
Conversation in Berar and Criticism By Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar

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-The soil of Berar always sprouted ideas of justice and ideas of equality into mindset of common people. This soil always sprouted idea of revolution, That's why Berar always been important think tank for the ideas of justice, equality and humanity. Nagarjuna the teacher of Nalanda and the writer of many Buddhist books was from Vidarbha. Ajanta Caves also part of **Buddhathana** (permanent camp of Buddhism) of Ajanta ranges at that time, because there are many Buddhist archeological sites found in this area. There also many Buddhist centers also was very important in Buddha era like Chandol (Buldana), Pimpalgaon Raja (Buldana), Savali (Buldana , Patur (Akola), Bhokardan (Jalna), Kholapur (Amravati), Manjari (Amravati), Kalamb (Yavatmal), Nib Darvha (Yavatmal), Salbardi (Amravati) etc.¹The soil of Berar always took firm stand against all types of injustice because the soil of Berar cultivated with the Buddhist though of equality. The first voice against injustice always been raised up by whistle blowers of Berar. In each and every sector where there is injustice there the whistle blower of Berar raised his voice against it. Rajmata Jijau Maa Saheb raised her voice against Muslim rulers of India through Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. The first Voice against male dominationed culture raised up in this soil through Tarabai Shinde. Mahatma Jotirao Phule the founder of real Modern India and real Mahatma founded **Satyashodhak Samaj** to establish justice in each and every sector. Phuleism was the rise of reason of Indian mindset. It was the first modern voice of justice and renaissance of India.² He not only stired up the rotten mindset of common Indian but cultivate it with seeds of justice, equality, humanity, freedom, human rights. Phuleism was the first modern theory which challenged the high caste Hindu mindset with tool of justice. He was the first whistle blower of upcoming modern world. He was the first messenger of future new world and also of Indian society and thoughts. He removed curtain from hidden conspiracy went on here in the name of religion and customs. Phuleism created many movements in each and every sector of injustice eg. -

Non Brahmanist movement, feminist movement, farmers movement, Dalit movement, trade unions, Education for all movement, alcohol prohibition movement, Human rights movement, child rights movement etc. But after death of Mahatma Phule the movement of Phuleism went on in Berar region. The Berar was the first region which aggressively implemented the ideology of Phuleism. The first voice against untouchability also raised in Berar region in Jalgaon Jamod taluk. The acrid solution of untouchability researched by the common untouchable class of Berar.

Jalgaon Issue and the motion of conversion – 5000 Mahar people appealed to all Hindus to abolish the custom of untouchability if they fails to do so, 5000 *Mahar* people will convert into another religion.³ The pamphlet of appealing to Hindus is available and there found names of '*Purnaji Sonaji Mahar*', '*Motiram & Jama Mahar*', '*Bhavji & Ramji Mahar*' on behalf of five thousand people. The interesting fact is that untouchable community was living life worse than slavery system from thousands years they why only then they revolt against it. The answer will found into Phuleism. *Satyashodhak* movement stirred up mindset of oppressed community and forced them to stand up against all type of injustice. First warning against these inhuman customs ranged in the soil of Berar. The siren of last warning against religious slavery system which is generally known as untouchability was going on in the name of great culture. One should play the role of untouchables for a month who feel proud for such great rotten culture. The high caste *Sanatani Brahmanical* mindset never treated untouchables as human. Till today the mindset of these people is not changed. They took the revolt of untouchables against such rotten culture as attack on their religion. Because the religious customs allow them to do so. Roots of such inhuman customs deeprooted into Sanatani religious theories and practices.

Revolutionary acrid solution of untouchability – The soil of Berar discovered revolutionary and acrid solution over untouchable mindset of highcaste sanatanis. The struggle against such customs of common people was going on from thousands of year. But there found no change into such rotten mindset of those people. Those days Maharashtra was facing such struggle against such rotten Brahmanical mindset. Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj and Sayajirao Gaikwad successfully faced *Vedokt Prakaran* and such rotten Sanatani mindset. They faced that mindset by taking strict actions against them. But all the Sanatins of

Maharashtra with Lokmanya Tilak opposed Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj in that struggle. Even Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj also had to face such rotten mindset.⁴ But they can fight and won the struggle against *sanatanis* because they were in power or they were power of the time. On the other hand oppressed classes can't take such actions so they decide to cut off the connection with such rotten mindset and rotten culture which have no importance of human life compare to animal dung and urin. The first idea of such solution sprouted into well cultivated minds of Berari people. To take final decision on this issue untouchable community of Berar decided to take special session of CP & Berar Untouchable conference at Paturda.⁵ The warning letter declared of heading '*Hindu Samajas jahir Vinanti*' stated that discrimination of castes divided Hindu supporters and it decline the Hinduism. *Mahar* and *Mang* community had been facing discrimination from high caste *sanatanis*. Muslim, Cristians and other beef eater communities can enter into temples of *sanatanis* but on the other hand *Mahar* and *Mang* which are part of Hindus are not allowed to enter into temples. If someone tried to do so he definitely will beaten by followers of Hindus. In this pamphlet there given an example of '*Piraji*' who converted into Islam about six months ago and now known as '*Shekh Piran*'. But before conversion he had not allowed to drink water from public well or water source but now he sell beef from basket taking on his head to village to village and can drink water from public well or water source. Many of *Mahar* and *Mang* people are follower of *Mahanubhao* and *Vaishnavism* and never eat nonvage but if by mistake these people touched Hindus or temples they become (mental) impure. Now we appeal to Hindu people that if they do not abolish the custome of untouchability till 1st of June 1929 we 5000 Mahar people will convert into Muslim or Christian religion on next day to it. Those who wish to contact with us they can contact with us they can contact with Bhiku Isaji Khanderao at post Jalgaon Jamod Dist Buldana.⁶ The pamphlet suggest us that the solution of conversion of religion was the last option they had to choose, but it was only the way to live respectful life for them. This invention of conversion and respectful self dependent life going to become the weapon for fighting against injustice and discriminations.

Criticism of Dr Ambedkar for the issue of conversion—The special session of CP & Berar untouchable conference was held at Paturda on 29 & 30th of May 1929. The Pamphlet stated that Welcome president of the session was MLC G. A. Gawai and Vice President was Utraji Lulaji Shegokar. Dr Ambedkar was the President of the first day session

and the session unanimously pass the motion of converting issue of Jalgaon jamod. The special session of the conference was held to know the opinions of local untouchable peoples about the issue of conversion. At the first day of conference session passed the motion of conversion and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar also support the motion. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar aggressively stated the efforts to abolished the untouchability. He said, *“Bramhanetar and Untouchable class of the district strive their’s best to abolished the custom of untouchability, but they failed to do so. But Indirect autocracy of mendcant persecuted to the **Bramhanetar** and untouchables. The print media also support to them, they print false news against untouchables. They tried to spilt into the movement. They persecuted of untouchables with the help of Brahmin officers. By bothering and persecution of the Brahmin to untouchables of the Jalgaon jamod and connecting region decided to convert their religion. But there is no response from the high class Hindus. So for taking final decision about the issue of religion conversion this conference is very important about that.”*⁷

‘Jagdeo Tukaram Bhalerao Patil’, generally known as *‘Veer Hutatma Jagdeorao’* of Chandur Biswa Tq. Nandura directly criticized Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar on the issue of conversion. The criticism found in the pamphlet issued by Jagdeo named *‘Nimgaon Chya Asprushya Parishadela Saprem Bhet’* (Gift to Nimgaon Untouchable Conference with love). Logo of Om and Hindu Dharm ki Jai is written on top of the pamphlet. There also mentioned that the pamphlet is of second number. The pamphlet suggest us that there had been held untouchable conference before the issue date of the pamphlet 27th Feb 1936 and the conference must had pass the motion of conversion. That’s why the pamphlet had been issued by *Jagdeo* to counter the motion of conversion. The pamphlet also stated that Untouchables should not convert into Muslim or Christian religion. Untouchable should not fear to minority *Sanatanis* and most of Hindus don’t support the custom of untouchability. Untouchables should not fear to oppose of Sanatanis. To run away from own religion for fearing oppose of *Sanatanis* is not bravery, converting religion is an act of cowardness. The conversion of religion never can abolish the custom of untouchability ; contrary new type of untouchability gets with new religion. The Pamphlet suggest us that the *Sanatanis* were minorities and most of Hindus never supported them. Mukundrao Ganpatrao Patil also stated same theory in his book ‘Hindu aani Brahman’.⁸

The pamphlet stated further that Dr Ambedkar and people like him those who wish to convert their religion are agents of other religion and they are not angels. An angel never give up his religion. Those who advising to untouchables to convert the religion are selfish. Untouchables should not trapped themselves into the trap of such cunning and selfish leaders.⁹ The pamphlet issued from Chandur Biswa Tq Nandura Dist Buldana and the issuer is *Jagdeo* the leader of *Hindu Mahasabha*. The pamphlet show us mindset of leaders of *Hindu Mahasabha* and any other organization like it. They tried to divert untouchables from act of conversion but they failed to give assurance and belief of demolishing the custom of untouchability and any other inhuman traditions. Any of High caste Hindus, *Sanatanis* and *Arya Samajis* never agreed with demolishing *Chaturvarna* System, Caste system and any other disability set up by religion. They were trying to divert untouchables only on the basis of their own declaration of denying untouchability. But untouchable very well known with the ground reality that even family members of these people also don't support them about the custom of untouchability, *Chaturvarna* and any other disability set up by religion so untouchable remain confirm on their stand to convert the religion. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar also gave answer to the issue of conversion of Jalgaon Jamod in Bahishkrut Bharat dated 21st of June 1929 with the heading, '*Nak Dablyashivay Tond Uhgadat Nahi*'. In that editorial Dr Ambedkar wrote that the appeal by the untouchables did not seriously took by the high caste Hindus. And they tried to counter the appeal by using the Bramhanetar worker Jayram Nana Vaidya against the untouchables. He moreover added that the appeal was not the issue of jest and hollow threat. It was the highly serious matter and the seriousness of that matter failed to imagine by the High class Hindus. They made a counter appeal to the untouchables that among the untouchable castes there also the untouchability between them.¹⁰ The untouchables should abolish the untouchability among them afterwards we the High class Hindus abolish the problem of untouchability. The counter appeal was only for check and mate and they have no mercy or good heart to solve the problem. The challenge by the high caste Hindus accepted by the untouchables of Jalgaon region. They arranged the co meal programme at Jalgaon Jamod. The people of sixty four villeges gathered there for the programme. People of Mahar and Mang castes took meal together at Jalgaon. Afterwards the programme started all over the region. Another programme arranged at the Malegaon Bazar Tq Telhara Dist. Akola of co-tea party. There gathered the people of twelve villeges for the co-tea party. Another co meal programme was arranged at Panchgavhan Tq Telhara Dist.

Akola and Manatri Tq Telhara, Dist Akola . The challenge given by the High caste Hindus accepted by the untouchables and the abolished the untouchability among them. By this defeat the high caste Hindus seduced the Mahars of Kherda Tq Jalgaon and arranged the conference of Mahar people. In that conference they make a resolution of boycotting of the Mahars who appeal to convert the religion and working in that movement. But *'The Varhad Asprushya Samajsudharak Seva Mandal'* persuaded the Mahars of Kherda not to pass the resolution. And they succeeded in it. The mahars of Kherda then pass the resolutuion to abolish the custom of untouchability.¹¹

In the editorial Dr Ambedkar added that after defeating about the counter appeal by the High class Hindus they dilly dallying about the abolishing the custom of untouchability. Moreover the 'Hindutvavadis' of Jalgaon said to the untouchables that they can convert their religion we have no need of them. We have proverb that *'Mahar Mela ani Vital Gela'*. By knowing such attitude of High class Hindus the twelve untouchables Mahar really converted the religion into Islam. This act of Mahar's was the earthquake for the high class Hindus. The never felt that the Mahar will really convert the religion. They quickly open two wells for the use of untouchables and started to negotiate with the untouchables. They arrange the programmes of betel and betelnut for the untouchables. In that programme they did not follow the custom of untouchability. Dr Ambedkar noted that there was not a single Hindu till the convert issue, who really felt the need of justice and equality. This is the big downfall of Hinduism. Dr Ambedkar also stated that the policy of high class Hindus is to crush the untouchables as they can till the aggressive response. If they got the aggressive oppose from the untouchables then they adjust themselves for sometimes only. The Hinduism is became like a deadbody and it have no mearcy, equality and justice for the marginalized peole. Dr Ambedkar quoted the line –

'Kakopi Jeevati Chiray Balich Bhunkte'

With this line Dr Ambedkar stated that as in this line 'The living thousand years of Crow and Hindus are same.'¹² From the quote given by Dr Ambedkar we can realized the unrest of him against the evil in Hinduism. But the self blind Hindus never ready to accept the injustice system of Hinduism because there was the fault in base philosophy of Hinduism which treated the follower of Hinduism as high and low standerd by birth. And there is religious

philosophy to support the system of '*Chaturvarna*'. That's why Dr Ambedkar gave message to solve the problems of untouchables as they can solve on their level by hook or crook.

Conclusion – Criticism of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar on the issue of conversion of religion was started from Berar. The movement of justice also tried to solve the problem of untouchability and they invented the acrid solution of conversion of religion. This invention of conversion for demolishing untouchability gave inspiration to all untouchables of the nation. Dr Babasaheb also came to conclusion that conversion is the last weapon to demolish such inhuman tradition. But he took care while taking decision of conversion that damage will remain least.

Keywords –

Vedokta Prakaran – The issue between Brahmins and Shahuji Maharaj (also with Sayajirao Gaikwad) for the status of Kshatriy. Brahmins were not ready to allow Shahuji Maharaj as Kshatriya and that's why they didn't use Vedokt Mantras for religious practices in Chatrapati's palace.

Mahar and Mang – Untouchable castes /communities of India.

Hindu Mahasabha – Aggressive Hindu right wing organization founded by V. D. Savarkar in 1915.

Bramhanetar Movement – The movement of demanding justice by the rest of Bramhin communities in 19th century Maharashtra. They oppose the system of '*Chaturvarna*' of Hinduism and ascedency of Bramhins in all sectors.

Satyashodhak Movement/ Satyashodhak Samaj – (Truth Seekers' Society) This social reform society was founded by Mahatma Jotirao at Phule on 24th September 1873. This movement ran the movement of social justice which generally known as Satyashodhak Movement.

Asprushya – These were castes of Indian societies which treated as impure and one who touches them he also got impure. Paradoxical behavior was that touching to human you got impure and by spattering the urine of cow one could be pure again. Even the shadow of these people also treated as impure. These people treated as more than animals. They did not permission to spit anywhere for that they had to kept with them an earthen pot hanged to their neck. Their footprints in dust also treated as impure so they had to kept the broom hanging to their waist from the back side for wiping off their footprints. They also had no permission to take a drinking water from the public source of water.

Sanatanis – This is a term used within Hinduism to describe denominations that adhere to what is sometimes known as Hinduism. The term is used to contrast with reformist denominations of Hinduism, which often reject previously long – established socio- religious systems based on traditional interpretations of specific scriptures, or with unorthodox sectarian followers of an individual Saint. The term was popularized by Gandhiji. (By Wikipedia)

Mahanubhao – The sect of Hinduism founded by Chakradhar Swami.

Vaishanism – The sect of Hinduism which have faith that the Lord Vishnu is the supreme God.

Arya Samaj – The Hindu reform movement established by Swami Dayanand Sarasvati.

Chaturvarna - follower of Hindu religion divided into four classes. This is caste based class system of Hinduism. Chatur means four and varna means Groups. There are four varnas Brahmins(Teachers), Kshatriya (Fighters), Vaishya (Traders) and Sudra (Producers).

Notes

- * The fixed date of ultimatum was First of June 1929. The date of convert was Second of June 1929. In the pamphlet of 'Varhad Prantiy Asprushya Parishad' the date also mentioned for the issue was same. Also in the Moon Vasant (Editor), 'Source Material On Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and The Movement of Untouchables Volume II', Education Department Government of Maharashtra, 1990, Page no 286(2) also mentioned the same date.
- ** 'Jagdeo' the mentioned name in that pamphlet was of 'Jagdeorao Tukaram Bhalerao Patil', generally known as 'Veer Hutatma Jagdeorao' of Chandur Biswa Tq. Nandura. He was revolutionary by his thought. He ran the revolutionary newspaper 'Rashtrasevak'. He wrote many books such as 'Goryanche Band', 'Shetkaryanchi Durdasha', 'Vasaicha Vedha' etc. These books was seized by the government. He also wrote plays and *Povadas* but that all banned by the British government. He was active member of 'Bramhanetar movement' and classmate of Pandharinath Patil. He was murdered by the hundreds of hooligans of 'Leeg' at 17th of March 1939.

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11. *Ibid*, Page no 291(7)
12. *Ibid*, Page no 289(5)