

**Shahu Maharaj: Perspective on Education and Educational Reforms**  
**Kirti S. Kurane**, Asst. Prof. (CHB) Department of English, The New College, Kolhapur.  
Mob. No.- 8459467692, Email- [kirtikiku20@gmail.com](mailto:kirtikiku20@gmail.com)

---

**Abstract:**

Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj was a democratic king of the Kolhapur state in Maharashtra. He was the king of people in a true sense. He was coronated as a king of Kolhapur presidency in 1894 and graced the throne until 1922. His work for his people covers an immense part of the Indian history of social reform. This research paper focuses on the contribution of Shahu Maharaj in the educational alteration of people in society.

**Key Words:** education, social, backwards, caste, religion, reform etc.

**Introduction:**

Education is the basic right of every human being. It is the base for creating and living a well-cultured life. Education enlightens man and makes him capable of changing the world in a better way. These and such were the thoughts that were blooming in the minds of a great human being, Chh. Shahu Maharaj, who later made them become reality with his great efforts. Shahu Maharaj is one of the leading personalities who enlightened the society with their reformative strategies.

Chh. Shahu Maharaj developed the importance of education among his subjects, especially the poor and backwards. He held education as an important tool to uplift the destitute and quarantined people to an equal layer of society. He promoted education among people by introducing various educational acts and schemes.

**Educational Reforms by Shahu Maharaj:**

The society back then was an unequal division of people into classes on the basis of their castes. Brahmins were at the top of this layer and thus, were enjoying the higher place in society. For them, all the other non-Brahmins were lower and mean people that could never match their status. The people from lower strata of society were not aware of the benefits of education. They were underprivileged due to the lack of knowledge that only education could provide. Shahu Maharaj announced free and compulsory primary education for all children in his state in 1917. The act was passed regarding this program and the parents were fined Rs.1 one for not sending their children to school at the end of every month. In this way, the parents were forced to send their children to school regularly. Shahu Maharaj invested Rs. 100,000 for this mission of educating every single child of his state. An educational inspector was appointed to submit the regular report regarding this. The main objective was to educate every child in the society to make him able to cast off the destitution. An educational tax was then applied to the professional service providers like doctors, officers, money-lenders etc., whose income was more than Rs. 100 per month. The objective behind this was to meet the cost of expenditures of free and compulsory education.

Though the primary education was made free for the students in the state, it was not possible for the students to continue with their education in future. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj started offering the help in the form of scholarships and free-ships to such students. This attracted the scholar students who were willing to pursue higher studies. Dr B. R. Ambedkar is one of the examples whom Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj inspired and supported to complete their further education. The students were sent to various places like Pune, Madras (Chennai), Bombay etc. in order to pursue higher education.

Not only the conventional, but professional education and training was also the focused field that Shahu Maharaj contributed to. The establishment of the King Edward Agricultural Institute, Kolhapur was made for educating the training the students in agriculture. New innovations in this field were made familiar to the students to improve the future of agriculture as well as of themselves.

In the patriarchal society and culture like India, it was difficult back then even to raise the question of women's education and equality. The great initiative taken by Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule proved to be a revolutionary reform in Indian history. Shahu Maharaj preceded this very vision of educating women and the making them a powerful being in society. The Act of Compulsory and Free Education exclusively included girls as well. An order was passed by Maharaj to reward the teachers from the schools that girl-students passed the academics in. The training college for women was also established to prepare more female teachers who were then made to teach girls in the schools. Along with boys in the state, girls were also equally supported with scholarships and free-ships for gaining their higher education in different field. Krushnabai Kelavkar, a female scholar, was sent to London for acquiring the professional education in the field of Gynecology.

Along with funding and supporting education for the students of different castes and communities, Shahu Maharaj ensured for the lodging of the distant students. The Victoria Maratha boarding house was the student's hostel that was established in 1907. Many other hostels were established for providing the lodging facility to the students from different castes and communities. He donated Rs. 4000 for the construction of Muslim Boarding as well.

A Brahman priest refused to cite Vedic rites for Shahu Maharaj as the king was not a Brahmin but Kshatriya. The reason he gave for this was that Vedokta rites were reserved only for Brahmins, for Shudras, Puranokta hymns were supposed to be cited. Despite being a king, Maharaj was treated by the priest as a Shudra as the king was not the biological descendant of Shivaji Maharaj. This matter had a great impact on Maharaja's establishment of Vedic school for the uneducated and deprived strata of the society. Shahu Maharaj's objective behind this initiative was to make the non-Brahmins aware of all the Shastra and Puranas of Hinduism, and to remove the monopoly of Brahmins over them. These schools were open to the students from all castes in the society. Later, he established a Sanskrit school for all to learn Sanskrit language so that the non-Brahmins could easily understand the cultural heritage of the religion with the help of the language.

**Conclusion:** Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj was one of the leading social reformers during the British rule. His revolutionary thoughts and reformative policies changed the ugly face of unequal contemporary society. His urge for social reformation was, and still, is unmatched by any king or so. He started his work of alteration from the very base, i. e. the lower-class people. He thought education the ultimate medium to filter the society which was full of inequality, untouchability, and inhumanity. His extraordinary efforts to enlighten people with the flame of education changed the life of the socially and economically backwards. It took the work of social reformation even further, through the medium of the great souls like Dr Ambedkar, who fought for the upliftment of the socially backward and disadvantaged people till the end. It was Shahu Maharaj who supported and encouraged these great souls like Dr Ambedkar to take his legacy of social and educational reform even further.

**References:**

1. Dr Jadhav, R. (ed.): Rajarshi Shahu Gaurav Granth (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), Ministry of Higher and Tech. Edu. (Maharashtra), 2016.
2. Kumbhar, V. M: Education for Social Change and Economic Upliftment: Views of Raj. Chh. Shahu Maharaj, Int J Recent Sci Res 9(3.) pp 25,000-25,002

**Web:**

1. <https://www.recentscientific.com>
2. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>