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Shahu Maharaj : A Modern Social Reformer

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Introduction: -

In India, some of the social Reformers gave very valuable and Impactful contribution in Social development. They have done great work to make constructive changes in society one of the very well-known and respectful personality amongst them is Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj. He was a royal King with Sympathetic approach, constructive mind and modern thoughts. He was well educated and that's why He know the importance and necessity of education. His thought process, ideology, value system, His opinions about various issues were very modern especially in that social context. So He has done great work in Kolhapur to improve living conditions of common people. Social Reforms Movement, women's movement played very effective role in Indian Society. Because of these movements, many wrong and Harmful Social traditions which were very bad for weaker sections in the society, were opposed by the people. Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj gave very effective direction to the Social Reforms Movement in India. So It is very necessary to give an account on contribution of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj as a Modern Social Reformer.

Objectives: -

Following are the objectives of this research paper.

- 1) To give an account on Contribution of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj in Social Reform Movement in India.
- 2) This paper also aims to give an emphasis on constructive work of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj in various Fields.
- 3) To underline modern approach of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj about various Social Problems.

Research Methodology:-

This paper is based on Secondary Data Collection.

Shahu Maharaj "A Modern Social Reformer: -

Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj was a King who Shaped Kolhapur with his modern thought process. He was a person, who have a progressive and liberal attitude towards weaker sections of society. In that days there were very wrong and Harmful traditions for women's and some of the castes, tribes in Indian Society, Because of these traditions and social situations. So Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj decided to improve the condition of such weaker sections of Society. He always advocated Social justice for all. He tried to remove all bad traditions who are harmful for society. He always took stand for social equality.

Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj knew that Knowledge is the source of power & prosperity. So He gave priority to Promotion of education among

the backward classes of the society. He always believes that there should be equal opportunities for all in Administration and every field in the society. But uneducated people cannot be able to get that opportunities. So He gave priority to educate the people.

Contribution of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj in various fields as a modern Social Reformer is as follows –

1) Women Empowerment :-

In 18th and 19th centuries, women were facing lot of problems in Society. They have to suffer a lot because of lot of restrictions in families and society. They were uneducated and had no right to get formal education. They have very low and inferior Social status. So their condition was really not good at that time. At that time there was very bad condition of widows, So Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj Supported Remarriages of widows.

Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj had great respect for women, so they tried a lot to improve the condition of women. They give priority to give equal status to women and Social Justice for them. In Kolhapur, He took an initiative to promote education amongst them. He motivated clever girl students for getting higher education. He was a great supporter of female education and a believer in women's progress, Shahu Sent miss Krishna Bai Kevlar to grant medical college, where she passed with honors. It was very big step, in the process of women empowerment. By doing this, he motivated the society to support women for formal education. In January 1902, he appointed her as assistant doctor in the A.E. Hospital on securing her a Scholarship open to native women. Shahu Sent her to England to improve her professional Knowledge and obtain a diploma in midwifery at Dublin.

There was Successful on her return in February 1903, She resumed her duties after an absence of 10 months. she was a clever woman who, at the instance of Shahu, and Participated in the congress Session as a woman delegate at Poona in 1895, She served the state very faithfully until 1924 in the A.E. Hospital. Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj always motivated people to give equal opportunities and respect to females in families and society.

2) Education :-

Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj was a Social reformer, who took an action initiative to spread all sections in the Society. Education is a key of Success. In Kolhapur, he motivated people to take formal education. He made Primary education compulsory. He tried to change the mindset of people toward education. He Started Schools and colleges in Kolhapur. He started Hostels for students for many Castes. This was very effective step for the social development of all sections of the society.

3) Social Reservation :-

At that time, there was a Strong influence of caste Discrimination in Society. There was very low status of people who belongs from so called

lower caste. They have no freedom to take Education, or choose profession. So they lived very poor life. So Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj believed that They must give equal opportunity to improve their condition. So he gave 50% Reservation to socially backward classes in Administration. It was a life changing decision for lot of people.

4) Social equality and Social Justice: -

Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj always stands for social equality and social justice. He treated all the citizens with equal social status and respect. He always motivated People to live the life with self – respect and treat others with Humanity. In his Speeches he always supported the concept of Social equality and Social Justice.

5) Agriculture :-

Rajarshi Shahu maharaj always supported farmers. He had very scientific and Modern approach towards Agriculture. He has made many Innovative experiences in farming. He applied an idea of planting tea and coffee in South Maharashtra. He prepared plans and programmes, which will be beneficial in droughts. He always gave priority for water conservation. In 1908 He made 'Bandhara' on River Bhagirathi and named it as Maharani Laxmibai Lake. He made Dams for people, who is still providing water for farming.

6) Industry: -

Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj gave Importance to Industrial development. In 1907 He started textile mill on the Co-Operative bases. He started technical school in 1903 for technique education. These initiatives played very useful role in providing employment to people in Kolhapur. Industrial Development was given priority by him. He started various Industries, and motivated youngsters to take advanced education in their fields and enhance their abilities. He started Rajaram Industrial Schools for professional training. He gave importance to start Co- Operative Society. He started 'The Kolhapur urban Co-Operative Society Limited' in 1913.

Conclusion: -

Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj was a great Social Reformer with His progressive and modern approach, he was given a great and constructive contribution in various fields.

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