

# छत्रपती राजर्षी शाहू महाराजांची राष्ट्र उभावणीत भूमिका

संपादक  
प्राचार्य डॉ. महादेव गव्हाणे



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राजवैभव थोर असेल,  
पण मी रयतेशी  
वचनबद्ध आहे.  
ती वचनबद्धता  
त्या वैभवाहूनही  
थोर आहे.

— राजर्षी शाहू महाराज



अरुणा प्रकाशन, लातूर

१०३, ऑफिस कॉम्प्लेक्स - अ, खर्डकर स्टॉय, औसा रोड,  
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## Attitude of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj towards Brahmanism

□□□

Shrikrishna Panchal

### Introduction:

In 17<sup>th</sup> century British East India company Landed in India as trader. Mughal emperor Jahangir granted them to do trade and permitting the English to erect a factory at Surat. but with the more economic power, better weapons and a certain European confidence which allowed them to slowly permeate into the Indian subcontinent till it was ruling the huge nation and in 1757-64 they become the ruler of India. There are lots of disadvantage of British rules but we cannot ignore some advantage which helps India to inter into modern age. One of them is social reform which was mostly against "Brahmanism". When the British came to India, they introduced the English language as well as certain modern ideas. These ideas were those of liberty, social and economic equality, fraternity, democracy and justice which had a tremendous impact on Indian society. As a consequence, several individuals and movements sought to bring about changes in social and religious practices with a view to reforming and revitalizing society. Time has recorded many reformers, one of them being Rajarshi shahu Maharaj. He was one of the great reformer who wise and active to bring changes in society.

There were 563 princely states in India before they were integrated into the Indian union during the British rule. All of them were loyal and supportive to the British. None of them dared to rebel against British. But the two eminent Princes, Chhatrapati Shri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur and Sayajirao Gaykawad of Baroda differed from others and thought of utilising the position to champion the right of untouchables and work for their emancipation. Shri



Shahu Maharaja in particular was much touched by the condition of the depressed. In one hand he was reforming the society not only in material manner but also mentally and other hand he was facing to social, religious power forces who wanted status quo. Many problems of society were originally connected with these social, religious powers. Those who wanted to secured and centralized power in their hands. Generally we use the term "**Brahmanism**" for this mentality and social power struggle.

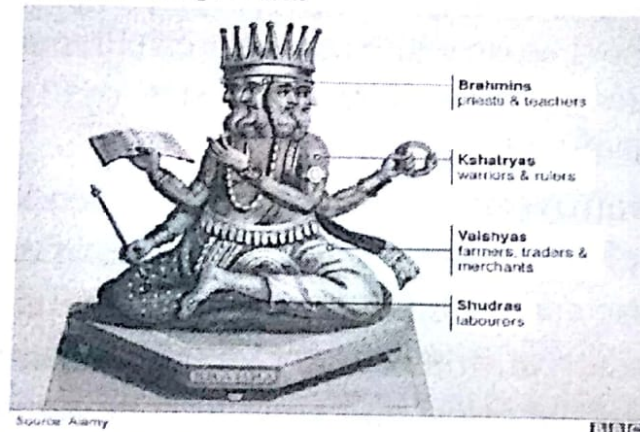
### **What is Brahmanism?**

Some time we used the term Brahmanism for upper class. no doubt that this term is related to the upper class. But when we focused our approach on the thoughts of our social leader they see Brahmanism as narrow mentality or they use the term for who considered themselves as god of earth and exploit the lower people. According to the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, "The extreme fertility of the soil in India, its rich productions, the proverbial wealth of its peoples, and the other innumerable gifts which this favoured land enjoys, and which have more recently tempted the cupidity of the Western nations, no doubt, attracted the Aryans, who came to India, not as simple emigrants with peaceful intentions of colonization, but as conquerors. They appeared to have been a race imbued with very high notions of self, extremely cunning, arrogant and bigoted. Such self gratulatory, pride-flattering epithets as "Arya, Bhudev, etc with which they designated themselves, confirm us in our opinion of their primitive character, which they have preserved up to the present time, with, perhaps, little change for the better. The aborigines whom the Aryans subjugated, or displaced, appear to have been hardy and brave peoples from the determined front which they offered to these interlopers. Such opprobrious terms, as Shudra 'Insignificant' Mahari- 'the great foe', Antyaj, Chandal, etc. with which they designated them, undoubtedly show that originally they offered the greatest resistance in their power to their establishing themselves in the country, and hence the great aversion and hatred in which they are held." (Ref. – Mahatma Phule Samagra Vangmay, page no. 72, 1st Edition, 1969)



In different way we can see the cast system to understand "Brahmanism". This is authorized by our holy texts. The caste system is a four-fold categorical hierarchy of the Hindu religion - with Brahmins (priests/teachers) on top, followed, in order, by Kshatriyas (rulers/warriors), Vaishyas (farmers/traders/merchants), and Shudras (labourers). In addition, there is a fifth group of "Outcastes" (people who do unclean work and are outside the four-fold system). This system is ordained by Hinduism's sacred texts (notably the supposed source of Hindu law, the Manusmriti), it is thousands of years old, and it governed all key aspects of life, including marriage, occupation and location. Caste-based discrimination is illegal now and there are policies instead for caste-based affirmative action (or positive discrimination).

Brahma and the origins of caste



(Photo courtesy: BBC)

The cast system was legal and authentic in 19th century. Base of this system was/are sacred texts, Hindu laws. They used to misinterpret the Hindu laws in society to rule social realm from the top of social hierarchy. AS a result ninety per cent of the society was powerless, wealth less and living under the shadow of exploitation.

### Shri Shahu Maharaj and Brahmanism:

Shri Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj was a great king in British rule. He was king of his own kind but he considered to be more of a social reformer then a king. During his time there were many problems in society. This originated from a rusty mentality and rotten ideas. The mentality of Brahmins producing the problems and they demands to rules the state by the manusmriti.however Maharaja

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was not against Brahmins but Brahmanism and Brahminical ways and their half-hearted reforms. The plea for running governments on the principles of Manusmriti were out rightly rejected by Shahu Ji Maharaj. He wanted to destroy such social hierarchy and hegemony of Brahmins.

By shedding light on various aspects of Shahu Maharaj's personality as well as his thoughts and works one can understand attitude of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj towards Brahmanism.

#### **Vedokt controversy:**

The hegemony of religious was in hand of Brahmins from ancient time. Other cast or class were prohibited to recite ved mantras. Brahmin class pretend themselves as Bhudev. So they had the monopoly of reciting vedas. Vedokt controversy was not new to Maharashtra as during the period of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the dispute arose with Satara Naresh Pratapsingh (1837), reappeared with Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda (1896) and later with Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj.

The controversy erupted in 1901 when head priest of Kolhapur Princely state refused to recite the rites of vedas for Shahu Maharaj because according to him shahu Maharaj was adopted son and not Kshatriya. Immediately Shahu Maharaj took daring step he removed the priest and appointed new priest who was from non-Brahmin cast and honoured him by naming kshatra jagadguru. He believed that **"Inheritance did not come from the father, but inheritance has to be achieved by self-capability."** He soon became the leader of the non-Brahmin movement. In the process he became a supporter of **Satyashodhak Samaj** and **Arya Samaj**. Vedokt controversy brought a hornet's nest about his ears, but he was not the man to retrace his steps in the face of opposition. Where the king is treated like this, what will be the condition of common people? Shahu Maharaj took step forward and the policy of reservation was born.

#### **Reservation policy to break the hegemony:**

As per the Laws of Manu in Manusmriti 100% dignified jobs and services including those of temple priests were reserved



for Brahmins( Twice born) and people coming from Upper Castes. To create social justice he break the Laws of Manu. On 26 July 1902 Chhatrapati Shahu Issued the order from London to reserve 50% government jobs for lower cast. It was historic decision. He decreed, would be reserved for the backward classes. It was the beginning of what came to be called affirmative action'(reservation). According to Gazette of Kolhapure Princely State:

*"In this regard, His Highness orders that, of all the seats that go vacant from the date of this proclamation, 50% should be filled with the backward classes. In all the offices where backward class employees number less than 50%, all the next appointments should go to the backward classes."*

*After the publication of this order, the chiefs of each department should send a tri-monthly report of all the appointments to his highness.*

*Note – The backward classes should be understood as all classes except Brahmin, Prabhu, Shenvi, Parsi and other advanced classes.*

On the orders of His Highness,  
Nagesh Pandurang Bhide,  
Personal secretary  
(Rajarshi Shahu Gaurav Granth by Maharashtra State  
PageNo:1077)



(Photo Courtesy: <https://thesatyashodhak.com>)

When Shahu Maharaj took the power of Kolhapur State Brahmin were appointed in general administration around 60 of total 71. however only 10 of 500 clerical post given to the non-

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Brahmins. After the implementation of reservation policy only 35 brahmin left among 95 administrative post in 1912. He also issued the order in 1917 "the government Dalit employees should be treated with dignity and respects. The officers who are unwilling to follow this order should resign within six months". Chhatrapati Shahu was a true descendent of Mahatma Phule's Thoughts. The idea of reservation for non-Brahmins first mooted by Mahatma Jyotibha Phule in front of Simon commission in 1881. Shahu Maharaj did deeply respectful adaptation of Phule's living path.

### **Leader of Non-Brahmin Movement:**

Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj ran the legacy of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. He supported Satyashodham Samaj to create equality, free education for Dalits and women, demolish untouchability, widow remarriage etc. He was totally agree with Phule's thoughts what he wrote about education in "Gulamgiri". In early 19<sup>th</sup> century when the all educational rights were only to Brahmin. In 1912 he had made law for compulsory primary education and in 1917 he made it free. Before to make law he studied closely the situation in spread of education among his subjects. He found the following report data prepared in 1850. Community Students in English Schools Vernacular Schools Brahmin 47.46, Sheinvis 07, Prabhu 05, Maratha 03.04, Muslim 03, Oil Presser (Teli) 01.03, Ginjin 01, Kodale 01, Sonar (Goldsmiths) 03, Kesar - 02, Shilpi (Tailor) - 01, Others 03 - Total 71 59 (Note: - Vide Graham D.C.: The Statical Report of the Principality Of Kolhapur) He was the first India ruler to do so. Which villages had population above 500 he opened school there. When primary education was made free and compulsory, Kolhapur had only 27 schools with 1,296 students. By the time he died in 1922, Shahu Chhatrapati had helped build 420 schools which admitted more than 22,000 students. He also established hostels for different ethnicities and religions, including Panchals, Devadnya, Nabhik, Shimpi, Dhor-Chambhar communities as well as for Muslims, Jains and Christians. He established the Miss Clarke Boarding School for the socially quarantined segments of the community. Shahu introduced several scholarships for poor meritorious students from backward classes.

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The condition of dalit was terrible. They were not counted as human beings. This society was oppressed for years and lived a life of slavery. Shahu Maharaj wanted to change the condition of dalit to demolish the untouchability. To demolish inequality and untouchability he made law in 1917, subsequently untouchable could visit the hospital and get treatment. As long as the economic status of Dalits does not improve, their social status will not improve, so they stopped some traditions. He ended two particular practices which proved to be epoch-making. In 1917, he ended the 'Balootdari-Prathta', after which the untouchable got own land in return. While, in the year 1918 by making a law, he ended another old practice by the state 'Vatanadari', and immediately started land reforms and gave the Mahars the right to be landowners. In 1920 he noted that "I want to point out to all the leader of the community that it is desirable to break apart the caste discrimination, it is of course, keeping the caste is sin, this is a barrier in the path of patriotism, efforts should be made to overcome this, keeping this awareness in mind. Therefore, it is noteworthy that such councils should not be affected due to the increase in casteism, intensification of caste system." on 15 April 1920. at Udgary Maratha Residences at Kaushalya ceremony.

His entire life Shahu maharaj was trying to improve the social, economic status of Dalits as well as women. He worked for betterment of women. He didn't only spoke about women education he had established schools for women. He legalised the marriage of widow women in 1917 and made efforts towards stopping child marriages. He also stopped the devdasi pratha in his empire. He gave legal sanction Inter-Cast Marriage and Inter-Religious Marriage in 1919. Shahu Maharaj was committed to welfare the exploited class. He fought with Brahmins, upper class, British to made society better and create actual welfare state. He was described by his renowned biographer Shri A.B. Latthe as "The greatest Maharaja that ever sat on the thrown of Kohlapur and one of the powerful men that the nation ever produced in its long & brilliant history". He was real democrats within Monarchy. Now days we are talking



about democracy, Liberty, Equality, Justice and Social Justice but in 19th century even we clearly unknown about these values and Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharatra had established these values in his state. He had created democracy in monarchy for which we are striving today.

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