disturbed and that added strength to the Non- Brahmin Movement. There was a need to end the system of Brahmanism. The non-Brahmins realized that because of Brahmanism, they remained backward illiterate and fatalist. Everybody has now realized that the Brahmanism has harmed the country. It was because of Brahmanism that the doors of education were closed to the Non-Brahmins and the Non- Brahmins remained illiterate for centuries together. The Non- Brahmins were prevented to read the religious books like the Vedas, by keeping the caste system

birth- based. This killed the individual initiative which is required for means of progress. By preaching that nothing happens against the fate they made the people fatalist.

They were deprived of humanity by the ideas of purity and impurity, touchability and untouchability. Those who told the people that the British Anglican system has damaged this country are not perhaps aware that how much damage Brahmanism had done to this country. Both the Anglican system and Brahmanism were two sucking insects that were sucking the blood of the country. The Anglicanism sucked the wealth of the country and Brahmanism had sucked the humanity of the people of this country. Brahmins joined all the movements and carried on the struggle but it was surprising that they had not joined the Non- Brahmin movement. The Brahmins are the originators of Brahmanism. As the stream of Brahmanism went on widening itself, it covered many people within. But for those who joined this stream; it did not mean that they should not make efforts to arrest its growth.⁵

Growth of Non-Brahmin Party

A number of factors succinctly explained below led to the establishment of the non-Brahmin party in 1920. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule [1827-1890] Contributed for female education. That was opposed by Chitpavan Brahmins a great social reformer was given public recognition for his service to the cause of female education. The radical nature of educational campaign among the mali, and other Maratha lower castes provoked virulent opposition from the Chitpavan Brahmins. Phule practiced what he preached unlike most upper caste reformers, by allowing access to his well to all defying opposition even from his own caste members, Phuley challenged the Brahmanic caste ideology, promoted Balirajya who represented equality of men as apposed to idea 'Ramarajya' based on Varnashramadharma and elaborated the ideology of Dravidian origin to counter the Aryan theory of race among the Brahmins.

The Satyashodhak Samaj founded by Phule in 1873 spread his ideas and activities throughout Maharashtra and laid the foundation of transformation of socially lower castes into a common named called Maratha. The issues of struggle were the same as those of all deprived of education as means of emancipation, share in the political and administrative power, pressurizing the administration to pay attention to the problems of cultivators and diversification of occupation into trade and technical fields to break the rigidity of caste system. The democratization of civil society to enable the maximum number of people to enter the new political community was the basic thrust of the Phule and Satya shodak movement.⁶

Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaja [1874-1922]. It was Chatrapati Shahu maharaja of Kolhapur who after Jyotiba Phule, under took the task of uplifting the non-brahmins and the depressed classes. He challenged the Brahmin orthodoxy soon after he ascended the throne. Chatrapati Shahu Maharaja revived Satya Shodak Samaja in 1911 and its activities in his state. He tried to reduce the Brahmin domination in all fields. He made the Non-Brahmins conscious of the need of political power. It was

during his reign [1894-1922] that the Satyashodak Movement degenerated into the NonBrahmin movement.

The British Rulers in Bombay and madras encouraged the non - Brahmins and depressed classes to demand separate representation and a reserved share in the services. This moral posture of the British as the guardians of the masses created a stir among the have-nots.⁷

The Maratha League was set up in 1918 and its basis was the Satyashodhak organization. It had put forth certain demands, it Sseeked 10 seats for the Marathas, 04, for Lingayats, 01 for Jains, 04, for the Depressed classes, 10 for the Backward Classes in the forthcoming Reforms. t The result of Montford reforms 1919 was that it provided in the state Legislature seven seats reserved for Marathas and other similar Castes in Bombay presidency. this served powerfull weapon to the political activities of the Non-Brahmins. With the extension of polical Democracy , Non-Brahmins could no longer remained aloof from the institutions of reserved Maratha politics. In the wake of new reform Non-Brahmin leaders worked to destroy mental slavery of the same based on Brahmanical religioion dogmas and take them over politic⁸

For strengthening Non –Brahmin movement a conference was held at Hubli in 1920, Sir P. Tyagaraj Chetty presided, President of the Reception committee was Sir Siddappa Kambli who said that, “Non Brahmin Communities are 95 percent in population and still we are neglected in the Legislature, the fruit of our labour is enjoyed by the 5 percent Brahmins, the women from Brahmins are not at all Laboring like our women not only that our women are working in the fields both in rainy or summer season so where is the Justice for our Non Brahmins there must be equality and for that we will fight in the Legislature. Sri. Panditappa R Chikodi a Non-Brahmin leader and Reception committee chairman, of Hubli Non-Brahmin conference said, In Bombay and Madras provinces Non-Brahmin Movement was spreading very fast, and he urged to strength the movement come together, eschew mutual hatred. And he advocated necessity of joining together for educational development through which social upliftment would be possible.⁹ In his inaugural address, Chhtrapati Shahu Maharaja in the beginning thanked the Brahmins for preserving the knowledge and keeping it alive, but the keys of the treasure of knowledge was only in the hands of the Brahmins and had they that time been liberal minded men like Ranade, Gokhale and Agarakar, they would have imparted that knowledge to others also. And what happened due to their selfish – interest others were not taught had they done it the distinction between Brahmin and non-Brahmin would have disappeared long back and there would have been no need to organize a separate conference of the Non-Brahmins one like this.

He also supported Class to Caste and appealed to stop injustice to the Non-Brahmins. He further stated that he would persuade and educate them from his point of view. He would convince them and consider them as brothers. According to him Chaturvarna based on merit and demerit tried to establish superiority based on birth which was wrong. Rishis like Vashistha were born in low families but because of merit and good act, they became Brahmins. Had this tradition continued

down to our own, day-today social degradation social divisions would not have been seen at all.¹⁰

He said "If the free and compulsory primary education was available, we would have attained progress in one or two generations only. Our Lingayat brothers were extending their co-operation by giving education and training in trade and commerce to those people who are disgusted, harassed and suppressed. I am very much happy to see this. We also love them; they also love us on occasions like this. Once we used to get help in our work from the liberal minded Brahmins, like Ranade, Gokhale Agarkar, etc. But that, light is almost extinguishing and we should make effort to see that we start receiving co-operation once again in our work." He demanded moral progress of society. He was against the physical, mental and intellectual degradation, caused by ill practices in society. He advocated the progress of the Nation through character building of the citizens. He appealed to choose proper leaders for making the reform successful through Council Elections. He criticized the caste distinctions and advocated education to all, and all are equal in their right to religion.¹²

While criticizing the evils of Brahmanism DR. B. R. Ambedkar said that existing social system Hindus had formed themselves in three social classes, namely Brahmins, Non – Brahmins and Depressed classes. Similarly if the attention was paid, it would be seen that it had produced different effects on different Castes. Of course, the Brahmins who were the highest in social grade felt that they were God on earth. According to him Brahmins dominated the other castes. They have got this because of Knowledge and writings of religious scriptures. He criticized the mentality of scripture writers and their inequality in their practices. He admitted the impact of shastras on the minds of the people. The Brahmins confined the knowledge to them alone. They even punished the Non-Brahmins who tried to acquire Knowledge either openly or secretly. Because of lack of knowledge Non-Brahmins remained ignorant, poor and backward. He criticized the policy of Brahmins for not coming forward to produce a scholar like Voltaire who had the intellectual honesty to rise against the doctrines of the Catholic Church in which he was brought up. This happened because of their selfish interest in the Brahmanism.¹³

Dr Ambedkar was of the opinion that the intellectuals, never allowed Non-Brahmins to share their intellect of India he suffers from these internal limitations. As a result of which he does not allow his intellect full play, which honesty and integrity demands. For, he fears that it may affect the interest of his class and therefore his own.

But what annoys one is the intolerance of a Brahmin scholar towards any attempt to expose the Brahmanic literature. He himself would not play the part of an iconoclast even where it is necessary. And he would not allow such non-Brahmins as have the capacity to do so to play it. If any non-Brahmin were to make such attempt, the Brahmin scholars would engage in a conspiracy of silence, take no notice of him, condemn him outright on some flimsy grounds or dub his work useless. As a writer engaged in the exposition of the Brahmanic literature, I have been a victim of such mean tricks.¹⁴

With August declaration of 1917, Shahu Maharaja, inspired, Political ambitions among NonBrahmins, he also awakened them about the desirability of getting political rights. The Montford-Reforms were granted in 1919 and immediately after that politically awakened non-Brahmins quickly set up their political organization known as the non- Brahmin Political Party in 1920, to actuate due advantage of the Montford Reforms for the Non-Brahmin masses. Because of the massive numerical strength of non-Brahmins and the pro- British Policy consistently pursued by their leaders, the British rulers toyed with the idea of using the force of the non- Brahmins as an instrument to counterbalance the powerful influence of the Indian National Congress in Bombay province.¹⁵

A newspaper war broke out, over the candidature of V. R. Shinde who had founded the depressed classes Society mission in 1906 at Poona. He was bitterly criticized by Walchand Kothari through his paper "Jagruk" in 1917. As per the advise of B. V. Jadhav, Keshavrao Jedhe wrote to all the prominent leaders of non- Brahmins on 12th december 1920 and invited almost all the leading Non –Brahmin leaders in Bombay at his residence, Jedhe Mansion in Poona. Consequently the Deccan Brahmanetra Sang [The Deccan league] came into being which soon came to be called as Non-Brahmin Party.¹⁶

Decline of Non-Brahmin Party

The Non-Brahmin movement in Bombay state advised its followers in its meetings and conferences to keep away from Congress. A group of Non-Brahmin young men had founded, Bharatiya Yuva sangh at Dharwad in 1927 under the leadership of Gudleppa Hallikeri and Sidlingaya Kariswamy and undertook many activities.¹⁷

In one of the meeting, whether the Non Brahmins of Bombay Presidency should join Congress or not as was resolved by the Non Brahmins at Madras. The president opined 'that those who were keen to join congress might do so It was also resolved to convene a special meeting and it was held at Poona. 'A special session at Bombay was held on 27, 28 August 1927 and shri B K Dalvi a Government pleader from Belgaum presided and about 200 delegates attended it and prominent among them were shi BV Jadhav, shri Aswale, Shri Shankarrao Zunjarrao. Shri Anand Thorat, Shri R A Gole Shri R G Kalekar Shri D S Javalkar and Shri. Atmananda shri Ramaswami Mudaliar of Madras.¹⁸

In this conference the resolution to join congress met with a considerable apposition, however finally after hours of heated discussion a compromise was arrived and it was decided that it was not desirable for the Non Brahmin Party members to join the Congress. However Individual members were allowed to do so Shri B V Jadhav however strongly apposed the idea of joining Congress.He made it clear at the Conference and said, his apposition to join Congress was based on the fear that the Non Brahmin party will lose its entity. It is not a question of anybody losing his leadership and influence. The Non Brahmin movement even though it was losing its ground was represented at the Second Round Conference. Shri B V Jadhav made an earnest effort in July 1933 to unite Non Brahmins and also to consolidate the Non Brahmin party again with a view to

retrieving its former prestige. Non-Brahmin party of Bombay has always remained outside the congress politics and not take part in the civil disobedience Movement. Sri BhaskarRao Jadhav, therefore advised all the members of Non Brahmin party and Non Brahmins in general to stick to lawful future'methods of constitutional agitation whatever turn political activities may take in¹⁹

No doubt, Non Brahmin movement forced the Government to take steps in favor of Non Brahmins. Finally but after 1925 when the Non Brahmin Party Joined Congress Party, this led to the disappearance of the movement. The Non-Brahmin party would have risen to the full height of its great mission of struggling for the freedom of toiling masses of the great Non-Brahmin community that party had in its germs of the great principle of Democracy. Its leaders unfortunately did not realize their duties and responsibilities and allowed the party to be smashed to bits under the double influence of Government and Congress patronage. So Non-Brahmins committed a political suicide. under the influence of the ideals of the leaders, like Jyotiba Phule, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaja and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The Movement against untouchability and Hindu Caste system continues even today in which Non-Brahmin Movement merged itself partly and its remaining part it merged itself in the power politics of the states and the nation. And consciousness has been at its formidable position among the lower castes in the socio -economic Political fields.

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