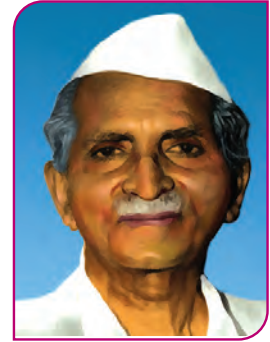


## 11. Struggle for Equality

In the progress of Modern India, struggle for political freedom was important. This struggle was based on broad philosophy of man's emancipation. Therefore in the course of this struggle along with political dependence there was opposition to things like feudalism, social inequality, economic exploitation. Like freedom the principle of equality is very important. From that point of view the contribution of movements built up by various social groups such as farmers, workers, women, dalits etc as well as the stream of socialism giving importance to equality, proves to be significant. Without realising its contribution we will not be able to understand the developmental process of Modern India. Therefore let us study some of these movements.

**Peasant Movement :** The Indian farmers had to suffer due to the ill effects of British economic policy. The British Government used to protect the landlords and money lenders. They gave unjust treatment to the farmers. On many occasions the farmers rose against this injustice. The peasants in Bengal formed their union and revolted against the compulsion of cultivating indigo. The play 'Neel Darpan' written by Deenbandhu Mitra brought to the notice of the society the wretched conditions of the peasants producing indigo. In 1875, farmers from Maharashtra rose in revolt against the atrocities of the landlords and money lenders. The farmers in Uttar Pradesh formed 'Kisan Sabha' in 1918 under the leadership of Baba Ramchandra. The Mopla peasants rose in a great revolt in Kerala. But the British government crushed it down.

In 1936, with the initiative of Prof. N.G.Ranga, the 'Akhil Bharatiya Kisan Sabha' was established. Swami Sahajananda Saraswati was the President of this organisation. This Sabha presented a declaration of peasants' rights to the Indian National Congress. The session of the Congress was held in the rural part of Faizpur in Maharashtra. Thousands of peasants attended this session.

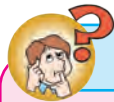


**Prof. N.G.Ranga**



**Sane Guruji**

In 1938, the crops in eastern Khandesh were destroyed due to heavy rains. The condition of the farmers was miserable. In order to get the land revenue waived, Sane Guruji organised meetings and processions at many places. He took out marches on the Collector office. The peasants participated in large numbers in the revolutionary period of 1942.



### Do you know?

Sane Guruji built up unity of the workers. He tried to create strong centre of workers union at Dhule-Amalner. He was the President of Mill Workers Union of Ammalner.

He went on fast unto death to open the doors of Vithal temple at Pandharpur for the Dalits.



**Narayan Meghaji Lokhande**

### **Workers Union :**

In the latter half of 19th century, textile mills, railway companies and such industries were started in India. The workers group had not aroused on large scale but in this period efforts were made to solve the

problems of the workers. Sashipada Banerjee and Narayan Meghaji Lokhande organised the workers at local level. Lokhande's contribution to the working class movement was so valuable that he is described as 'Father of Indian Workers Movement'.



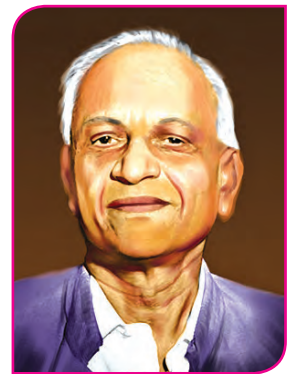
### **Do you know ?**

The native place of Narayan Meghaji Lokhande was Kanhesar near Saswad in Pune district. He formed the mill workers union known as 'Bombay Mill Hands Association' in 1890. This workers union is believed to be the beginning of organised movement in India. He was also the chairman of Mumbai branch of Satyashodhak Samaj founded by Mahatma Phule. Due to his efforts, from 10 June 1890, the workers started getting weekly holiday on Sunday.

At the same time an agitation was launched against the wretched condition of the tea plantation workers in Assam. In 1899, the Great Indian Peninsular (GIP) Railway workers called for a strike for their demands. During the anti partition movement workers carried out strikes from time to time in support of Swadeshi. After the First World War, due to industrialisation,

there was rise of worker class in India, and then a necessity for nation wide worker union was felt. With this necessity, in 1920, All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was established. N.M.Joshi had a major role in the working of AITUC. Lala Lajpat Rai was the President of the first session of AITUC. He told the workers to actively participate in the national movement.

Shripad Amrut Dange, Muzaffar Ahmed such socialist leaders, by spreading the socialist ideology among the workers, worked to form militant organisations. In 1928, the Mumbai Mill Workers Union went on strike for six months. Many such strikes were made by the Railway workers, jute mill workers etc. The government was

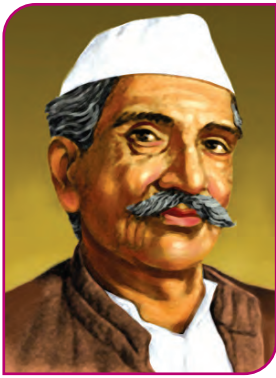


**Shripad Amrut Dange**

disturbed to see the growing strength of the workers movement. To suppress this movement legislations were made. The workers struggle proved to be supportive to the national movement.

**Socialist Movement :** Many of the young activists in the Indian National Congress felt that for protecting the interest of the people it is necessary to overthrow the British Government. Similarly, they started realising that the society should be restructured on the principle of economic and social equality. Through this realisation, there was rise and growth of Socialist ideology.

The Socialist youths, while they were in prison at Nasik, decided to form the Socialist Party within the Indian National Congress. According to this decision, in 1934, the Congress Socialist Party was formed which included leaders like



**Acharya Narendra Dev**



**Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia**

Acharya Narendra Dev, Jayprakash Narayan, Minu Masani, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia etc. In Quit India movement of 1942, these young socialists were in the forefront.

Indians got introduced to Karl Marx and his ideology of Communism. Lokmanya Tilak had already written an article on Marx in 1881. After First World War the influence of Communism was felt in India. Manavendranath Roy played active role in the International Communist Movement.

In 1925, the Communist Party was formed in India. The work of building militant organisations of workers and peasants was done by the young Communists. The British Government started feeling the danger of communist movement. Shripad Amrut Dange, Muzaffar Ahmed, Keshav Neelkanth Joglekar etc. were arrested. They were charged with planning of a conspiracy to overthrow the British rule. They were given different punishments. The trial took place at Meerut and is therefore known as the 'Meerut Conspiracy Case'. Even after the Meerut trial, the influence of Communist workers movement remained constant.

**Feminist Movement :** In the Indian social system, women were given secondary position. Due to many evil

practices, they were subjected to injustice. But during the modern period there was an awakening against it. Some of the male reformers took initiative in the reform movement related to women, in the course



**Pandita Ramabai**

of time women leaders started coming forward. Their independent institutes-organisations came to be established. Pandita Ramabai established the 'Arya Mahila Samaj' and 'Sharda Sadan', similarly 'Seva Sadan' founded by Ramabai Ranade are examples of this. 'Bharat Mahila Parishad' (1904) and 'All India Women's Conference' (1927) were founded as well. Therefore this institutional work reached at the national level. For the issues such as right to inheritance, right to vote etc. women had to struggle through the medium of these organisations.



**Ramabai Ranade**

Rakhmabai Janardan Save was the first practicing woman doctor in India. She delivered series of lectures related to health issues of women. She also opened a branch of Red Cross Society at Rajkot.



**Dr. Rakhmabai Save**

During the 20th century, participation of women in public life began to increase. Women's participation in the national movement and revolutionary work was significant. After the Act of 1935, women





### Do you know ?



**Dr. Anandibai Joshi**

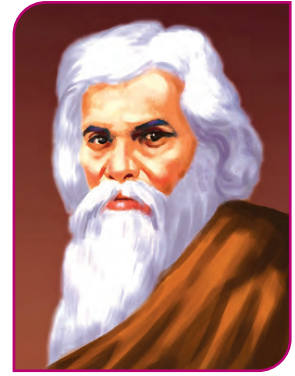
**Dr. Anandibai Joshi :** First Indian Female Doctor. Her son lived a life of only ten days and then died. This sorrow became responsible for inspiring her to study medicine. She acquired M.D. degree in 1886. While returning to India Anandibai contracted tuberculosis. Later on 16 February 1887 she died in Pune.

were included in the Provincial Ministries as well. After independence, the principle of equality of men and women has been clearly stated in the constitution of India.

**Dalit Movement :** The Indian social structure was based on inequality. Social reformers like Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Narayan Guru brought about awakening of the people against the unjust treatment given to Dalits in the society. Following the teachings of Mahatma Phule, Gopal Baba Walangkar and Shivram Janba Kamble worked for the eradication of untouchability. In 1888, Gopal Baba Walangkar, in his book 'Vitaal Vidhwansan' condemned untouchability. Shivram Janba Kamble started the magazine 'Somavanshiya Mitra' on 1 July 1908. He raised voice regarding issues of Muralis and Jogtins. He also took initiative for marriages of Devadasis. In Tamil Nadu, Perriyar Ramaswamy started a movement for eradication of untouchability.

In 1906, Maharshi Vitthal Ramji Shinde started the 'Depressed Classes Mission' for the progress of the Dalits. The important part of their work was to make the Dalits self respectful, well educated and engaged in work, while the second part of their work was to destroy

the delusive ideas regarding dalits in the minds of the upper castes. For this purpose he founded marathi schools, work schools in parts of Parel, Deonar in Mumbai. He actively took part for the benefit of Dalit class regarding satyagraha for entry in Parvati temple at Pune, Shetkari Parishad of Dalits, federal electorate etc.



**Maharshi Vitthal Ramji Shinde**

Rajarshi Shahu gave support to the leadership of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. During his period, he led the Non Brahmin movement. Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj made revolutionary declaration for reservation in



**Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj**

state of Kolhapur. He made a law for free and compulsory primary education. He did substantial work for abolition of caste discrimination.

There were three restrictions put up in the caste system. Prohibition of inter dining with certain castes (Rotibandi), prohibition of intercaste marriages (Betibandi), prohibition of pursuing certain occupation (Vyavasaybandi). In this regards, during meetings and conferences Shahu Maharaj ate food from the hands of Dalit people and overthrew the restriction on inter dining. Shahu Maharaj believed that till the restriction on inter marriage is followed till then the caste distinction will not be uprooted. He passed the Act of inter caste marriage and gave it a legal acceptance in his State. On 22 February 1918, he abolished the 'Balutedari System' by

publishing a declaration in the Government Gazette of the state of Kolhapur. Permission was granted to practice any occupation by anyone. By giving freedom of occupation, by Shahu Maharaj, the people were freed from a type of social slavery.

The Justice Party did valuable work for social equality in South India. Mahatma



**Thakkar Bappa**

Gandhi took up the issue of eradication of untouchability in his hands and put it up on the platform of Indian National Congress. While at Yerwada prison, he debated with the rigid Hindu Pandits stating that the religious texts

of Hindus do not support untouchability. He gave inspiration to Harijan Sevak Sangh. By taking inspiration from him Amrutlal Vitthaldas Thakkar alias Thakkar Bappa, Appasaheb Patwardhan etc. these activists dedicatedly worked for equality.

The struggle of the Dalits began under

the leadership of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. He aimed at establishing a society based on principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. He was convinced that the injustice to the Dalits and inequality would not end unless the caste system was completely uprooted. According to him, social equality was the right of the Dalits. He intended to carry out a movement based on self respect. From this point of view he established the 'Bahishkrut Hitkarini Sabha' in July 1924. 'Be Educated, Be Organised and Be Agitated', was the inspirational message given by him to his followers.

Babasaheb Bole got a bill passed in the Bombay Provincial Assembly for the public water reservoirs to be opened to the untouchables. However, in reality, the water reservoirs were not accessible to the Dalits and hence Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and his followers started Satyagraha at Chavdar lake in Mahad. He also burned the Manusmriti which advocated inequality. In 1930, he started Satyagraha for the entry of Dalits in the Kalaram temple at Nasik. This Satyagraha



**Satyagraha at the Chavdar Lake in Mahad**

was led by Karmaveer Dadasaheb Gaikwad.

Newspaper was an integral part of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's movement. To create awakening in the society and to voice out their grief, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar started newspapers like 'Muknayak', 'Bahishkrut Bharat', 'Janata', 'Samata' etc.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar established the 'Independent Labour Party'. He opposed the laws that went against the interest of the workers. In 1942, he established 'All India Scheduled

Castes Federation', to put forth the issues of Dalits in an effective manner. Through the Constitution of India, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar made a significant contribution to the creation of a social structure based on equality in Modern India. In 1956, along with his innumerable followers, he embraced Buddhism that advocated humanity and equality.

The struggle for equality has a prominent position in the making of Modern India.

### Exercise

#### 1. Rewrite the statements by choosing the appropriate options.

(Lala Lajpat Rai, Sane Guruji, Rakhmabai Janardan Save)

- (1) ..... founded the Red Cross Society at Rajkot.
- (2) ..... was the President of mill workers union at Ammalner.
- (3) The President of the first session of AITUC was .....

#### 2. Write short notes.

- (1) Social work of Vitthal Ramji Shinde
- (2) Reforms of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj in the state of Kolhapur.

#### 3. Explain the following statements with reasons.

- (1) The Government decided to crush down the communist movement.
- (2) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar started newspapers like 'Muknayak' Bahishkrut Bharat etc.
- (3) There aroused a need of nation wide workers union.

#### 4. Answer the following questions in brief.

- (1) Why was the struggle for equality important in the making of Modern India?
- (2) Write about the work of Sane Guruji in eastern Khandesh.
- (3) How was the struggle built up by workers decisive for the national movement?
- (4) Discuss the nature of reform movement related to women.

#### Project

- (1) Read the biography of Dr. Anandibai Joshi.
- (2) Read the biography of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj.

