

Relevance of thoughts of 'Satyashodhak Samaj' founded by Mahatma Phule

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Abstract:

Mahatma Phule fought for the rights of poor and landless peasants. He provided much importance to the education of women. He established first school for girls at Pune in 1848. Widow practices were prevalent in pre-independent era which was inhuman. So being a staunch humanitarian, he launched movement against such evil practices of society. He wanted to create awareness among non Brahmins and untouchables regarding their privileges. He formed Satyashodhak Samaj (society of truth seeker) with the help of his true followers and intention behind it was to attain equal rights for deprived group of society. People from various religions and casts became the active members of this association which worked for the upliftment of deprived people. Present political, social and economical situation is concerning as individual's rights are denied and freedom of individual is in danger. So with the help of this research paper, I want to throw light on Satyashodhak Samaj, social reform movement initiated by Mahatma Phule and need of thoughts of Satyashodhak Samaj in present situation.

Key Words:

Social Engineer, reformer, women problems, deprived people, untouchables, superstition, movement etc.

Introduction:

Indian society was divided into different caste in pre independent era and Brahmin community had its upper hand or the dominance on Indian society. Emergence of English language played vital role in the structure of Indian society as due to this emergence, Indian society got acquainted with new world and social reforms but the leaders of social reform movements were of high caste and class as well. Many social reform movements were initiated under the leadership different people in Indian society before independence and to provide rights to middle class and lower class people was the main tension of reform movements. With considering all movements, Mahatma Phule is considered and praised as the most important figure of social reform movement of India. He is known today as a mentor in the Indian social reform movement. He wanted to uproot the unfair inequality in Indian society. He contributed a lot to improve the miserable condition of Indian women and the social and economical condition of the Dalit people, so he is considered as the pioneer of freedom and social upliftment of Dalits.

Now the situation in India is getting worse day by day. Religious conflict is increasing in the country. In my opinion the present young generation need to study the thoughts of Satyashodhak Samaj and Mahatma Phule as some ideologies want to destroy the secular identity of the country and this paper will guide for this.

Foundation of Satyashodhak Samaj and its motive:

Mahatma Phule was social engineer and a thinker in Maharashtra. He founded 'truth seeker society' in Maharashtra in 1873 which is known as satyashodhak samaj in Marathi. The intention of the social engineer was very humanitarian behind such a foundation of satyashodhak samaj that is to uplift shudras and untouchable casts against the social restriction of a society. To provide equal rights for landless people and poor was also his aim behind it. Membership of this samaj was open to all. Mahatma Phule was the first President and even treasurer too. In the year 1876, there were 316 members in Satya shodhak. Phule was against sati system and child marriage. He rejected the thoughts of Vedas. He supported widow remarriage. In prevalent religion there was

social discrimination based upon the hierarchy of caste which was against the principles of Mahatma Phule so he condemned the prevalent religion and established satyashodhak samaj in 1873.

The book of Thomas Paine 'the rights of man' played vital role in the establishment of satyashodhak samaj because Mahatma Phule was influenced by this book. Satyashodhak samaj was a reformational society that promoted education and increase social rights. It insisted that low caste groups of people should be the mediator between man and the god in a religious rituals. It means the ideology of satyashodhak samaj was against brahminism and supportive and encouraging to lower caste people as correspondence to contemporary social situation which was based upon injustice and discrimination. It maintained faith in one god (monotheism) and opposed idolatry (worship of idols).

Objectives of Satyashodhak Samaj:

Followings are some primary objectives of Satyashodhak Samaj:

- Main objectives were education, access to social rights and civil liberties
- Put an end to the exploitation of Brahmins on Shudras and Dalits or ati- Shudras.
- Convincing and influencing every individual to believe that he or she is the child of one omnipotent. Thus everyone must only obey and follow one God.
- Claiming and establishing that no medium or means of connection to God is required. Phule further contended that every subject and voice of prayer reaches to the almighty before entering the external world through any medium's voice.

Oath and Affirmations of Satyashodhak Samaj:

- Access to education for lower caste people is a necessity.
- Disseminating cottage industries and propagating the importance of domestically manufactured goods.
- Eradicating Brahmin's social status that has been proclaimed for ages.

Published Work:

Newspaper was one of the means of spreading the thoughts and principles of satyashodhak samaj up to the people, so the samaj published 'Dinbandhu' newspaper from 1877 to 1897 to spread the thoughts effectively towards deprived people of the society even to the followers Mahatma Phule's work 'Gulamgiri' and 'Sarvjanik Satyadharma' came in front as a source of inspiration for the common people.

Encouragement to English:

Mahatma Phule was aware of importance of education, so he started first school for girls in the year 1848 with the active support of Savitribai Phule. Samaj emphasized the importance of English education as it played a vital role in building occupational skills and served as the basis skills for intellectual liberation of deprived people. He also believed that and education might open the chances for the employment with British government otherwise it would be only Monopoly of educated people of higher caste. So he was aware of English education and its importance with the help of such a policy he wanted to cultivate relationship with British officials in order to seek benefits for deprived people and the British government as the most likely power to offer low cost people affair treatment.

Revival under King Shahu:

This satyashodhak samaj movement had not made much difference to any section of the society in the in the 19th century. The moment declined after the death of Mahatma Phule in 1890 but many thinkers social workers and even a rulers were influenced with the principles of satyashodhak samaj so the same moment was revived by the king Shahu the ruler of princely state Kolhapur. In 1902, he reserved 50% of civil service posts in Kolhapur state for all community other than Brahmin, Prabhu and Parsi. He also rejected the Brahmin priests from religious ceremonies.

Need of thoughts of Satyashodhak Samaj in present situation:

Superstition is still not eradicated from the country. Some sincere efforts are also underway to remove it but many people are making conscious efforts to increase superstitions in our nation. They are trying to create conflict between castes and religions in order to gain political benefits. Attempts are being made to establish the world of religious conflict by denying the truth of inequality, unemployment, operation and exploitation. In this situation, it becomes necessary to understand the richness and legacy of satyashodhak Samaj movement and its thoughts because even today society needs truth seeking attitude and truth seeking vision. Mahatma Jyotirao Phule has stated that not all men and women have benefited the human race and everyone should practice truthfulness. According to his philosophy all religions speak the same truth. Religious hatred is spread in our country today, the role of Mahatma Phule is very important at the time when religious discrimination is being deliberately sown. Present political and social situation its concernable, people are cheated robbed and exploited to gain position, prestige and money even rights of common people are denied. Freedoms are taken away, people are getting banned from writing, speaking and moving. People are afraid and have to live in social and political environment of fear. Mahatma Phule used to call such situation as unfair business because in his concept of truth man has all the rights there is freedom, equality, dignity, brotherhood, love and the compassion.

The corrupt behaviour and immoral practices that continue in our social political economy and religious life. All that is falsehood according to Mahatma Phule. Today the world spends a lot on military. Many thinkers have their opinion that there is huge war market behind it. The war market does not want the world peace and universal harmony. Mahatma Phule has created link between ignorance, war and money of farmers and said that as soon as the people of all the world send their children to school to make them literate, all those people will become virtuous and no one will invades anyone's nation and due to this all nations will not have occasion to spend crores of rupees on maintaining useless armies. Hence here Mahatma Phule's point of 'Universal Humanism' which is Satyashodhak Samaj's one of the great principles, is very important.

Conclusion:

Mahatma Phule a social engineer, writer and true humanitarian fought for social emancipation of deprived people and landless peasants. He appeared as a source of inspiration for deprived people of Indian society. Social discrimination and problems of women were his concerning issues. His fight and continuous efforts against social evil made him a true social reformer. He shown his special concern towards untouchables and women so he founded Satyashodhak Samaj. With the help of it, he wanted to promote education and social rights in the deprived group of the society. Present political social and economical situation is fit to acquire and follow the thoughts of satyashodhak samaj. Even after many years, thoughts of Satyashodhak Samaj are ideal for today's society to get rid from every adverse situation.

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