

CHAPTER-IV

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Shahu was a prince of the Kolhapur Sansthan under the paramount power of the British Queen. Therefore, he to carry out his different schemes, plans and policies with the consent or approval of the British rulers, and, therefore, he did not had complete freedom to adopt an independent measure of his own and without consulting the ultimate authority i.e. the British rulers. Shahu was not a political thinker in a traditional sense. He was an administrator and politician. He made a number of speeches in his State and outside his State on different occasions. Through his speeches, his political ideas can be gleaned. Shahu had mobilized his subjects for different purposes. The aim of his administration was the upliftment of the common man. The solution of sorrows, hardships of common man were at the centre of his thinking. In a sense he tried to build-up an efficient administration oriented towards the common men. The wholesome and sincere thoughts contained in his speeches are woven round noble and golden thread of social and economic upliftment of the masses and promotion of unity,



strength and glory of India. He dreamt of an educated free and strong India. An attempt is made to analyse Shahu's political thought.

SHAHU MAHARAJ ON SWARAJ AND HOME RULE MOVEMENT :

As already stated in the first chapter, when Shahu ascended the throne in 1894; three forces were working in Maharashtra, Agarkar and Ranade led the social reformers, Mahatma Phuley the Satyashodhak Samaj and Lokamanya Tilak the political workers. He supported the Satyashodhakites and the social reformers but strongly criticised the movement of political freedom led by Tilak. Therefore, sometimes, it is concluded that Shahu was opposed to Swaraj; but it is not correct. Before one comes to this conclusion he must take into consideration the situation under which he had to perform his royal duties. He was the prince of Kolhapur working under the control of British rule. In a speech delivered in All India Maratha Education Conference held at Khamagaon on 27-12-1971 referring to Swaraj he said, "A present the great cry is about Home rule we do really wish to have Home Rule.¹ It will give us what we call life-blood. The British imperial Government had sown the seeds of the India of Home Rule in our mind. My reasoned opinion is that a time will come when we have to break down the

shackles of the present caste system. I took forward to this result in the interest of the general moral and material progress. So long as we have caste dissension and they can influence recruiting one way or the other. Shahu added that the Brahmin leaders were not known to the people and they could neither raise a single recruit nor prevent men from offering as recruits." Shahu further argued, "The non-Brahmins are just now getting awakened to their degraded condition and to the severity of the social and religious laws of Brahmins which had hitherto put them down. Naturally, they are suspicious of these so-called Brahmin leaders and are afraid that if power again goes into their hands, attempts would be made to bring back hands, attempts would be made to bring back to life the old Brahmanical regime. Their religious heads are already trying to organise their forces on the modern and review what they call Chaturvarn a. The old four water-tight compartments of castes among Hindus-Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Naturally, they are afraid that under the levelling influence of the sympathetic rule of the British Government, castes may lose their rigidity and non-Brahmins may rise in the social scale and may try to come-up with the Brahmins and claim equality."² Shahu pointed out, "The British rule and certainly conferred this great blessing on the ignorant and down-trodden masses. They have just now begun to see and realise the past in its true colour and to know

the causes of their jealousies among us, we will keep fighting among ourselves and injure our interests. In order to make us qualified for Swaraj we have to remove caste system which has been ruinous."

If castes remain as they are, Shahu asserted, "Home Rule in the sense in which it is meant will result in nothing, but a kind of oligarchy, this, of course, does not mean. I may tell once more that I am against Home Rule. Surely we want it. Under the present circumstances, however, we must have the protection and guidance of the British Government until the evil of caste system becomes ineffective. To prevent Home Rule from culminating into oligarchy we must have communal representation atleast for ten years. It will teach us what our rights are once we know them, communal representation can be dispensed with."³

Shahu was of the view that "The so-called Home Rule party is neither in touch with the masses nor have they sympathy for them. All they want is power for themselves. I do not at all like the idea of these extremists holding out a threat to Government at such a critical time. They say in effect that if their demand for Home Rule is not satisfied they will not help the Government in getting recruits for war as if present degraded condition. They certainly want

the same kind and sympathetic administration till they are, so far as literacy goes in some degree atleast comparable to the Brahmins. They naturally wish that the great gulf between them and Brahmins should lessen and should not at any rate be allowed to widen."⁴

From Shahu's above views on Swaraj and Home Rule, it is clear, that he was not apponent of the Swaraj and Home Rule. He advocated them but was of the opinion, "we will first deserve and then desire". Thus Shahu's concept of Swaraj was not confined to any particular class or caste. He wanted to broaden the base of Swaraj or democracy. He felt that as long as the depressed classes were kept away from education and were denied minimum human rights, there was no meaning to Swaraj. It is a well-known fact that Shahu strove to eliminate the dominance of the Brahmins in various fields and sought to establish a society based on equality fraternity and social justice. He thought that for home rule to be successful, it was necessary to remove the caste system, otherwise, there was the fear of the development of oligarchy.⁵

Shahu had sympathetic attitude towards the British Government and he expressed his feelings regarding the British rule an many occasions. While addressing the Third All India Depressed Classes Conference held at Delhi on

13th, 16th, 17th February, 1922, he said, "We must never forget that the cause of the new life and awakening amongst us is the liberal policy of the being British Government that gives equal opportunity to educate themselves and makes no distinction of caste or creed under the new reforms Act many of you enjoy the privilege of voting. I hope you will wisely take full advantage of the New Reforms that have been granted to us by our kind Government and of the channel that has been opened for us by setting our political goal to be progressive realisation of self-Government for uplifting ourselves politically, economically and morally."⁶

Shahu added that the political destiny of any country depended upon the character of the people of that country. Therefore, the attempt should be made for building-up the character specially of our youths and prove ourselves deserving of the new rights that have been bestowed upon us.⁷

According to Shahu, the main obstacle in the way of Swaraj was the Brahmin bureaucracy. In a letter to Woodehouse dated 19th February, 1919 Shahu wrote, "The Brahmin bureaucracy has got so strong; a religious and educational hold over the non-Brahmins that not even a few educated non-Brahmins have the strength of character to go against them. Indeed, some of them are foolish enough to play into the hands of these social despots. Their religious hold over us

does not allow us to break through this despotism; because our ladies and elders are all wholly under their control. Satya Samaj cannot break this Brahmin despotism as it has not got any religious foundation like Vedas which the Arya Samaj has got. The work of Satya Samaj is chiefly to show the black side of the brutal priestly."⁸

Shahu had pointed out to Col. Woodehouse that since from his boyhood it was his pride and cherished object to over rule and break-down Brahmin bureaucracy. He added that he would do all he could to put down spirit of social despotism. It can be said that Shahu had to modify the existing social order. In order to achieve a standard of efficiency in administration, to spread education among the masses, to improve rural conditions and to eliminate minority rule by the Brahmins. Therefore, Shahu laid stress on the upliftment of the down-trodden reactions and vehemently attacked the nationalist movement dominated by the Brahmins.

Shahu's speech at war conference at Bombay on June 11, 1918 throws a flood of light on his views regarding the British Government and Swaraj. He said, "The chief thing that is wanted, however, is mutual love and mutual trust between us and Government and our love and trust, I am sure will be rewarded."⁹ He added, "This is not a time for us to military posts or political rights or lay down conditions

on which our whole-hearted help will be given. We should claim the privileges by our deeds and win them by force of love.*¹⁰

In short, it can be concluded that due to peculiar situation under which Shahu had to work he was compelled to take the side of the British Government. But it cannot be denied that he awakened the masses, made them conscious of their rights and tried to unite all the Indians on equal footings, Indians on equal footings. By using various techniques, Shahu succeeded in getting sanction of the British rule to the different schemes launched for the benefits of all. Shahu was the Maharaj who made relentless efforts to free the depressed and the down-trodden from the bondage of all kinds by a particular class and caste. A man who emancipated millions of the poor and the depressed cannot be considered anti-Swaraj and Home Rule. He opposed the Brahminism that could have assumed of the form of political communication.

COMMUNAL REPRESENTATION :

After 1917, Shahu Maharaj vigorously advocated the principles of communal representation. Shahu was of the opinion that the Brahmins opposed the communal representation because that was a threat to their monopoly over bureaucracy.

They wanted to keep the non-Brahmins as slaves and victims of the brutal Brahmin bureaucracy. Shahu Maharaj submitted a memorandum to Lord Sydenham in the month of September, 1918 stating the reasons why the Marathas were greatly in need of the communal representation. He wrote in the memorandum, "The Deccan has been for centuries groaning under the tyranny of the Brahmin priest who has seized supremacy in every way in religious as well as secular matters, politics, commerce, education, banking etc. and so on. The masses of the country are not, therefore, free agents and unless special precautions are taken to safeguard their interest they are sure to fall an easy prey to the tyranny of their Brahman masters. Communal representation is the only way for safeguarding their interest in the provincial and Imperial Councils."¹¹

Shahu explained, "Although the British are the rulers of the country, the real power rests with the Brahmin officers who pervade every rank of the service from the meanest clerk and the village account, the Kulkarni, to the highest offices and predominate even in the Councils. The other communities have to submit to this Brahman bureaucracy and their tyranny is beyond description. The grievances of the non-Brahmin communities do not reach the British officers and even when they go to them the Brahman

subordinate is a past master in the art of prejudicing his head against the complainant. Under such a bureaucratic rule of the Brahmans the Marathas and other backward communities have no chance to send their representatives to the enlarged Councils. The non-Brahmins will have to vote in favour of Brahmin candidates whose caste-men know all the tricks of threatening cajoling or inducing them. There is no remedy except communal representation, for a limited number of years atleast."¹²

The second reason given by Shahu was that the congress had closed its eyes to the needs of the submerged classes and the aims of their leaders were to strive to keep down the masses to perpetuate the bureaucratic rule of their community. Communal representation was necessary to counteract all the Brahminical tendencies.¹³

Shahu opposed the nomination of members from the Marathas on the grounds that such nominated members lacked the confidence of the people. Moreover, they were most likely to play into the hands of powerful priestly bureaucracy.¹⁴ They might neglect the interests of the community to which they belonged. He added that Brahmin bureaucrats were in the habit of accusing nominated members of being partisans and slaves of Government and tried to

lower such members in the popular esteem. Communal representation was necessary for the creation of confidence in the representatives.

The dominant Brahmin bureaucracy made the non-Brahmin officers difficult to work as the Brahmins were in possession of the records and could quote precedents to support the Brahmins claims and could suppress the precedents that would go against them.¹⁵

Shahu said that the principle that majorities have no need of separate representation did not hold good in a province where a selfish minority was likely to get the power which was sure to be used to hold the majority in perpetual vassalage, Shahu was of the view that the Marathas had shed their blood on the battle fields for the British and they were loyal to them, therefore, it was the duty of the British to grant communal representation to them. Shahu pointed out that instead of coming forward, the Brahmins instigated the subjects against their prince whose black side only the Brahmins exposed. According to Shahu the best way to break-down the citadel of Brahmin power was to grant communal representation, not only in the Councils but also in all branches of the service, high or low. There should be communal representation in service as there must be in Councils,¹⁶ atleast for another twenty years. Shahu

pointed out that if no step was taken in that direction it would not be correct to say that the princes ruled India or the British ruled India but on the contrary it would be right to say that Brahmins ruled India. Communal representation was the only remedy to correct the communal imbalance.¹⁷

In short, it can be said that, Shahu thought that if communal representation was not granted, the political reforms of the Britishers would strengthen the Brahmin bureaucracy at the expense of the really loyal and faithful subjects of the Government.

SHAHU MAHARAJ AND NON-BRAHMIN MOVEMENT :

Shahu contributed tremendously to the cause of non-Brahmins. He firmly believed that unless all people in India. Men and women were educated, the nation would never be free united and strong Shahu was influenced by ideas of Mahatma Phuley and different reform movements of Hinduism. The Satyashodhak Brahmoism, Theosophy and Arya Samaj were in search of the system which would satisfy the spiritual as well as the social needs of the non-Brahmins. Shri Shahu, since his boyhood, had a cherished objective to overrule and break the Brahmin bureaucracy. The Vedokta incident spurred



the Satyashodhak Movement. These all factors entailed Shahu to get involved in the non-Brahmin movement.

Shahu supported the non-Brahmin movement because he felt that unless the weaker sections of the society were made conscious of their democratic rights, of their rightful place in the society, India would not be in a position to work on democratic principle. By awakening the non-Brahmin masses Shahu prepared them to be the real citizens of free India. According to Shri Shahu protection of these backward and depressed Hindus were more important, than independence of Swaraj. He feared that Swaraj might turn into slavery for Hindus, if the prevailing conditions of the society did not undergo a change.

Analysis of the non-Brahmin movement throws much light on the basic principles on which the movement was based and how those principles helped to establish a democratic society. The non-Brahmin movement was a cultural revolt against the dominance of the Brahmin as it demanded, an equal opportunity equal status to each individual. It aimed bestow fundamental rights on citizens by abolishing all kinds of differences based on race, caste, creed, language etc. Social justice was the soul of the movement.¹⁸ Shahu aimed at broadening the base of the political system by uplifting the down-trodden and making them conscious of their political rights.

It is rightly pointed out by Dr. Chandra Mudaliar that the non-Brahmin movement in Kolhapur began as a protest against the dominance of the Brahmins in the administration. It was not initially concerned with their religious dominance and with the lower position of the Marathes in the ritual hierarchy. Instead, it was concerned mainly with acquiring new levers of power. In its origin and goals, therefore, it was one of the modernistic non-Brahmin movements in South India.¹⁹

Shahu Maharaj encouraged different non-Brahmins in order to make them politically conscious as he realised that Monte que Chelmsford reforms would help Brahmins acquire political rights. He sought to reduce Brahmin influence by demanding communal representation and promoting the cause of many reforms movements launched by different backward communities. The non-Brahmin parties played an important role in provinces like Bombay and Madras.

SHAHU AND POLITICAL REFORMS :

Shahu ascended the throne when he was fourteen. He had to shoulder great responsibilities in his young age, but with the help of his training and new ideas, he tackled them properly. Shahu was the first Maharaj who visited all talukas,

pethas and concerned offices after he assumed power. He had to face many difficulties and hardships due to the dominance of the Brahmin bureaucracy. He himself was greatly insulted in the Vedokta incident. Therefore, he adopted the policies which hurt the established interests of the Brahmins. He made a number of political reforms though he was not an independent ruler. He was the prince of Kolhapur (the native State) under paramount power of the British throne but he thought that it was his duty to promote the cause of non-Brahmins.

When Shahu was engaged in different social and political activities the first world war over and the British rulers decided to introduce a fresh dose of political reforms. The Montagu reforms of 1919 generated a wave of enthusiasm in India. Shahu was of the view that the reforms should be properly worked as its successful working would enable the British Government to introduce further reforms. He feared that the reforms might cause many movements but non-Brahmins should utilise the opportunity to bring about gradual change.²⁰ Thus, Shahu welcomed the British policy of progressive realisation of self-government in India and asked the non-Brahmins to utilise the opportunity to bring about their social, economic, political and moral advancement. He

asked them to build their moral character to advance the cause of their political liberation. Because, for the national development, development of moral character was very necessary.²¹

POLITICAL IDEAS OF SHAHU :

Shahu followed double method as far as political reforms were concerned i.e. reforms in his own State and political reforms in the British India. As far his princely State Kolhapur was concerned he initiated many revolutionary reforms. He initiated reforms in political, social and economic fields in his own State and supported the reform movements other States.

Shahu Maharaj was a supporter of social democracy as he wanted to see that political power was equally shared by all castes and communities. He was willing to give political rights to people provided that they were equally shared. He agreed that democracy was a new idea and it should be accepted. He demanded that every adult should be given voting rights; majority's wishes should be taken into consideration and everybody should be given his rights.²² He held that this was the essence of democracy.

Shahu's progressive ideas were influenced by western liberalism as he articulated his ideas in the light of

principles of rights liberty, equality, social justice and fraternity. He was of the view that the people should be conscious of their rights as everybody was born free and he should secure his human rights.²³ He claimed that the emancipation from the slavery of Brahmins was the basic right of all non-Brahmins. All Hindus had equal religious rights and no one was high or low. He expounded the idea of equality of opportunity was necessary to create equality of opportunity. He made it clear that in the Indian context, equality and liberty meant the removal of caste-system and the encouragement to the backward communities to acquire capacity.²⁴ He did not like division between social and political reforms and argued that they were inextricably linked with each other as they were two wheels of a cart. He maintained that both of them had to be taken together.²⁵

Shahu Maharaj wanted to have national integration as he claimed that "we were all Indians, we are brothers and whatever may be our caste, religion or class, we are Indians. Religion is important for us, but it has to be a personal concern to attain God head. He held a view that religion did not and should not come in the way of national integration. He was of the opinion that caste system and selfish behaviour of the upper castes damaged our national solidarity. It could be established by following the principles of equality,

fraternity and justice.²⁶ The perusal of the preceding ideas of Shahu Maharaj makes it clear that Shahu preached secular nationalism.

Shahu was of the view that with the spread of democratic ideas, unions of the people were growing. He exhorted the workers to establish trade unions to safeguard their rights. He held that there was bound to be struggle between the capitalists and the workers but workers should form unions to protect their rights. He believed that in democracies power ultimately went in the hands of the labouring classes and in Europe, after the war the labour party would come to power. He praised the Russian workers for October Revolution and expected that Germany would also be dominated by the working class.²⁷ He further made it clear that in India due to the caste system, trade unions could not be properly organised but hoped that this would be done very soon. He claimed that India was a country of poor and backward peasants and there was a link between workers and peasants. He held a view that the workers and peasants should unite to protect their rights.²⁸ He said that to forge the unity, we should arm ourselves with weapons like unity. Mutual affection, mutual faith and persistent efforts, because through our struggle only we can acquire our basic rights. Forming of trade unions is the essential

condition of workers progress. He condemned the capitalists for the exploitation of workers and unite.²⁹ Thus, Shahu was a progressive thinker who realised that introduction of capitalist system in India worsened the already bad conditions of lower caste people³⁰ hence he asked them to establish trade unions. He was of the view that the just wages should be given to workers and demanded that every one should get wages according to his ability and the amount of work he had performed.

Shahu was a democrat. who believed in freedom of speech and expression. He was of the view that everybody should have right to express his own ideas. But unfortunately the Marathi Press was dominated by the Brahmins and their news papers did not go to rural areas. Also the Brahmin editors did not allow anti-Brahmin ideas to be published in their news-papers. It was his opinion that such a situation was not conducive for the freedom of press. Therefore, he asked non-Brahmins to start their own news-papers and extended the material help to them.

Thus preceding ideas of Shahu Maharaj make it clear that Shahu was a prophet who advocated principles of liberty, equality and fraternity and argued that the workers should form trade unions to secure their rights. He supported the cause of freedom of press and maintained that religion should

not be an obstacle in the development of national integration.

SHAHU, MAHARAJ'S POLITICAL IDEAS
AND THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION :

The Constitution of India was promulgated in 1950 and it was the result of many events in the past such as national freedom and different social movements, and one can see the influence of Shahu's social economic political ideas on the Constitution.

The preamble of the constitution visualizes in brief the aims and objectives of the Indian political system. It states that establishment of secular, socialist, democratic republic are the objectives. It wants to guarantee fundamental rights to all and wants to maintain unity and integrity of the Nation. In short, it wants to provide equal opportunity to all.

When we take into consideration the social and political thoughts of Shri Shahu and try to their influence in the Indian Constitution we find that Indian Constitution is the result of Shahu's thoughts spread in Maharashtra and India under British Rule before twenty five years of India's independence. Shahu's mission of life was to uplift the down-trodden classes to establish social and

political equality balute and Hajeri system, giving preference in administration to backward classes, to making education free and compulsory, passing laws permitting inter-caste marriages, starting different schemes of transport and water supply for trade and agriculture, asking workers to form unions to fight for their rights. Fined each in fundamental rights and directive principles of State policy some points are included in 20 point programme of Mrs. Gandhi. Shahu was of the opinion that political freedom had no meaning when there was no equality, fraternity and social justice in the society. Similar is the view of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi.

CONCLUSION :

Political ideas of Shahu Maharaj were very progressive in the sense that he added sociological dimension to politics by saying that both social and political reforms were inter-linked. He considered the Swaraj meanings, its fruits were not enjoyed by all. He asked all the deprived classes to struggle and ceaselessly work to win their rights. He valued national integration and said that national integration was not hindered by religion if every religion was equally respected. He supported freedom of press and implemented several programmes in his State that were calculated to secure freedom for the enslaved population.

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