



Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj's Role of Social Justice

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About Shahu Maharaj-

Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj (June 26, 1874 - May 6, 1922), known as Shahu Bhosale, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Shahu of Kolhapur and the fourth Shahu, was an Indian social reformer and Chhatrapati of Kolhapur (A.D. Between 1884-1922).⁽¹⁾ During the British rule, Shahu Raja made efforts to bring justice to the common people and for the social upliftment of the Bahujan Samaj. He gave impetus to the social change. Maharaj was given the title of "Rajarshi" by the Kurmi community of Kanpur.⁽²⁾

Concept of social justice

Social justice means, 'It is the creation of an egalitarian and non-exploitative society. 'The concept of social justice is moving towards an egalitarian society. In this broad concept of social justice; following sub-components are included. For problems with representation, reservation, inequality, problem of education, joining the mainstream of society, etc. There are two types of social justice.

First, formal justice. Which is carried out by the judiciary by punishing the guilty persons as per the provisions of the Act. The nature of this justice is related to crime and law.

Second, informal justice. Which deals with morality and the political situation. Which is given by allocating the good and the bad available in the society by setting constructive and humanitarian criteria. It distributes resources and rights with proper criteria. This aspect of justice has to be taken into consideration while understanding the role of justice of Rajshri Shahu Maharaj's.

Introduction-

It has been 75 years since our country gained independence; We are all celebrating the 'Swatnryacha Amrut mahotsav'. But even today, no government has been completely successful in providing education, implementation of women's reservation, and jobs for the people at the grassroot level. Against this background, as a social reformer, the policy and role of Shahu Maharaj is very important. Ideology was inclusive of all elements. His thoughts were broad and life-oriented in all respects. He has touched all social, political, economic, educational and cultural aspects through his work. Overall, the work done by him is found to have an edge of social justice.

Rajshri Shahu Maharaj brought these changes in the society thoughtfully and diligently. For that he started infrastructure schemes in the economic sector and gave opportunities to the common man to progress in the social sector. To bring about this change, Shahu Maharaj started Satya Shodhak Movement, Co-operation Movement, Non-Brahmin Movement, Untouchability Abolition Movement etc. Active support was given to social movements. Of course, all these changes were consciously brought about by Shahu Maharaj. He says about this, "It is my principle to take special care of the weaker sections of the society over the stronger sections, and the aim of my administration is to bring about their maximum improvement and accordingly I have been working hard for the last 25 years."

Even when the British rule was in power in India, Shahu Maharaj enacted many progressive laws. If Shahu Maharaj's speeches and actions are studied, 'future generations will not believe

that there was such an egalitarian and just-loving king in India.' Such work was done by Shahu Maharaj. In the 20th century, recognizing the steps of time, Shahu Maharaj did a great job of creating a society based on equality by making laws against casteism, social disparity and undesirable customs in our land and implementing them. Shahu Maharaj worked to create a social system based on human values and social justice. These thoughts of Shahu Maharaj are today useful for social change.

Objectives of the Research paper-

1. To study the concept of social justice.
2. To study role of Shahu maharaja's for social justice.
3. Examining the impact of Rajarshri Shahu maharaj's role regarding social justice.

Research Methodology-

The descriptive and analytical method will be used according to the social science method for writing present research paper. Secondary tools will also be used for material collection, classification and analysis.

Role of Shahu Maharaj's on Education

Knowledge is the source of social progress, prosperity and power. Shahu Maharaj recognized that education is indispensable for the development of people from all walks of life. His academic work is very important in the overall work of Shahu Maharaj. Like Mahatma Phule he gave priority to education in the work of social reform. When Shahu Maharaj assumed power, the number of matriculate in the Bahujan Samaj was small. There were no primary schools in the village then. *The common people of Bahujan Samaj were living a life of ignorance and superstition.* Getting an education is not your job; That was the understanding of this society. Moreover, the monopoly of the Brahmin caste in the field of knowledge had been established since pre-British times. After coming to British India, he opened education for all castes.

Priority to primary education-

Shahu Maharaj also adopted the policy of getting higher education from primary education to educate this ignorant Bahujan Samaj. In 1844, there were rural schools in 122 villages of Kolhapur state.⁽³⁾ Kolhapur Sansthan started primary school in 1848. He wanted to build a higher education on a solid foundation with the spread of primary education. He was of the view that there should be at least one school in each village and it should be run by the majority of the people in the village. Teachers should have faith in education and this should give impetus to the education movement. For this, Maharaj started appointing teachers on salary.

According to an order of 1913, many primary schools were started in different villages from temples, chawdi, dharamsalas etc. The construction, repair and maintenance of the school building was entrusted to Patil, Kulkarni and the villagers. With this in mindset, he provided financial assistance to various educational institutions and individuals. Due to this, primary education was greatly developed in the state of Kolhapur.

Free education-

From 1880, England made primary education free and compulsory for children up to the age of 10. Inspired by this incident, Mahatma Phule had requested the British government to make primary education free and compulsory in the villages of India.

Women's education-

Shahu Maharaj took a strong stand for education for all women. He created various opportunities for women education. Going beyond book education, Shahu Maharaj has tried to empower women through action. Shahu Maharaj also took a revolutionary decision to impose a modest fine on parents who did not send their girls to school.

Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj granted fee waiver concessions to encourage women to pursue education. At the same time *highly educated women got jobs*. Women were appointed to positions of authority in the administration. *Granted scholarships for female students*. In order to inspire widows to pursue education, he *encouraged his own daughter-in-law Indumati Rani to pursue education*. Shahu Maharaj while advocating women education says, *"If a woman is educated, it will definitely help in the self-reliance of the family in raising and rearing."*⁽⁴⁾

Not Reservation; It's a representation-

The Constitution of India came into force on 26 January 1950. The Constitution of India provides for reserved seats for economically and educationally backward classes. It took another forty years for these reserved seats to be implemented. Next, the Mandal Commission came and their recommendations were adopted in the 1990s.

Against this background, the uniqueness of Rajshri Shahu Maharaj can be seen. Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj had enacted a law on reserved seats in Kolhapur a hundred years ago. He had reserved 50 per cent of the reserved seats in his state on 26 July 1902.⁽⁵⁾ This should be the first law on reserved seats in India. In this order, Shahu Maharaj has said that,

"The proportion of backward classes in the employment of institutions is low. Therefore, in order to alleviate this situation to some extent and to encourage the people of the Maharajah to pursue higher education in the Sansthan, the Maharajah has decided to reserve more and more seats in the Sansthan for this class."

"According to the policy, 50 percent of the vacancies from the date of decree will be allotted to backward class candidates. Such a maharaja has been allowed."⁽⁶⁾

In those offices where the proportion of backward people is now less than 50 per cent; The vacant space in that office will be given to the backward class Ismas.

Shahu Maharaj not only gave orders but also strictly implemented them in the state of Kolhapur and made progress for the backward classes. Next, the heads of each department should submit quarterly reports of the vacancies filled after the order. Maharaj was not only making decisions, but also strictly enforcing them. The work done by Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj to eradicate caste discrimination is well known. Maharaj did this by enacting laws and helping the backward castes in every possible way.

The role of the Maharaja was also clear in this regard. His role was to provide concessions and facilities to the backward classes so that caste discrimination would not escalate as a result. In this regard, he says, "take care of the backward, make special efforts for them, give them concessions but do not ignore the fact that the ultimate goal is to eradicate caste."⁽⁷⁾

Special Opportunity Principle-

In a society full of inequality, it is necessary to create inequality of opportunity and this inequality is legitimized by the reservation policy. Mahatma Phule also believed in this principle, so he suggested that the various selected castes should be given priority first and the advanced caste should be considered later. This will bring justice to a society that has remained socially, economically and politically untouchable for thousands of years. Mahatma Phule first mentioned this concept. After this, Shahu Maharaj implemented it directly. Later, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar carried this legacy by giving place to this policy in the Indian Constitution.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, while advocating the goal of equality, does not mean equality of opportunity, but goes one step further and says that the principle of special opportunity is included in equality. Constitutional provision of special opportunities, privileges and protection for the socially, economically, exploited backward group of individuals is required to drive their development. Only then will their ability to compete with the leading class of society increase for some reason. Although this principle of special opportunity seems to be inconsistent with the principles of equality, the real egalitarianists do not think so. Dr.



Babasaheb Ambedkar, while supporting the principle of special opportunity, has expressed the following opinion,

“The goal of egalitarianism is not to treat everyone equally, but to establish equality. Where all individuals are equal, treating some people unequally will create inequality. But to write like them is to oppose the goal of establishing equality. It is the custom of the egalitarian to treat inequality unequally and inequality unequally.”⁽⁸⁾⁽⁹⁾

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar incorporates the principle of special opportunity in his idea of equality and emphasizes social justice. In the Constitution of India, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Socially and Educationally Backward Classes etc. Concessions and protections given to communities for development. His inspiration lies in his concept of this kind of equality. His inspiration has come from the thoughts of Shahu Maharaj.

The noble intention of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. It should be embraced by the society, everyone should try to raise the social status of the weak by giving them the first opportunity. So true social justice can be established.

Conclusion-

The findings of this research paper can be stated as follows:-

1. With the *50 percent reservation policy* given by Shahu Maharaj, the number of backward castes seems to have increased by getting opportunities in administration jobs.
2. Shahu Maharaj's scheme of '*Free and Compulsory Primary Education*' enabled Dalit-Untouchables and children from all walks of life to get education.
3. Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj's policy on *women education* gave a boost to women education. With the rise of educational awareness among women, they entered the mainstream of education.
4. As Shahu Maharaj continuously provided educational and employment opportunities to the *marginalized and deprived castes*, the social status of those castes was raised to some extent.
5. Shahu Maharaj's attack on *caste system* and *caste discrimination*, which is a disgrace to humanity, and by making various laws and practical implementations, the severity of caste discrimination seems to have reduced.
6. Today, Maharashtra plays a leading role in education due to the foundation laid by Shahu Maharaj in building *educational institutions and hostels* across Maharashtra.
7. Shahu Maharaj was the king. However, he tried to hand over power to the people. That is, Shahu Maharaj was a king who advocated '*social democracy*'.

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