

## **A Study on Shahu Maharaj's Contribution to Women Empowerment in India**

**Mr. Ajay Dagadu Kate**, Assistant Professor, Adarsh College, Vita, Tal: Khanapur,  
Dist: Sangli, 9921453845, Email: [ajaykate1981@gmail.com](mailto:ajaykate1981@gmail.com)

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### **Abstract**

Shahu Maharaj did the work of Shri Mukti on two levels. One is the efforts made to educate men and on the other hand the laws passed by them to create an independent existence for women. Shahu Maharaj's work on Sri Mukti in the early nineteenth century is said to be the gateway to the Sri Mukti movement of the twentieth century. Modern Maharashtra was shaped by Phule Shahu Ambedkar's thoughts. The difference of Shahu Maharaj is that he has worked hard for women and their rights, which is a great contribution. In Maharashtra, Shahu Maharaj sowed the seed of women's power and worked to bring the reformation women out of the darkness of slavery and ignorance. Shahu Maharaj has done great work through the empowerment of women to bring the economic development of the country. For the empowerment of women, Shahu Maharaj has raised their pride by raising freedom movements and trying to bring them into the flow and bring them to all areas of the country. During Shahu Maharaj's time there were many social reformers but Shahu Maharaj has done some special work for women in which he has contributed greatly to the economic empowerment of women.

Key words: Shahu Maharaj, Women Empowerment, contribution, economic and social, Modern Maharashtra, reforms etc.

### **Introduction:**

Shahu Maharaj has done very important work for the empowerment of women in India. Women have become the pillars of society by performing various roles in day to day life with ease. Sometimes loving daughter, sometimes doting mother, sometimes competent companion, she plays various relationships very skillfully and tenderly. However, in many parts of the world, society seems to be ignoring them. Also, women are largely victims of social inequality, oppression, economic dependence and other social abuses. Since time immemorial these restrictions on women have been hampering their personal and professional development. To bring dignity to women in the society, Art of Living has launched women empowerment programs that will lead to self-esteem, inner strength and constructive development of women at various levels of the society. Because of these programs, women are now seen to be overcoming all odds and becoming leaders in terms of their skills, confidence and utility. An early ruler of Kolhapur State and a great social reformer. Primary education, caste discrimination-prevention, untouchability-prevention etc. Rajarshi devised an educational policy that developed the common man and placed him at the center. He made special attempts to bring about harmony among castes and religions through his educational and social policies. These efforts to build a society without religion and caste are especially important in view of today's situation. Shahu Raje is the symbol of all social unity. By going beyond the walls of language, region, caste, religion and race in the matter of education, Rajarshi awakened the society which was mired in ignorance. He worked to make it capable of moving towards development. Inspired by this educational work, from Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil to Dr. Up to Panjabrao Deshmukh many education evangelists continued the education movement empowering marginalized communities all over Maharashtra. Kings are recognized as pioneers of social, educational and cultural revolutions. Rajarshi was of

the opinion that public education is the foundation of democracy and unless the entire society is enriched with education, the idea of representative democracy is meaningless. To follow the path shown by him is still a challenge for the rulers and the ruling class.

### **Problems of the Study:**

Shahu Maharaj's contribution to women empowerment in India and women's problems are very closely related and women have faced many problems. Shahu Maharaj made many efforts to empower women economically, socially, politically, religiously, culturally and legally by empowering the problems of women in all areas, but at that time they were facing many problems in many areas. While empowering women, Shahu Maharaj felt it was very important to educate women, so he opened the knowledge base of education to women and educated them. A very important part of Shahu Maharaj's work for the empowerment of women was the empowerment of women in all sectors and his efforts to bring women into the stream of economic development. Women had to face many problems to get education at that time. Empowerment is a multi-faceted processual creative flow concept and any social element has to bring the ability to bring social recognition, dignity, freedom, equality and justice to the expected exploited society element to eliminate inequality in the society, poverty, gender, color, class, race, religion, etc.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

Shahu Maharaj's contribution to women empowerment in India is the main objective of the research and some specific objectives are given by the researcher as follows. In this, empowerment of women in all fields, especially economic, social, political, religious, cultural and legal fields is the main objective of the research and some specific objectives have been mentioned by the researcher while writing the said research paper, which are given below.

1. To Study the Contribution of Shahu Maharaj in Women Empowerment In India.
2. To Study the Women Empowerment and Education.
3. To Study the Women Policy for overall development.
4. To suggest the remedies.

### **Significance of the Study:**

Mahatma Phule's philosophy of education was precisely grasped by Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj and accelerated the process of social transformation in the first decade of the twentieth century. He was a visionary king who implemented the concept of 'right to education'. In the progressive movement of Maharashtra, the name of Raje Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur State comes to the fore as a symbol of social justice, equality, brotherhood and freedom. Rajarshi Shahu did the work of destroying the caste differences in the society and bringing the marginalized into the mainstream. Rajarshi has made invaluable contribution in all fields of social, economic, art, sports. His work in the context of education is particularly important. One hundred years ago, the importance he gave to education, the concept of right to education, is a historical work. Mahatma Phule opened schools for underprivileged boys and girls in Pune and insisted on free and compulsory primary education before the British Government's Hunter Education Commission; but this wave of education thought continued to wane. Mahatma Phule's educational philosophy was exactly captured by Rajarshi Shahu. As education is the key to equality, Rajarshi wanted to spread the message of education from village to village for the upliftment of the people, the development of their innate wisdom and the sanskars of the mind. Since 1913, Shahu Maharaj was thinking seriously about making primary education free and compulsory for his subjects in his

state. Further, on September 21, 1917, he issued a manifesto of the Compulsory Education Act. Education is the tool of social change and Shahu Maharaj had the goal of creating a society free from exploitation through education.

**Scope of the Study:**

The whole of India is a scope of the present research and in this it is seen that Shahu Maharaj's efforts from the point of view of public awareness of female education and the efforts made to empower them economically, socially and politically as well as culturally can be seen as a scope of this research. Rajarshi enacted the Compulsory Primary Education Act so that all the citizens of the Kolhapur state become literate and able to realize their status and achieve progress. He insisted that parents should send their children to those schools, not just those who run away from school. He forced the parents about this. Fines were imposed on those who did not send children. The first new compulsory school was started on March 4, 1918 in Chikhli village. This law was implemented with difficulty. Primary schools were started in every village with general population in the Sansthan. Shahu Maharaj made special provision for expenditure on primary education. Rajarshi focused on primary education to lay a strong foundation for the edifice of education; He also emphasized on secondary and higher education. Special attention was given to Rajaram High School and Rajaram College. An order was passed that Shiv Shiv should not be observed in government schools and students of all castes should be seated together. Schools which do not comply with this order have been threatened to stop financial aid (grants) and other concessions. Rajarshi followed the principle that public education is the foundation of democracy from primary education to higher education, so every caste should provide good education to its men and women. Rajarshi established different hostels and schools for boys and girls of different castes. Since the backward castes do not have much interest in education and because of this there is no possibility of getting a government job after getting education, Shahu Maharaj took a revolutionary decision to reserve 50 percent of the government

**Period of the Study:**

In order to research this, the researcher Shahu Maharaj's economic, social, political, religious, cultural and legal empowerment of women in India is an important part for which Shahu Maharaj worked from 1884 to 1922. Hence the researcher has chosen the said period.

**Limitation of the Study:**

One of the limitations of this research paper is that the researcher has selected only women's empowerment among the many works of Shahu Maharaj to research this. Shahu Maharaj has worked for social work, agricultural work, water management, industrial development, social movement, economic policy, social welfare policy, justice to disadvantaged groups, caste system, religion system, race tradition, etc. Shahu Maharaj has worked for many of the factors given above, in which the researcher has chosen only the empowerment of women in all fields as the research topic, which shows the limitation of the research.

**Research Methodology:**

To do this research, the researcher has used secondary research, in which many secondary resources such as internet annual reports, government publications, university libraries, research papers, articles, journals, news papers, managing magazines, periodicals, reference books, serial books, etc. have been used. In this the researcher has completed the said research using descriptive analysis method.

**Research Method:**

While reviewing the work done by Shahu Maharaj regarding women empowerment in India, researchers have completed the said research paper using descriptive analysis method. In this the researcher has used many contextual secondary researches.

### **Results and Discussion:**

Shahu Maharaj was especially insistent for the education of the girl child. The then caste system did injustice to Shudras and all women by denying them the right to education; But the Kolhapur Institute's approach to women's education was fundamentally progressive. He provided free facilities through his court for backward caste mature women who wanted to get education. He maintained a liberal vision in the matter of higher education for girls. He gave free education to all the girls studying in Rajaram College. He provided financial assistance to many aspiring youth from marginalized communities for higher education. Not only in the Kolhapur institute but also outside the institute, Rajarshi generously gave donations and scholarships to students and institutions. In the first decade of the 20th century, Mahatma Phule's philosophy of education was grasped by Rajarshi. Rajarshi made Kolhapur an effective center of truth-seeking society and spread the wave of education throughout Maharashtra. Therefore, the poor and brilliant students of Maharashtra started rushing to Kolhapur for education with hostel facility in Kolhapur. The situation remains even today. Rajarshi's rule was a dispossessed people-centered one. His thoughts and work with the contemporary situation are guiding and of social interest. His reformist educational and social policies are a hundred years old. Shahu laid the foundation of education with hostel facilities in Maharashtra. Provided education, accommodation and food for children of all castes. Currently there is a need for developmental renewal of this method of education. Considering Rajarshi, efforts should be made to bring the present deprived section, which has come out of the original stream of education, into the same stream. There is a need to effectively implement Rajarshi's reformist views on girls' education. Shahu gave importance to compulsory primary education through mother tongue in his educational policy. The current policy is to put mother tongue as secondary, so although the quality of students is increasing, the basic content of knowledge is not being exposed to the students.

### **Shahu Maharaj and Women Empowerment:**

Along with untouchability, Shahu fought caste discrimination till the end. He legalized inter-caste marriage as a panacea for caste discrimination (1918). He initiated many inter-caste (Dhangar-Maratha) marriages. It also promulgated the Registration of Marriage Act to prevent child marriage. Divorce and widow remarriage were legally recognized. He also passed a law protecting women from physical and mental abuse in the family (1919). Free education facilities were created for girls and women from backward classes. Along with social reforms, Shahu encouraged agriculture and industries. Many agricultural and industrial exhibitions were held. Experiments were carried out on plantations of tea, coffee and rubber on Panhala. Markets like Shahupuri, Jaisingpur were established for agricultural produce. Therefore, Kolhapur became famous in the country as a jaggery market. Shahu laid the foundation of the factory in Kolhapur. He promoted the modern textile industry by establishing Shahu Mill. The Radhanagari Dam built by Shahu became an initiative that would transform the Sansthan in the field of agriculture. By building this largest dam in the kingdom, he made his kingdom Suglam-Suflam. Shahu ushered in the co-operative movement by passing the 'Co-operative Institutions Act' (1913). In

recognition of Shahu's social work, the Kurmi Kshatriya Sabha at Kanpur awarded him the title of Rajarshi (1919). His work created an image of him as the savior of the downtrodden, the king of the ryots. This king maintained his vow to awaken the ignorant Bahujan society till the end. In his last days he was exhausted by the accidental death of Chiranjeev Shivaji II (1918) and also suffered from diabetes. Finally, he died in Mumbai at the age of forty-eight due to a heart attack. After him, his son Rajaram Maharaj ascended the throne of Kolhapur.

#### **Grants for Education:**

Before India's independence, there was a hierarchy in Indian society. In it, the upper class wanted to be freed from British slavery but wanted to subjugate the lower class. The Bahujan class was trying to free itself from the slavery of the upper castes but wanted to keep the women of their households as slaves. Considering the descent of the upper castes, Shahu Maharaj made educating women an important part of his and his court's affairs. At that time, Shahu Maharaj had implemented the Compulsory Primary Education Act in the institution. For this he had spent one lakh rupees from his treasury in which his main objective was to achieve empowerment of women through inclusion of education. Shahu Maharaj spent one lakh rupees for the education of the people in the Bombay area during the British period, which was a part of Sindh, Gujarat and Karnataka, especially from the point of view of empowerment and financial empowerment of women, Shahu Maharaj's work is highly honored even today. The work of Shri Mukti done by Shahu Maharaj was world class. At a time when liberal Sri Vadi, Marxist Sri Vad, Jhal Vaadi Sri Vad and Socialist Sri Vad were arranged at the global level, Shahu Maharaj had expressed the opinion that the work of Shri Mukti was fitting in Liberal Sri Vad. If we look at the Indian level, there are three eras, in which the first era was occupied by male reformers, the second era was the era of Shri Samantha and the third era was the era of Shri Jagurti. Total Shahu Maharaj worked in three eras.

#### **Women's Liberation and Laws:**

If there is a need to enact laws to give freedom to women, Shahu Maharaj has done it. Shahu Maharaj had made revolutionary laws for the rights of women. In the year 1947, Shahu Maharaj passed the Widow Remarriage Act. In 1901, there were fifteen thousand five hundred widows under 5 years of Brahmin caste, three lakh 25 thousand widows under 15 years of age and 25 lakh 40 thousand widows under twenty five years of age were considered by Shahu Maharaj to re-examine widows in the Sansthan. Henceforth, Shahu Maharaj proposed remarriage to his daughter-in-law Indumati. The Inter-Caste Inter-Religious Marriage Act was passed by Shahu Maharaj on 12 July 1919. He raised the age of marriage of a girl from twelve to 14 years in his institutions. Shahu Maharaj passed a separate law that girls do not need to take their parents' permission for marriage after the completion of eighteen years. In independent India, such a law was passed in 1955. This shows how far Shahu Maharaj's work dates back. Shahu Maharaj enacted many laws for women's education as well as marriage and gave women a better opportunity and position in the society.

#### **Development of Women:**

Shahu Maharaj has empowered women how to enrich women in all aspects. Accordingly they have accomplished anything. Shahu Maharaj's work in all-round development of women can be seen from the fact that he supported women's political participation and sent two women, Krishnabai Kelavkar and Dwarkabai Kelavkar, as his representatives to the National Congress session in 895. It was Shahu Maharaj's concern that women should strive in all fields to be economically and socially as well

as politically and culturally empowered. Empowerment of women was an important issue for Shahu Maharaj. Shahu Maharaj's love of liberalism was not complete without his daughter-in-law Rani Indumati. Rani Indumati was widowed at the age of eleven. Defying all the norms of that time, he arranged education at Sontali. In order to inculcate the culture of equality in Queen Indumati, his companion Maharaj took four girls from different castes with him at that time and Shahu Maharaj tried to give Indumati an all-round education instead of just book education. Shahu Maharaj wrote some letters to Indumati in which he told Indumati to take care of those who are with him and the importance of education. Indumati's life was Shahu Maharaj's laboratory for reforming. Shahu Maharaj had sown the seeds of Shri Shikshan in the early 19th century, and today the direction of female education in Maharashtra should have been more advanced, but even after all these years, Shahu Maharaj assured that it is necessary to try to change this picture by pointing out that even after so many years, there is no promising picture in the state, especially in the rural areas.

**Objectives of Third Women's Policy:**

1. For all-round development and empowerment of women in Maharashtra, it is necessary to inculcate a natural approach and change the patriarchal mentality and make efforts to strengthen the relationship between men and women.
2. In order for women to live their lives according to their priorities, it is necessary to provide equal opportunities in all sectors and provide them with the necessary nurturing environment and tools to achieve their goals.
3. Supporting women to effectively combat increasing violence on the basis of religion, race, caste, power and region, and implementing preventive measures to prevent violence from occurring.
4. It is very necessary to make a conscious effort to promote the interests and rights of all women in the society in the decision-making process at all levels of government.
5. Efforts must be made to rehabilitate single women devadasi prostitutes women folk artists women and tritiyapanths who have been thrown out of the mainstream of society.

**Suggestions:**

1. To take preventive measures to free women from the undesirable practices that do injustice to them
2. Due to the unequal structure of the society, special efforts must be made to eliminate injustice against women belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as well as Freed Castes and Nomadic Tribes and minority groups.
3. It is necessary to strive for the rights of working women in the unorganized sector.
4. It is essential to create a violence-free and safe environment at home as well as at the workplace for women to realize their full potential.
5. In order to understand the extent to which women have progressed compared to men, there is a need to prepare a Gender Inequality Index according to international policy. For that, the state level index will be regularly revised as per the government's human development index based on the following criteria, which includes the following factors.
6. There is a need to include women's education, women's health, economic empowerment and sources of income and women's participation in the labor market in a proper manner and prepare a gender inequality index as per international policy.

**Conclusion:**

The fundamental rights and entitlements provided by the Indian Constitution are an important milestone and foundation for the development of women. Similarly,

provision has been made in the constitution to make special laws for women and weaker sections of the society. The attitude of the society and the government towards women has remained mainly as beneficiaries of welfare activities. Empowering women is an integral part of the women's development process. The principle that women could not be an integral part of the development process as per the Indian Constitution has been ignored. Women played an important role in the national independence movement as well as in the movement for the rights of the weaker sections, caste customs, eradication of inequality, workers' peasant movements, social reforms, productive processes. Even though there is an increase in education in the post-independence period, the expected participation of women in the overall socio-economic political life does not seem to have increased. Family and social insecurity, unemployment, migration, lack of healthcare and other day-to-day facilities have started to affect women and children. Lack of drinking water, poverty, malnutrition, infant mortality rate, some women's diseases, decreasing number of children, sale of women and girls are seen as violation of human rights of women. As our country has adopted the policy of liberalism for the last several years, there have been major changes in the economic and social structure. It is necessary to reach these fruits of development to a greater extent, especially to women, but it is a big problem that they have not reached at present.

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