

C H A P T E R V

SOCIAL IDEAS OF MAHARAJA SAYAJI RAO

CHAPTER V

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From the third Chapter it will be observed that Sayaji Rao attached great importance to education and constantly pleaded for it. He expected that his subjects should have an intelligent understanding of his aims and methods. He hoped to get their active co-operation in his efforts to build an ideal State. Prof. A.G. Widgery contended that the Maharaja desired to take his subjects more into confidence and to have their loyal co-operation. So he sought many opportunities to address them on a variety of matters concerning their welfare.^① He had a passion for social justice. He hated greatly prejudice and intolerance. His speeches delivered on several occasions and on different social problems distinguish him as a deep social thinker like the other nineteenth century social thinkers and reformers.

Not only did Sayaji Rao preach social reforms but also gave a clear and bold lead to others in the country by introducing far-reaching measures of social advancement. He highly appreciated the value of education as an indispensable factor in social reconstruction.

Following are the ideas of Sayaji Rao on different social problems.

Caste

In ~~1902~~ 1902, congratulating the Gujarati community in Madras for its enterprising zeal and works, Sayaji Rao said, "In our Sastras there are hardly any points on which advice is not given to us, and trade is one of the most important points referred to in the Sastras. The whole community in India is divided into four classes and the Vaishyas or the trading class occupy the third place." Here he declared that he was not "...a person who believes

1. Widgery, SAMSG, Vol. I, Introduction, p. 6.

in such traditions. There is no class that can ultimately be called lower or higher than another."^① This statement shows that he respected the Sastras but not the class system existing in the community.

The following year, speaking before the Arya Samajists at Lahore, he said, "No institution has wrought so much mischief and done such incalculable harm to our country as this unfortunate, irrational system of caste." He held that the social status should not be determined simply by the 'inseparable' accident of birth.^② It was due to selfishness of our ancestors that the lower castes had fallen down so miserably. He advised to treat the lower classes with justice in order to call ourselves "true Aryas" and to admit them into the Hindu Society.^③

In his Inaugural Address to the Eighteenth National Social Conference in 1904, he outlined the aspects of social reform for example: Female Education, Abolition of Polygamy, Removal of Caste Divisions, Inter-marriage between sub-castes, Inter-dining, Freedom for Travel and Sea-Voyages, Raising the position of the castes called low, Temperance and the Regulation of Public Charities. According to him these aspects could be classified into two main heads namely, the difficulties arising from the caste system and the difficulties relating to the status of women.^④

He visualized the evils of caste that covered the whole range of social life. He felt that the life of an individual is hampered with a vast number of petty meaningless rules and observances. These are found in his relations with his family, in his marriage affairs and in the education of his children. The caste system weakens the economic position of an individual by

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1. Widgey, SAMSG, Vol. I, p. 76.
 2. Ibid., p. 132.
 3. Ibid., pp. 132-33 and p. 135.
 4. Ibid., p. 157.

confining him to a particular trade, by preventing him to receive good education and learn the culture of the West. It also creates in him an exaggerated conception of his knowledge and importance. As a result, Sayaji Rao believed that the professional life of an individual was crippled with the increase in distrust, teachery and jealousy which ultimately ruined his social life.^① This eventually restricted the opportunities of social intercourse and prevented intellectual development on which the prosperity of any clan depends.^②

After discussing the above aspects, he made a thought provoking remark. He said that as a result of narrow social mindedness in the wider spheres of life, in municipal or local affairs, the hope for local patriotism or of work, for the common good was destroyed by thrusting forward the interests of the caste as against those of the community. He went further and he pronounced '... its most serious offence is its effect on national life and national unit.'^③ He hinted that due to local dissensions, diverse interests were intensified and they also obscured great national ideals. He considered this conservative element in the society as a steady enemy to all reforms.^④ He appealed to the people to remove the 'social incubus' and pending final solution, advised them "... to promote free social intercourse and inter-dining between all castes, and inter-marriages at least between sections of the same caste."^⑤

Sayaji Rao referred to the ideal underlying caste. According to him "... it is the recognition on the one hand of individuality of every man, that which distinguishes him from every other, which gives him his own work, his own value in the

1. Ibid., p. 159.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 160.

5. Ibid., p. 163.

world; and on the other combination of these countless individualities into the united and organised life which we call a society, his organised relations to the rest of society."^① In the subsequent period on various occasions Sayaji Rao spoke on the caste and on the place of an individual in it.

In 1933, speaking before the Maratha Samaj at Poona, Sayaji Rao compared caste and country as intimately connected like the fingers and the hand. He said, "All fingers are not of the same length or strength, yet all of them form a strong fist".^② By this statement Sayaji Rao wanted to include the backward classes in the term 'caste' and give importance to it as one of the fingers of a hand.

It had been the policy of the Maharaja to encourage the down-trodden classes of the Hindu society to come forward and get the benefits bestowed on them by the State for their betterment. In 1933, Sayaji Rao referred to his policy to encourage and uplift the '...diverse castes like the Dheds, Kolis (fisherman) and Chambhars (shoe-makers)'.^③ To this, he immediately added that while doing so "I take care to see that they are helped only in proportion to their need." It meant that Sayaji Rao did not prefer to give an aid to such backward classes for the sake of helping him, but he wanted to give them only their due share. He seemed to have been more concerned with the help and aid he gave and utilized by the members of the backward classes. As for the caste, he came to the conclusion that just as a "body cannot function well unless its different organs are sound, so also our nation cannot thrive unless its constituent castes are made strong."^④ He had a broad outlook of the nation vis-a-vis the caste.

1. Ibid., p. 166.

2. Saunders, SAMSG, p.648.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

Status of Women

In the Hindu Society, the position of women was very low. They suffered much because of their ignorance, infant motherhood, infant widowhood and abject dependence upon men. In other words, the evils concerning them were many:- the marriage of mere children, the degraded position of the widow, their confinement to household work, their recognition as the producer of progeny particularly sons, the purdah system and the denial of education.

Sayaji Rao evinced keen interest in uplifting the status of women by removing their disabilities. As early as 1892-93, he ordered that the Public Park (present Kamathi Bag) be closed on every Friday to the male public so that it could be freely available to women as a place of recreation.^① He regarded defective social institutions and ignorance to be responsible for the wrong treatment of women in the society.^② He believed that women should be given freedom and they should be treated on equality basis with the men. To achieve this, steps should be taken to instill in them confidence because after all the difference between them and men is only of division of labour which could be shown to them. If they, along with their children, were imbued with such spirit, the superstition prevailing among them could be easily fight out.^③

In the Inaugural³ Address at the Eighteenth National Social Conference in 1904, Sayaji Rao "...most legitimately" objected to the prevailing customs in the society because they involved "a bad economy of social forces."^④ Like a thinker, he analysed some factors regarding the status of women. According to him, early or infant marriage brought early consumation which, in turn, increased the ratio of deaths and diseases among the

1. Dewan Kutchery Huzur Orders, 1892-93, p. 21. (Hereafter as DKHO).

2. MSGVB, Vol. II, p. 135.

3. Ibid., p. 134.

4. Widgery, SAMSG, p.164.

"mothers". This, in its turn would increase "infant mortality and injure the physique of race."^①

Education of Women

Education of women and their emancipation engaged much attention of social thinkers and reformers of the nineteenth century. There might have been differences in opinion regarding the scope and nature of reform or approach to the problem, but as to the desirability of the item itself, there was no disagreement among them.

Sayaji Rao emphasized much on the necessity of giving education to women. He hit hard on the attitude of denying education to them. Enumerating the disadvantages of such attitude he said, "We deprive ourselves of half the potential force of the nation, deny to our children the advantage of having cultured mothers, and by stunting the facilities of the mother, affect injuriously the heredity of the race."^② He added that it also created a gulf of mental division in the home and made the women a great conservative force "that clings to everything old, however outworn and irrational."

These statements of Sayaji Rao show how very deeply he had pondered over the problems. He put both men and women on equal level and looked at them from the national point of view. He did not believe in leaving out women as a conservative force, when the atmosphere of development and progress prevailed in all the spheres of human life. In the support of his convictions, it may be pointed out here that one of his very early acts was the establishment of a Training College for Women Teachers in 1881 in Baroda. In the subsequent period, the measures taken by the Maharaja to open up primary and secondary schools for the Hindu and non-Hindu communities, are too many to be traced here.

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

Sayaji Rao strongly held that the women should be educated not only for the sake of passing the examination, but for running their home-life nicely also.

Speaking at the Third Annual Conference of the Hindu Club at Bombay in 1910, he emphasized that the giving of education to women did not mean that it should be done for the sake of passing the examination. The women should be also given education in Home-science. It would be futile if the women learnt making public speeches, but it would be worthwhile if every talk was translated into action. He considered Chemistry as one of the Sciences necessary to be taught to women.^① As early as 1885, while resolving to provide education to the females in the State, Sayaji Rao laid down in a memorandum, the importance of women in the social life of the people. According to him " Women regulate the social life of a people, and men and women rise or fall together."^②

Marriage

Sayaji Rao held that no real uplift of women was feasible without radical reforms in the marriage system. The disabilities from which women suffered most were to be found in the evils which had entered into the institution of marriage itself. If women suffered as widows, it was due to infant marriage and the denial of right to them to remarry. If they were illiterate, it was because they were married early. The birth of a daughter was a cause of sorrow, because marriage of a daughter meant the humiliation of her father at the hands of her would-be husband's guardian and the heavy expense at the time of her marriage. The Hindu marriage custom had many abuses, such as polygamy, infant marriage, prohibition of widow re-marriage, unequal marriage, heavy dowry and others.

1. MSGVB, Vol. II, p.215.

2. Sergeant, op. cit., p.208. Cited.

Sayaji Rao kept all these evils in view, while putting his ideas in the public. He considered the customs of polygamy and of the prohibition of widow re-marriage as "... a bad organisation of society." He contended that for this 'evil', "... the lowering of our ideas about women and the relations of the sexes" were responsible. He desired to solve the problems affecting the status of women in such a way that it should lead to "... the attainment of conditions in which our Indian womanhood can once again produce types as noble and as great as those which glorify our national history."^①

Sayaji Rao's idea about infant marriage have been already mentioned earlier. Infant marriage was a national disease and all classes, more or less, suffered from it, irrespective of caste, colour, creed or religion. "Early marriage," he said, "causes precocity in both sexes, early maternity shortens the natural span of life of women; they both lead to untimely waste and decay."^② This reflects not only his academic thinking but also his ability to foresee the resultant effects of the customs.

Sayaji Rao believed that no girl below sixteen be married and this he wanted to introduce into his State. He clashed with the people on this point. But seeing the protests and discontent of the people, he proposed fourteen as the marriageable age for girls. In spite of that the public opinion was so strong that he had to lower down the limit. He fixed the minimum marriageable age at twelve for girls and sixteen for boys. The Infant Marriage Prevention Act, containing these provisions, was passed in 1904 for the Baroda State. Sayaji Rao expressed his dissatisfaction over this measure because his motive remained far from what he desired.

1. Widgery, SAMSG, p. 167.

2. Ibid.

Sayaji Rao was bent on preventing the evils of child-marriage and removing the impropriety of marrying children who would be ignorant of the meaning of their marriages. He wanted to create secure conditions for the education of women and wanted to prevent immature consumption which would bring early mother-hood, child mortality and untimely deaths of child-mothers.

Therefore, he prohibited child-marriage through an enactment in 1904. Measures were undertaken to implement this Act but it did ^{not} prove adequate. Cases of violating the Act were frequent. It is astonishing to note that even the Maharaja himself acted contrary to his professed ideas on child-marriage and yielded to the orthodox social pressures of the time. Though the child-marriage was prohibited in the State, Sayaji Rao, in 1918, contracted a marriage of his own granddaughter Indumati Raja, daughter of the late Crown - Prince Fatehsingh Rao. The bride was by then hardly of twelve years and the bride-groom who was the second son of the Maharaja of Kolhapur, was twenty-years old.

This incident has been noted by both Dr. Sumant Mehta^① and Miss E.L. Tottenham^② who were very intimately connected with the Maharaja and the Maharani. Both of them had scolded the royal couple mildly for acting contrary to their professed views. Dr. Mehta sarcastically observed that the Maharaja pushed this innocent girl in an uncivilised family where she had to observe the purdah! Though this girl later on became the Maharani she did not live a happy life. Therefore, the Maharaja was guilty of breaking the law of child-marriage and retaining the purdah system for the members of royal family.

1. Sumant Mehta, op. cit., p. 325.

2. Tottenham, op. cit., p. 280.

The Polygamous Marriage Affair

Another incident in which both the Maharaja and Maharani took an orthodox approach, was the marriage affair of their only daughter Indira Raje in 1913. Sayaji Rao was against polygamy and hated it. He also indicated his liberalism in the selection of bride and bridegroom, instead of leaving it to their parents.

Sayaji Rao and Maharani Chimnabai wanted Indira Raje to marry Maharaja Sindhia of Gwalior who had already one wife and had no heir to succeed him. He was desirous of having an heir out of this marriage. As shown elsewhere, Indira Raje had her own views. She revolted against her parents and finding her own way managed to marry Jitendranarayan, an heir-apparent of the Cooch-Bihar State, in London. She was in love with the Prince and hated to marry Sindhia. The stubborn attitude of the Maharaja and Maharani in this affair reveal the other side of their professed ideas.^①

Purdah System

Sayaji Rao viewed the purdah system with disfavour and considered it foolish. In spite of his such belief, he had to tolerate Maharani Chimnabai observing the purdah till 1914. When the latter discarded it and sat on the same sofa with the Maharaja at a public function in Nyaya Mandir. But before 1914 the Maharani moved without the purdah in foreign countries with her husband and acted freely "like any other Western woman, going to the theatres entertaining, eating in restaurants and living in hotels as if purdah had never existed for her."^② While in India, she observed the purdah though she held the same views as her husband.

Sayaji Rao in his article "My Ways and Days" written in the issue of XIXth Century, February 1901 (London) represented

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1. Sumant Mehta, op. cit., p. 325 and Tottenham, op. cit., p.134.
 2. Tottenham, op. cit., p. 144.

the views of Maharani on the purdah system. He expressed his inability to do away with the system. "In the opinion of Her Highness," he wrote, "the custom of seclusion is bad, but she realises that no one in India, not even myself, her husband, can at the present time lift up the veil."^① This clearly reflects the helplessness of the Maharaja to abolish boldly the custom of the purdah in the State though he considered it bad and out of date. He had to submit before the strong and orthodox tradition and could not dare to abolish it in 1901. Sayaji Rao, however, gave an indication of his desire to reduce the purdah system gradually till the women understood the change and knew how to behave and treat others.^②

At the Eighteenth National Social Conference in 1904, Sayaji Rao pointed out that the purdah system was not a Hindu custom but was an adopted one from the Muslims at a time when wars and disorders prevailed. He considered this system as an obstruction in the smooth living of a social life. "A too strict purdah," he said, "mutilates social life and makes its current dull and sluggish by excluding the brightening influence of women."^③

In 1911, speaking on Sanitation and Social Progress before the Bombay Association at Bombay, he gave more thought to his thinking on the problem. Early marriage and purdah system as he put it, were responsible "... in creating pre-disposition to disease, especially phthises."^④ Thus he considered the purdah as a cause of disease which occurred for want of fresh air and free movement of the women. This would naturally affect the health of her children besides her own. He wanted such unnatural customs

1. Rice, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 70. Quoted.

2. Ms. Notes by His Highness. Quoted by Rice, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 72.

3. Widgery, SAMSG, p. 164.

4. Ibid.

to go. He believed in framing social customs in such a way that they should not hinder the health of women and their children.

As noted above the Maharani abandoned the purdah in 1914. Both she and the Maharaja had to encounter strong opposition of their relatives and the orthodox Hindus in this regard.

Widows and Widows Re-marriage

The position of widows in the Hindu society was deplorable. They suffered on many counts. Partly due to early marriage and partly due to superstition that "... an educated woman was fated to become a widow,"^① the women were denied education. Sayaji Rao who had an inquisitive sense, found the origin of the evil in the low ideas about women and in the relation between the two sexes. Speaking on the Aspects of Social Reform in 1904, he traced the status of women from the Vedic period to the disturbed times of the society.^② Under the circumstances, a concept of devotion ~~and purity~~ of wife and her purity developed and it assumed an exaggerated form which was beyond all reason. The social customs were modified in this spirit.^③ As a result "Sati, the entire prohibition of widow re-marriage, early marriage and the rest were established in our society and, in some parts of India, the strictest Muslim type of purdah was adopted."^④ Stressing on this aspect Sayaji Rao contended that while ignorance increased among men, it also became absolute among women. He considered polygamy and prohibition of widow re-marriage and the like responsible for the bad organisation of society. According to him "The one keeps up an unduly low standard of morality among men, the other demands an impossibly high standard from women."^⑤ For

1. BPIR, Vol. X, Part II, p. 262.

2. Widgery, SAMSG, p. 165.

3. Ibid., p. 166.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p. 164.

enforcing this standard, he said, "We suppress our feelings of ⁹humility and affection, and inflict severities upon widows in order to keep their vitality low and make them less attractive." Coming down to the conclusion, he expressed that despite such harsh measures we have failed to preserve an "ordinary standard of morality in this ill-fated class." He protested against this evil and determined to alter it.^① The legislations that he introduced in the State bear testimony to what he believed and what he translated into practice.

Following upon the Indian Act, he passed the Widow Re-marriage Act in 1901. G. S. Sardesai has described one such widow re-marriage in which Sayaji Rao evinced interest and helped G. S. Bhate the bridegroom who happened to be a Baroda State employee. After the death of his first wife Bhate selected Lilabai, a widow of twenty years, for his second marriage. Maharaja Sayaji Rao chose to make the celebration of their marriage, a State function with an idea of giving it a wide publicity. He attended not only the function but also blessed the couple.^②

Divorce

Sayaji Rao was equally concerned with the concept of divorce in the Hindu System. Hindu marriage was regarded sacred and therefore indissoluble. In 1918, he ordered the State Minister of Jurisprudence to prepare a draft of the Divorce Act keeping in view the requirements of the day.^③ About this time the educated women of Baroda had started a campaign for adopting a Divorce Act in the interest of those unfortunate women who were extremely unhappy and were unable to break the bonds of marriage. Some of the legal advisers of the Maharaja were against such legislation because they apprehended that it would be tantamount to "introduce distintegrating forces in the Hindu family life."^④ They advised

1. Ibid., pp. 164-65.

2. Sardesai, Shri Sayajirao Gaekwad Yancha Sahavasanta, pp. 76-78.

3. HHSDT, Part II, p. 139.

4. SSGG, Part II, p. 284.

the Maharaja to keep caution and to advance slowly by stages, lest it should provoke bitter opposition and agitation from the orthodox section.

After due care and consideration, Sayaji Rao passed the Hindu Divorce Act in 1931 in response to an educated public opinion. By that Act a Hindu marriage became a civil contract in Baroda and it was no longer regarded as indissoluble. However, all the religious ceremonies were observed in the marriages. Both the Widow Re-marriage Act and the Divorce Act were of a permissive nature in the Baroda State, because neither the former forced any widow to re-marry against her wishes nor the latter compelled any married couple to seek separation.

Nautch and Devdasi Practices

The social thinkers of the day also gave their thought to Nautch and Devdasi practices in the society. Nautch parties were regarded as institutions for recreation and amusement. Devdasi, a semi-religious practice, was dominant in the temples of south India. The Devdasis were dedicated to the service of God and their duty was to sing and dance in the temples to which they were attached. But with the lapse of time, they developed into a type of prostitutes.

Maharaja Sayaji Rao had some definite ideas on the Nautch practice. In 1903, he ~~xxx~~ ~~xx~~ expressed his displeasure before the members of Arya Samaj at Lahore,^① at the anti-Nautch Movement. In the later decades of the nineteenth century, social reform movement in Madras also included nautch dancing. The movement progressed so well in the Madras Presidency that it was highly appreciated at the Seventh Session of the National Social Conference by social reformers and was noted with satisfaction.^② Sayaji Rao disapproved the anti-Nautch Movement and admitted that he differed from some social reformers on this point. Supporting his conviction he said, "Nautch parties should be healthy institutions for

1. Widgery, SAMSG, p. 133.

2. S.R. Singh, Nationalism and Social Reform in India, (Delhi, 1968), p. 281.

recreation and amusement. Doing away with Nautch parties altogether is not advised.^① He felt that the institution had been handed down from generations in the past and therefore, should not be condemned. While making this statement he had in his view the ladies who took an honourable part in theatrical performances in Europe. Therefore, ~~he~~ he wanted to continue the same here. But he was not unmindful of the evils arising from this practice. He said that if these institutions led to immorality and demoralisation, "you must do away with the institution of Nautch."^② Posing the question as to why the people liked the Nautch, he explained, "Because mankind cannot do without feminine society" and the most effective way of checking immorality was to introduce music in our homes.

Sayaji Rao who believed in the freedom of women wanted that the women should begin to cultivate a feeling of equality with men and understand that "the difference is only one of a division of labour."^③ In order to fight with superstition, women and children should be imbued with this spirit. For the wrong treatment of women, he held that the defective social institutions accompanied with ignorance were responsible.

Though the Devdasi practice was not prevalent in the Baroda State, Sayaji Rao in 1909 ordered the Dewan to collect an information regarding the number of such Devdasis living in the State and also to inquire and make a study of the legislation pertaining to it. The model draft was to be adopted on the lines of the legislation passed in the Mysore State.^④

Sadhus, Swamis etc.

Sayaji Rao believed in setting up some practical working organisation for spreading social ideals and new knowledge which

1. Widgey, op. cit., p.133.

③. Ibid., p. 134.

3. Ibid.

4. Dewan Kutchery Huzur Orders (Baroda, 1913), No. 92, dated 28-5-1909, p. 281.

were lacking in all the classes of the community. This he considered essential for social reform and social progress. He thought of utilising the services of the Sadhus, Swamis and others who had renounced this world and were indulged in seeking salvation for themselves only. He thought that this class would render good help to the society by doing social work. In 1904, at the Eighteenth National Social Conference he declared, that "... the countless body of Sadhus who are roaming over the country ... must be trained, and they must have something useful to say."^① He considered asceticism as an evil unless it becomes a " humane asceticism.." It should not be divorced from philanthropy.^②

The intention of Sayajirao was to point out and seek the help of this class for social uplift. He was not bitter or sarcastic when he remarked that " who surrenders life to help his fellows is a saint, but not he who becomes a beggar to avoid labour or responsibility or retires to a jungle to save...'his own dirty soul.'^③

Speaking before the Arya Samajists at Lahore, he referred to the Brahmacharis, Sadhus ~~and Sadhus~~ and Swamis and exhorted them to ~~and Swamis and exhorted them to~~ render help to the poor and the famine stricken by diverting their charities and energies for such better purposes.^④ He felt sorry when he expressed that "Public money is now being squandered by these people" and that it should be stopped. While he was making this suggestion he was highly influenced by the work of the Christian Society that managed an orphanage at "Murree".^⑤

Depressed Classes : Untouchability

The question of ameliorating the social status and raising the standard of living of the depressed classes in India, engaged

1. Ibid., p. 174.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 135.

5. Ibid.

the mind of Sayaji Rao for many years. It was no secret that a fairly big section of society was separate from their fellows and their touch or presence were regarded as pollution by high caste Hindus. This system of untouchables had persisted in India since ancient times. It was a very difficult task to uplift these "depressed" classes and give them ordinary rights of citizenship.

The roots of this evil lay in the caste system. It aimed at sustaining the status of the high caste people. From his early years Maharaja Sayaji Rao devoted his attention to improving the lot of these poor people who were victims of social tyranny. Sayaji Rao was the first among the Indian Princes and the social reformers, to take up the question of untouchability firmly and persistently on a wide scale and aimed to do constructive work in improving their condition and giving them proper place in the society as well as in the administration of the Baroda State.

Speaking before the Arya Samajists at Lahore in 1903, he referred to granting of admission to the lower classes into the Hindu Society. He emphatically mentioned the numerical deterioration of Hindu society which had resulted due to large numbers of low-class people becoming Muslims and Christians. He exhorted the members of the Samaj to arrest this depletion.^① "If we are not going to admit low class people," he said, "to their legitimate rights in Hindu Society, I do not see any reason why we should blame Muslims and Christians for doing what we profess our ability to do." Expressing his fullest sympathy for the low-class people, he considered "the treatment at present meted out to them is inhuman."

At the Third Anniversary of the Depressed Classes Mission at Bombay in 1909, Sayaji Rao in his brief Address expressed his same belief and posed a question whether untouchability was a question of moral code, or of practical politics or of financial requirement or of humanity or of religion. He had a answer to it. As he put it, untouchability might have superstition or religion as a

1. Ibid.

base from the point of view of a Hindu for sanction, ~~the point of view of a Hindu for sanction~~, but from the point of view of humanity, it had no justification whatsoever. He laid stress on the point that "The question of untouchability was peculiarly Hindu. It could fully understood only by Hindus."^① He went further and said "Even then they found that opinions about it differed in different provinces and among different classes of people."^②

For such type of treatment, the Hindus ^{int}erpreted the Hindu religion in whatever manner they liked. Therefore, according to Sayaji Rao, it was a matter of interpretation and of the willingness of the Hindus to accept the untouchables into their fold. Sayaji Rao did not agree with the theory of untouchability. Reflecting his view over the unsoundness of the theory he revealed that it was "applied not only to the lower classes or depressed classes between themselves." In order to emphasize on this point he predicted, "Even in respect of the latter, a time might come when members of a family might make one of them sit apart and not touch him."^③ Fortunately the time did not prove his prediction as the movements of reformation in the later period retarded its such development.

Sayaji Rao viewed the question of untouchability from a different angle also. He said that the "... absence of such prejudices and superstitions had enabled other communities to occupy a much higher position materially, socially and politically, than the Hindus, who boasted so much of the civilization of the Bharatkhand."^④ He took the problem of untouchability as one of national importance. He made it clear that if the "Hindus" wanted to rise as a nation, they must all espouse the cause of the depressed classes and raise their status socially and politically.^⑤

1. Ibid., p. 244.

2. Ibid., pp. 244-45.

3. Ibid., p. 245.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

By 1918, he had formulated these ideas on the issue of untouchability.

One striking illustration would be enough to depict his ideal being translated into practice. Late Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who distinguished himself as one of the foremost jurists of India, received the patronage of the Maharaja in the pursuit of his higher studies leading to B.A. degree in Baroda. Later on, he proceeded to America for higher studies and received his Ph.D. Degree in law. This he achieved at the expense of the Baroda State. Dr. Ambedkar worked in the State service and later on was appointed as a member of the State Legislative Assembly. In 1933, Sayaji Rao expressed his satisfaction over the progress of Dr. - Ambedkar and more for making him a leader of the down-trodden classes. History shows that Dr. Ambedkar devoted his life for the uplift of these classes. In 1918 at the All-India Conference on the Abolition of Untouchability at Bombay, Sayaji Rao gave an Inaugural Address on the Abolition of Untouchability. He regarded the problem of ameliorating the social status and the standard of living of the untouchables in India as of "rare courage, breadth and freshness of mind."^① For the solution of the problem he asked to cast off the currents of popular prejudice and "...ultimately achieve a reversal of social theories that have dominated Hindu life for untold generations." It was in fact a question of examining the root of our social philosophy and demanding a transformation in mind and heart of all our people.

Sayaji Rao was realistic when he pointed out the peculiar difficulty that came in the way of abolition. He observed that in India "there is no one political or religious unit which can decree the abolition of a universal social wrong by an imperial enactment"^② as was done in the Japanese Reformation period during 1868-71. It was also not possible for a handful of far-seeing enlightened men to frame and promulgate and Imperial Edict removing the disabilities of the untouchables and abolishing the concept

1. Widgey, SAMSG, p.442.

2. Ibid., p. 443.

Atisadra once for all. Therefore he suggested "We can only appeal to the slow processes of education and public enlightenment,"^① for this noble objective. He believed that those who aspired to lead the movement of reformation in this field must have depth of conviction and unyielding perseverance.^②

Sayaji Rao's keen observation, penetrating thought and ability to make a comparative analysis of the social system of Japan, America, England and India were remarkable. He found that in advanced countries there were classes but not castes and the humblest citizen could rise through fluid strata to the highest positions in business, in professional and in public services according to his personal abilities.^③ He disagreed with the view that the rigid caste system with its concomitant outcastes was a part of the Hinduism in the old Vedic times. The principle of rigidity of classes confronted to reason and the caste subsisted by birth and not by acts of occupation. He supported his conviction by referring to the saints from the depressed classes, namely Nanad in South India, Ravidas in Oudh, Chokemala in Maharashtra and Haridas Thakur in Bengal. His purpose was to prove that the Antyajias were not "uniformly feeble in spirit or mentality"^④ and the saints hailing from the lower strata had earned nationwide reputation and were even respected by the Brahmins also.

Regarding the origin of the idea of untouchability he believed that it was born out of ignorance and conceit nurtured by self-complacency. He could observe that the state of untouchability in India in some of its aspects, was worse than slavery and was permitted to survive without effective protest from the majority of our people. He accused the "Indian caste peoples" for reducing "... the untouchables to a condition of servility and humiliation" and called it "even more subtly cruel than the

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1. Ibid., p. 445.
 2. Ibid., pp. 442-43.
 3. Ibid., p.445.
 4. Ibid., p.447.

physical tortures practised by the slave-hunters in Africa."^①

Sayaji Rao viewed this problem from a nationalistic point of view. He pointed out that there were social, political and economic effects of this type of 'servitude' on the country. The self-sacrificing national spirit could only be fostered in a community of free men. It was, he felt, partly due to subjection and disaffection of large masses of the people that the national unity was not built among the people of India.

He was highly critical of the attitude of the caste-minded Hindus who indulged themselves in self-satisfaction and laissez-faire in the face of social theories and institutions which degraded the sixth of the population and directed them to look towards other faiths like Buddhism, Islam and Christianity.^②

Sayaji Rao felt that untouchability was a standing reproach against 'us'. He said, "Nothing else has so alienated the sympathies of the world from Hinduism, so attractive to many on its esoteric side, as our own treatment of the depressed classes."^③ Keeping in view the demands of political rights of Indian people before the British Government, Sayaji Rao linked political justice with social justice. According to him the principles which impel us to ask for political justice for ourselves, should also actuate us to show social justice to those who were supposed to be untouchables amongst us. If we seek equity, we must practise equity.

Sayaji Rao referred to his own endeavours which were "humble" to ameliorate the lot of the depressed classes in the State. It may be noted here that for the Antyaj Schools in the State, no Hindu co-operated with him by becoming a teacher. The Muslims and Arya Samajists came forward and worked as teachers in the schools of the State.^④ Sayaji Rao was not satisfied merely by appointing teachers in the Antyaj schools, but also he personally visited the Antyajas in their homes, schools and boarding houses. He put into

-
1. Ibid., p. 449.
 2. Ibid., p. 451.
 3. Ibid., p. 452.
 4. Ibid., p. 453.

practice his ideas to break the barriers of prejudice of the Hindus against them and to eradicate the belief of pollution with their touch.

Making fervent appeal to the sense of reason and of justice of the Hindus, Sayaji Rao hoped that the community would soon perceive equity in enfranchising these depressed classes. He did not expect them to have with untouchables the inter-marriage or inter-dining relations against their convictions. At the minimum, he wanted to remove the "taint of untouchability" from the Hindu society in the first instant.^①

The opening ceremony of a second hostel named "Arya Kumar Ashram"^② in 1925 in the Baroda city, became an occasion of great demonstration. This was done by the Arya Samajists not only of Baroda but also by many of the Samajists visitors coming from other parts of India specially for this purpose. Sayaji Rao in his speech applauded the activities of the Arya Samaj which aimed in removing the disabilities of the depressed classes.^③ He declared that by creating social and national consciousness among the people, India could be built up as a nation and the progressive development of both the society and the country could be achieved. His basic thinking lay in the fact that he called on the people to learn about forgetting caste consciousness. He expressed that without this they could not "... either as men or as a nation, keep ourselves against the rapidly advancing civilization of the human race." Philip Sergeant, the biographer of Sayaji Rao has quoted the Maharaja's words uttered with reference to India. Sayaji Rao said, "India is not a nation, and cannot be made into a nation while split up into religions and castes as it still is."^④ Sergeant has also mentioned the resolve of the Maharaja to give the untouchables their full and proper share in the life of the State.

1. Ibid.

2. The word Arya Kumar was his own find.

3. Sergeant, op. cit., pp. 216-217.

4. Ibid., p. 217.

In 1927, Sayaji Rao expressed the same ideas regarding untouchability which he had done several years ago. He believed that no man could be low or high by the accident of his birth. It is by chance that the individual performs high or small duties. Our moral and religious condition in the society have weakened because we have turned against this reality. So far as the prosperity of all is concerned, a feeling of harmony and unity in the society, should be developed and this could be achieved by forgetting the caste differences.

Sayaji Rao constantly kept before him caste-prejudices against the untouchables. This is evident from his speech at the time of the Opening Ceremony of the Pratapsingh Lake in 1930. He remarked that the caste-custom made the work of the State difficult. The outcaste in the village were not allowed by the caste-prejudiced people to take advantage of the same well that they were using for water. Under the circumstances, there were demands to have two separate wells - one for such people and the other for the untouchables or low classed people. Sayaji Rao deplored such attitude of the people and directed their attention to the fact that to have duplicate wells in every village would mean an enormous expense to the State. He confidently hoped that "...the good sense of my people will sooner or later remove this blot upon the fair name of Baroda."^①

It is significant to note that in October, 1932, Sayaji Rao in the face of bitter opposition from the orthodox section, threw open all the State temples to the untouchables.^② The Harijans of Baroda were led by some high-caste leaders in procession to the Vithal Mandir, a State temple near Mandvi in the heart of the city. They all spent the whole day in ~~sing~~^{sing} Bhajans and in religious activities and made the function success. The function got wider publicity outside the State among the social reformers of the country.

1. Saunders, SAMSG, p. 569.

2. SSGG, Part III, p. 91.

It may be recalled here that Mahatma Gandhi had also by then, launched his programme for the uplift of the untouchables and for keeping open the Hindu temples to them in 1921's. On hearing the gesture of Sayaji Rao, he expressed satisfaction and hoped that the other Princes would follow him. In the British Indian territories, the movement of opening temples to untouchables did not materialise to a similar extent.

Sayaji Rao seized every opportunity to place before the people his long cherished ideas on the aspect of untouchability. Speaking in the Arya Kanya Mahavidyalaya (School for Depressed Classes' Girls) in 1935, he declared untouchability as the greatest grave affair in the Hindu religion. He felt that the society would not prosper unless this evil custom was abolished. In spite of his high idealism, he did not prefer radical methods to abolish it. He admitted that this might be done after weighing pros and cons of the problem with care and intelligence. He was sure that its solution would bring the general good to the society at large.^①

On the occasion of his Diamond Jubilee Celebration (1st January, 1936) in a message to the people, Sayaji Rao referring to the untouchability proclaimed, "It is repugnant to our common humanity that those who should be regarded as our brothers and sisters are branded with this unnatural stigma."^② He sharply criticised the higher classes which deprived millions of their fellow creatures of self-respect and hope of betterment. He added that those classes would inevitably suffer from moral decay. Though he and his government strove hard to improve the lot of the untouchables, they were pained to mark the stiff and unrelenting attitude of the orthodox section of the society.

At the Fifth Rotary Conference in Baroda in 1938, he spoke on the subject of untouchability for the last time. He urged the

1. MSGVB, Vol. III, p. 17.

2. Newham, SAMSG, p. 808.

Rotarions to strive hard for the eradication of taint of untouchability from India as it had led to the downfall of man.①

It will appear that Sayaji Rao till the end of his life, cherished noble ideas on the subject of untouchability and made earnest efforts to do justice and raise the status as well as the condition of the depressed classes in his State.

1. MSGVB, Vol. III, p.111.