

CHAPTER – III

CHHATRAPATI SHAHU'S : A PERSONALITY

H.H. Shahu Maharaja had camps at Secondary Capital Raibag from where he wrote letters example on 30th November 1904. He writes, "My dear Mr. Hill, I learn from the papers that H.E. Lord Curzon is expected to land in Bombay on the 9th proximo. I should very much like to be present on the occasion and personally to offer my congratulations not inconvenient to His Excellency the Viceroy I should like to come there by the 9th Proximo.

My visit would of course be of a private nature and no inconvenience would be caused to His Lordship in the matter of return visit as I know very well that His Lordship's stay in Bombay is to be so short.

I hope you also will be there at that time and I shall be able to have the pleasure of meeting you all there.

We are looking forward to the question of Imperial Service Troops being finally settled soon as Lord Curzon will shortly be here.

Mr. Hill, Governor of Bombay.

I think before you leave us every thing about the I.S.T.* will be decided.

Please remember me to Mrs. Hill.

And Lt. Col. W.B. Feerris, the Political Agent of Kolhapur, informs R. V. Sabnis 8th Decemiber 1904, the Diwan of Kolhapur writes, "My dear Sir, I return you the "Prakarn" ending with your vernacular No. 6177 dated 30th November 1904 on the subject of a demand for rent from the Chief of Vishalgad for the stable that used to stand on the opposite side of the road to his house. We have discussed the matter already and I have told you why I could not support the demand any more than I could a claim from the Chief for compensation. I think a modern binendi presents itself in the Chiefs letter of 1898, after offering to let the Darbar purchase the stables at what he considers a bargain, be concluded by saying that he is willing to abide by any decision in the matter H. H. may come to. I think on the strength of this it would place the Darbar in a dignified position if it closed the matter by a Shera to the effect that as the Chief has left it to His Highness to decide and as he has moreover removed the stable as desired there is now no question of compensation what was an untenable claim. H. H. on his part does

*I.S.T. denotes Imperial Troops

not propose to press any question of rent and therefore the correspondence of the incident are closed.

Believe me,

Chhatrapati Shahu's Personality:

Shahu's real father right from the childhood of his sons Abbasaheb took keen interest to educate them properly, Yeshwant Rao eldest son therefore at the age of 10, completed the study of course of vernacular std. IV and was acquainted with English. At that time he was very nicely trained in riding shooting and such other arts essentials as the son of Jahagirdar of his time. In the mean while the news of the death of Shivaji IV the Chhatrapati of Kolhapur was spread all over Maharashtra.

Naturally as Shivaji IV could not bear children the question to Kolhapur throne or Gadi became the immediate concern of Bombay Government and Kolhapur Darbar.

Maj. H.N. Reeves political agent of Kolhapur and SMCS, therefore took the cognizance of the situation in Kolhaupr and get permission from the Bombay Govt. to find out and select a suitable boy as an adoptee to the throne of Kolhapur Chhatrapatis Under the circumstances after taking the consents Queens Sawkarbai the widow of Shivaji IV. Maj. Reeves chose to request Abbasaheb

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Ghtagae the chief of Kagal for his younger son Bapusaheb as that would be more in conosance with the requirements of the Shastras.

To continue the lineage the Hindu couples, without a son used to adopt a suitable boy from other families equal or status. However the British rule which wanted to grab the whole country by hook or crook adopted during viceroyalty of lord Dalhosie the "Doctrine of lapse" to prevent Royal or houses from in India from adopting a boy from other families as their own.

But from the time of canning as vice royalty permission was again granted to royal houses for legalizing their hierarchy through adoption.

Even then adoptions in the royal houses were not possible without Direct or indirect consent and choice of the British Govt.

Again this precedent Maj. Reeves the political agent of Kolhapur asked Abasaheb to give three either of his sons and Abasaheb suggested the name of his eldest son Yeshwant Rao as he felt of his son the most suitable for becoming King.

Besides what Abasaheb conveniently put forth convince while the political agent as well as the concerned parties was a view that if the young son would became the Chhatrapati of Kolhapur, the Eldest would have to bear ultimately a inferior position and there

views were appropriately held up and pressed in through a letter to Bombay Govt. written by Hon. Reeves which he says.

“Abasaheb the Regent is willing to allow either of his sons to be adopted by Anandi Saheb but prefers to give the eldest in adoption if permitted by Government” Further in the same letter the eldest son Abbasahab tells me he is considerate obedient and generous with a fine sensitive nature. While fond of riding and amusement he is diligent at his lessons has a plenty of applications and shows natural talents.

The Govt. of Bombay it seems thought over the views thoroughly and communicated its opinion to the Govt. of India upholding the views of political agent in the following words.

“The Governor in Council therefore thinks that there is no sufficient reason why as recommended by his father the one should be choosen who appears to be likely to prove the better age will enable the earlier gratification of the desire of the people of Kolhapur to be again ruled by a Sovereign in full possession of the authority attracting to his position.” Thus after this much muddling only Yeshwant Rao’s selection for adoption to the Kolhapur Gadi became sure and certain.

Anandibai Saheb the widow of Shivaji IV received consent and approved for her plan of taking Yeshwant Rao in adoption from

Bombay Govt. on February 22, 1884 and with pomp and glory the adoption and thereafter installation ceremony were celebrated according to the Hindu custom on 17th May 1884. However letter of Reeves of the July 25, 1884 written to the chief secretary to the Govt. of Bombay throws light on the manner and question of selecting Yeshwant Rao For that great honour and after marth arrangement in the Kolhaur Darbar. Exactly two years after the constitution of the Regency he was adopted and the Govt of this state is still continued by a Regency administration on behalf of the minor Raja.

Shahu thus became the Chh. Of Kolhapur. But his minor age made him still to stay with guardianship of his own father. Thereafter arrangement were made to give him the best possible education in order to fit him in the position to which he had been raised soon after in consultation with the pol. Agent and Bombay Govt. P.S.V. fitz. assistant to the political agent and Krishna Bhikaji Gokhale the P.S. and the old teacher of Abbasaheb himself and tutor respectively from 29th Aug. and 17th Sept. 1884.

The study report of Mr. Pitz Gerald the details of subjectwise progress of maharaja getting up at 530 am regularly and follow the routine by starting dump bell exercise and fitz Gerald remarked of the maharaja as pain taking and anxious to learn.

Then Abbasaheb Ghtage was a man of progressive ideas and earlier felt to send his sons to England for education, but his personal tour to that country from 17th Sept to 25th Dec. 1885 brought a change in his views.

The Regent Made proper arrangements for the Education of Shahu and his other Son Bapusaheb Alias Kakasaheb and Dattajirao Ingle from Kagal under the tutorship of K. B. Gokhale and H. B. Gokhale respectively under the supervision, of P.S.V. Fitzgerald Assistant political was appointed as superintendent on Aug 24th 1884 by the government to prepare boy Raja for his education in England.

But later Abbasaheb, changed his mind in September 1885 and decided to send him to England soon the Superintendent, therefore relinquished the charge of his office in November 1885. Fitzgerald report on the progress of boy was interesting the boy was found shy though also "painstaking and anxious to learn". Indeed his shyness was a store of admirable qualities.

Abbasaheb Ghatge and col. J.W. Watson decided to send the boy to the Raj Kumar college Rajkot in January 1886 the boy raja and his companions together with tutor Gokhale and Buwasaheb Ingle went to Rajkot via Bombay by train and tonga when they reached Bombay Shahu was given a salute of 19 guns. Buwa sahib,

Ingale was good sportsman and a symbol of manliness and simplicity. At Rajkot he served as a companion to the Kolhapur teachers and boys.

No sooner did the boys join the college then Abbasaheb was taken seriously ill. The Kolhapur boys were therefore summoned home on March 19, 1886. Acting political regent expressed his wish that Shahu and Babusaheb should proceed to England when they were sufficiently instructed in the English language at Rajkot. Again the boy was sent to Rajkot after the summer vacation in November 1886 and boy and his companions visited Kathiwar, Junagad and the hills of Palitana which were full of lofty Jain temples. The climate of Rajkot did not suit his health of the Raja. He loved out door games wrestling was his forte and he exceeded in wrestling, drill shooting and riding. Sunday's he spent in riding horses and hunting yet he studied well. He and his companions gained praise from the examiners.

During the year 1888-89, C.H. Candy, principal of Rajkumar college acted in place of Macnaghten and was incharge upto December 1888. Candy was rude to Kolhapur boys and insulted then at every possible opportunity. Candy was incompetent to give lessons in English literature. In general Shahu disliked the treatment given to him by the Rajkumar college. So the new

guardian and tutor appointed was Stuart Mitford Frazer. I.C.S. a man of liberal views and dutiful disposition. He took charge of his work from May 22, 1889 at Kolhapur and training began on June 11, 1889 at Dharwad.

The period from 1889 to the year 1892 was spent in giving the boys sound instruction in several subjects. English, arithmetic, geography, elementary economics and others. The school met from 10 am to 1 pm and 2 pm to 3 pm they had drill for half an hour. They then played tennis or drove or walked. At dusk they generally practiced native fencing and gymnastics under a special instructor. After evening meal they prepared lessons for next day. The programme was so arranged that the boys might not find time for loafing and unwholesome conversations to which idleness tempted. Sundays and holidays they spent in hunting expeditions with Buwasaheb Ingle. Who was thoroughly experienced sportsman and fine old fashioned Maratha.

As regards the progress in Shahu's education Frazer observed in his report, "His highness the 'Raja' though still rather backward has done a satisfactory year's work and continually makes faster progress. He is not clever but he has very good common sense and fairly good memory added to which he is genuinely anxious to learn and take pains and interest in his lessons ." as regards Shahu

Frazer Observed that his characteristics were those of simple; generous affectionate and truthful person. Although he know the value of education he learned slowly from books but more from observation actions and experience. He was never a shirker, and when Frazer lectured on subject essential for his future career as a ruler, his interest evinced as he keenly desired to fit himself for his high position.

One of the most important events in the life of Shahu Chhatrapati took place on April 1, 1891. On that day the Maharaj was married to Laxmibai the daughter of Gunajrao Khanvilkar of Baroda and grand daughter of the sister of his highness Ganpatrao Gaikwad Baroda state.

At the age of 48, May 6, six am 1922 Maharaja passed way who was one of the greatest ruler in Indian history. The man who bravely faces his death is generally a man who has lived a useful life or who has spent his life for a great cause. The Maratha state never produced a greater and braver, more dutiful and more resourceful ruler than this towering personality.

He was deeply loved by his people and hated by the social to ries of India. Indeed he was an idol of thousand of his country man and the saviour of the suppressed and oppressed. A skillfull

organizer, a devoted ruler, a fearless royal revolutionary, Shahu was a prince among the social revolutionaries of India.

Shahu Maharaja was in the way the articulate voice of modern India in the words of Dr. Ambedkar "A Mukanayak" Leader of dumb i.e. shudras, providence did not give him a longer life. Yet he became the folk hero of Maharashtra in his life time he is still in the hearts of worker and peasants in the country. He was a charismatic leader though he did not live in olden days of idoltry he is almost being worshiped by the common people in the former state and he is still remembered with veneration by almost every man and women of the state.

None else in the present age had probably moved the soil of the earth so deeply as Shahu Maharaja by driving the plough of his all round intellect into religion, politics and sociology and driving it with all his authority. The people have already seen what is the result of all his efforts. But it is true that an intellectual awakening has taken place among many side tracked classes of man who found him a unique leader as it is also true that the maharaja indefatigable energy, his perseverance and his power to concentrate all his energies on the achievement of his goal was extra ordinary.

Maharaja had provided in his life ample material suggestive of many unknown laws in the science of human mind. The "Justice"

Madras said, "Shahu was a prince among men and man among princes. His magnetic figure, his robust optimism, the iron will of which he was a master, his kindly and generous disposition, marked him out as a true Maratha of the best and noblest type". Born at the other period justice continued, "He would have founded an empire and created a confederacy. The personal hold which he had over the people was phenomenal and reminded one of the palmy days of the Maratha emperors. The letter day awakening of the war like Maratha's their freedom from the snares of chitpawan Brahmins priests and their ability to assert their man hood was due to his teachings and his personal example."

Frazer his tutor said, Shahu was a rare character, he faced difficulties with courage and with high principle he was a true man, strong but with a tender heart, for all suffering and no son could have a fitter example before him to guide him. He uplifted the people at great cost to himself. "Thousands of his country men Fraser said, "must have felt that with him they lost sight which had begun to illuminate a world of new possibilities.

His loss to India is indeed hard to over estimate for as a social reformer he occupied a niche by himself among the ruling princes of India and gap caused by his death is to be measured not only by what he achieved but by the magnitude of the work which

still remains to be done. But he kindled a torch in the Maratha country. Which others must and I believe will its light can never now be extinguished and his name will not be forgotten and among the people he loved and served.

Shahu was indeed a man of boundless courage, phenomenal energy and strength. In all his dealings his very human and noble character was manifest. He felt more fellowship and brotherhood with the deserted and the downtrodden than with saints and with the privileged of society. To him, the liberation of the Depressed and the Oppressed was the highest goal of action; and the one great aim of his legislation was to give them full rights of equality and liberty. Neither threats nor open enmity could dissuade him his noble resolve. Without a doubt Shahu was more courageous than most of the Indian social reformers of his times.

As a practical man, Shahu knew the value of men and things and easily detected the vales of sycophants and the flattery of friends and the strategies of enemies. He suffered fools, but when flatterers took liberties with him, he, like the elephant in 'the story of the elephant and the cock', frightened them off unceremoniously. When driven to despair he used the tactics of tit for tat and rose to the occasion magnificently.

Shahu's was a grand personality. His face was, like the face / of Mahatma Phoolley, full of humanity. His eyes glowed with love of humanity which was denied to the suppressed and the underdog. His thick lower lip was suggestive of passion and pleasures which he enjoyed in his youth, but his generosity, wisdom and noble aim overcame the lust, and the love of power and pelf. Shahu believed more in love than in strength or power. That is why he could conquer even fierce animals. At Delhi, in February 1922, a tigress had killed the manager of the circus. On hearing the news, Shahu bought her and with the magic touch of his love turned her into a tame, docile and devoted domestic animal. It has been already noted how Shahu cheered and helped Rashingkar, a leader in the opposite camp, when he was on his death-bed. Tilak had threatened him with death. Yet he sent his men to Poona to bring Tilak to Miraj for treatment. Shahu said that his fight with Tilak resembled the fight between Prithviraj Chavan¹⁵ and his uncle who fought with each other ferociously on the battlefield, by daytime, but the same evening dined in the same plate at the call of the older man. Devoted to his wife and son, Shahu enjoyed a happy home life. It sustained him throughout his lifelong social conflicts he waged.

Shahu did not live between wine and women. Alcohol he did not consume in any form, not even in medicine. He preferred

abstinence to temperance. He may have been tempted, but he did not fall. The best field has weed. Yet in that respect he was better than most of the leaders who wickedly maligned him. Had Shahu been as blameless in character as Tilak, still he would not have escaped calumny. Tilak could not escape calumny so long as the British rulers of India maliciously tried to make him a Parnell. The real crime of Shahu was not his moral conduct. The leaders of the vested interests and the priests hated him not for his sins but for his virtues which were reflected in his mission for the liberation of the Depressed and the suppressed from social slavery, social inequality, and in his fight for human dignity, equal opportunities and human rights. What the Indian Republic has been fighting for, viz. transforming the political democracy into a social and economic one as, laid down in the guiding principles of the Indian Constitution, Shahu fought for fifty years ago.

Most of Shahus despisers and detractors were Brahmin lawyers, whose roofs were covered with the skin of their litigants and who had no real wish to make the world better. Their ideas of society and its range were narrow and selfish. They had knowledge without true wisdom and courage without moral heroism. They indulged in false ideas of holiness and in scriptural pride. Shahu

had his foibles and failings which will be burnt up in the furnace of time and history will honor him for his love of humanity.

Shahu was well read, well informed and always showed judgment, talent and astuteness in the discharge of his multifarious duties. As an administrator, he was able and efficient and was a delightful colleague to work with. He had appointed an Inspector of Orders to record and watch the execution of orders and disposal of complaints, petitions and schemes. He believed in modern agriculture and modern industrial development, and in building vast dams for irrigation and in starting co-operative societies to help the fanners and workers. On account of this stupendous work he was aptly called the Father of the Green Revolution in India! His strict rules governing the conduct of State officers, the service rules devised to weed out corruption and maladministration, the liberal and progressive legislations on devasthanas, the inheritance rights, the Kulkarni vatans, the abolition of Untouchability, equality of men before the law and the codification of the Hindu Law, all prove that Shahu was a great and successful administrator and ruler of his day.

It was Shahu's belief that the peace, progress and prosperity of India depended on the elevation of the Backward and Depressed Classes. He aimed at the integration and consolidation of the

national interests. It was the mission of his life to take these classes out of their morass, and he considered that his sacred duty to humanity. He experienced a sort of spiritual sentiment that goaded him on to fulfill this mission.

With this end in view, Shahu made his famous declaration: "To enthrone Indian nation, we must dethrone Brahminism" which divided society and bred ideas of highness and lowness and poverty for the masses on the basis of birth. He, therefore, strove to abolish the caste system and liberate the lower classes from mental slavery, social stigma and degradation. According to him, to dissolve caste was a necessity and to uphold caste was a sin. He, therefore, preached the need to foster the corporate and co-operative spirit. It was his conviction that any institution in the country, a Municipality or a village panchayat, would not be able to function smoothly and efficiently so long as it was not free from caste influence. He shouted at the top of his voice at conferences that it was shameless on the part of a leader to call himself a leader if he considered his countrymen and brethren as worse than coddung and beasts. "Those who take part in politics must treat men as men," he thundered.

In his own way Shahu, like Buddha and Ashok, tried to humanise religion. President V. V. Giri, delivering a speech in

Bombay on the occasion of Shahu's birth-centenary, appreciated Shahu's great services to the nation when he said that "Shahu was first and foremost a great emancipator and a true servant of the downtrodden."¹⁰ It was a fitting description of a great leader who said "Our rise depends upon the elevation of the masses."

Shahu's struggle for reducing the disparity between the privileged and the underprivileged was described by the leaders of the vested interests as casteism, a work of disharmony and disgrace. If a Brahmin thinks of removing this disparity between man and man, he is called a social reformer, but if non-Brahmin does it sincerely, he is denounced as a communalist who foments division in society.

Shahu often acted up to the instructions of the Resident under pressure and not with pleasure. He was an astute leader. While dealing with the British Government, he always pretended simplicity and artlessness. But under his simplicity and artlessness there was sagacity and astuteness. What Shahu wrote to Holkar was very suggestive of his shrewd and cautious nature.

Shahu advised Holkar that his outspokenness and straightforwardness in dealing with the British Government might be the cause of his ruin, and he added: "Virtue is not always admired in this world."

The British Resident had his spies to watch over Shahu's activities and often Shahu outwitted them. When he was found out, he wrote in an apologetic tone, made a show of his loyalty by talking aggressively and disdainfully of the nationalists and tried to wriggle out of the situation. But Shahu too had his spies to keep watch on the Resident, and got secret information about him. During a talk with the British Resident, a certain high dignitary raised some delicate questions which were difficult for the Resident to answer. When that dignitary met Shahu, the ruler skilfully turned the conversation to, those difficult questions and replied to them. The guest was taken aback!

Functioning as Shahu was under duress and the limitations of a dependent ruler, Shahu could not take an active part in the freedom struggle, though he fearlessly declared Swaraj as the goal of India. In the early twenties even Mahatma Gandhi was not prepared to define Swaraj as complete independence. Except the revolutionary party led by Savarkar, no other party had declared complete independence as its goal. Mahatma Gandhi said in *Young India* on January 3, 1922, that "it would be religiously unlawful for us to insist upon independence, for it would be vindictive and petulant. It would be a denial of God." In 1921, even Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru dissociated himself with a resolution which

Hazarat Mohani moved at the Ahmedabad Congress, declaring complete independence as its goal.¹⁷ Gandhi opposed this resolution.

Shahu's idea of Swaraj was not of a geographical nature, but aimed at broadening the base of democracy and enlarging the scope of Indian nationalism. His advocacy of the rights of the Backward and Depressed Classes and of their rightful share in the administration was misrepresented by the Maharashtrian Congress leaders.

Shahu was a good, wise and enlightened ruler, tolerant of all faiths. "In any other country," said a writer with good judgment, "he would have been an idol of all who recognized social advance as the just step to political progress." His educational policy has been the inspiration of numerous social workers; his liberty in social matters reasserted and revived the new era inaugurated by Mahatma Phoolley long before.

Sympathy for human life was Shahu's watchword and it proved to be a great moral and motive force. In reality he even risked his crown in his attempt to elevate the masses and he rightly tried to ensure the moral as well as material welfare of his subjects. His ultimate aim was much wider. His was a wiser, saner and more tolerant outlook. According to the definition of a great man given by Plekhanov in the *'The Role of the Individual in*

History', Shahu was a great man. While explaining how exceptional men play their role in history, Plekhanov observes in his essay that a great man is great because "he possesses qualities which make him most capable of serving the great social needs of his time, needs which arise as a result of general and particular causes.... A great man is precisely a beginner, because he sees farther than others and desires more strongly than others."¹⁸

Undoubtedly, Shahu saw farther than most of his contemporaries and desired the elevation of the lower classes more keenly and strongly than others. History is made by a great social man and like a great man Shahu was the product of the social forces that pressed for a new social order. Shahu and Dr. Nair were the rebels in India who were responsible for the social unrest in India in the first quarter of the twentieth century. No, other Indian ruler was as great a social as well as public figure as Shahu was. His heart bled and his eyes were often dim with, tears for the suppressed.

The secret of Shahu's success was his noble aim and selfless work. He once said that the crown was to be held in reality and rightly for the people to ensure moral and material triumph of the government and he acted accordingly.

Shahu played his historic role magnificently in the construction of a new society and a better world. It was a noble drama in which conquest of dehumanizing evils was made by shining principles of humanism, replacing darkness with light. Plato visualized a time when philosophers would be kings. He did not foresee the day when Princes would be social revolutionaries.

Shahu visualized a new social order based on equality and liberty, that is, based on reason, a pattern of a future Indian society.. His philosophy of enthroning labour, of annihilating untouchability root and branch, and of raising the status of the common man, has come to Free India in the ideal of social and economic democracy as enunciated in the guiding principles of the Indian Constitution.

Shahu was indeed a man of great soul, a man of simple greatness and a people's social philosopher. After the death of Mahatma Phoolley he rekindled the lamp of hope in the hearts of millions of Untouchables and the lower classes. This achievement alone entitled him to a high place in Indian history. He was a ruler who dreamed of a labour Government in India, a leader who said that mills and factories should not go into the hands of capitalists and millionaires, but should remain in the hands of the people. He was a ruler who lighted the eternal lamp of education which shines all

over Maharashtra. He was a Prince who believed in the dictum that peace had its victories more renowned than war.

Hence with the increasing success of the social and economic democracy in India, Shahu's figure will shine brighter. He will be ever remembered by the people with gratitude and affection. His name will be written in gold in the history of India. Man plays several roles in his life. With his indomitable, unselfish and ascetic soul, Rajarshi Shahu Chhatrapati proved to be the greatest ruler in Maharashtra since Shivaji the Great. He was indeed a great social man, a Royal revolutionary, a supporter of democratic journalism, a promoter of Indian music, a builder of the Marathi stage, a patron of wrestling, a maker of modern Maharashtra, the Father of the Green Revolution of modern Maharashtra, the Father of the green Revolution in India and one of the founders of social and economic democracy in India.

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