



Modern Maharashtra: Mapping Colonial Rule, Caste Relations and The Significance of Subaltern Movements

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Abstract

The geographical understanding of the Indian subcontinent can be learned in its entirety from the availability of Colonial registers. Before the colonial rule, territorial regions forming India were not marked by distinctive geographical boundaries. Availability of Colonial registers and its records happened to provide us with a peculiar documentation of not just India's regional/geographical boundaries, but its social and political formation/development as well. The introduction of colonial education policy within the subcontinent is another significant aspect that resulted in furthering socio-cultural, economic and political changes within the Indian society. Colonial education policy in its effort to impart education to Indians majorly helped Indian Upper-caste intelligentsia to emerge. With its liberal principles and educative measures, it could also help people from the lowest rungs of the social ladder to familiarise themselves with education. We could see social revolutionaries like Phule and Ambedkar (among others) hailing from the subaltern castes being introduced with colonial education, who revolted against the unjust socio-cultural practices and redefined the notion of freedom, human dignity, equality and democracy. It is this very moment where one could also witness the inception of modern and rational thinking shaping up the idea of India, and modern-day Maharashtra we see today is no exception to it. In this paper, an attempt is made to map colonial intervention into the Maharashtrian society and provide a critical commentary on the social and political conjuncture of colonial Maharashtra. While presenting the critical commentary, the paper emphasises on the formation of caste relations and subaltern/Dalit response as the most significant points of breaks in the making of modern Maharashtra.

Keywords: Colonial rule, Colonial Maharashtra, Caste system, Subalterns, Dalit, Religion.