

CHAPTER - V

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Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaja was one of the progressive rulers of Modern India, who ruled Kolhapur state from 1884 to 1922. Shahu Chhatrapati was a myriad sided the grand figure and august personality. He was a ruler who made revolutionary social changes even at the risk of his crown and life. In building vast dams and launching ambitious schemes in the fields of agricultural and co-operative societies, he proved to be the father of the green revolution in India. He was a law giver who did signal deeds of social justice. A saviour of the suppressed oppressed and the under dog, he liberated them in his state from the shackles of bondage and gave them full human rights, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj has become a Legend in Maharashtra; the people of Kolhapur certainly regard him as the greatest Chhatrapati after Shivaji Maharaj.

Kolhapur or Karveer state was founded by Tarabai, daughter-in-law of the Shivaji the great in the year 1710 A.D. and this tiny state lasted upto 1949, when it merged into Indian Union. During this period of about 250 years there were twelve rulers who administered the Kolhapur state.

- 1) Shivaji- I (1700-1714);
- 2) Sambhaji (1714-1760)
- 3) Shivaji-II (1762-1813);
- 4) Sambhaji alias Abasaheb (1813-1821);

5) Shahaji alias Buwasaheb (1821-1838); 6) Shivaji-III alias Babasaheb (1838-1866); 7) Rajaram (1866-1870); 8) Shivaji-IV (1871-1883); 9) Shahu Maharaj (1884-1922); 10) Rajaram Maharaj (1922-1940); 11) Shivaji-V (1942-1946); 12) Shahaji (1947-1983) were the Chhatrapaties of Karveer state.

But after Tarabai, Rajarshee Shahu Maharaja's period was important because the Kolhapur state achieved alround progress. Meanwhile British entered the Kolhapur state and concluded some treaties with Kolhapur state which became one of the native states in India after 1813. But the appointment of D.C. Graham in Kolhapur state as a political Agent in 1844 was a turning point in the history of Kolhapur state. Because from 1844 A.D. onward the administration of Kolhapur state was run on British Model and British officers started the modernisation of Kolhapur state.

In the year 1848 some English public schools were opened the Kolhapur state administration was divided into three major divisions : 1) General, 2) Revenue, 3) Judicial. Before 1844 the administration of Kolhapur state was on Maratha Model. The system of Asthapradhan Mandal was in practice in Kolhapur state before the arrival of British officers (1844 A.D.).

Britishers became the masters of all India in 1818 A.D. and introduced the new system of administration not only in British India but in Native states and Kolhapur state was not exception to

this. The rulers of East India Company undertook massive programme construction of roads, bridges and public buildings in India. Therefore there was a need of special Department which look after these constructive activities. Therefore, East India Company created Public Works Department in the year 1835. This Department later on became one of the important and major Department of administration in India. The highest Officer of this Department was State Executive Engineer assisted by other technical staff like Assistant Engineer, Overseers, Suboverseers, Draftsman, Tracers, Maistry and other technical staff as well as official staff like clerks, Accountant and contractors etc.

When Kolhapur state became the Native state, under British, a permanent British Political Agent stayed in Kolhapur since 1844. Like in British India, Public Works Department was created in Kolhapur state and a provision was made to appoint Kolhapur state Executive Engineer, who had to look after the roads, state buildings, bridges etc.

Shahu's period was important even in building activities but before Shahu, some important construction work like Town Hall, Native Library, Shivaji Bridge, Old Palace, Rajaram College, Kalamba Tank, Rankala Tank, New Palace, Railway Line and some Monumental works were took place. Even though Shahu became the ruler of the Kolhapur state by adoption in 1884, he was minor

and therefore the Council of administration was run the administration under the supervision of political agent from 1884 to 1894. During this minority period some important works were carried out by the Public Works Département mentioned above.

At the age of 20 His Highness Shri Shahu Chhatrapati Maharaja was invested with full powers of his high office on April 2nd, 1894. The Pomp and ceremony which accompanied the Investiture were fully in keeping with the historic importance of the occasion.

Shahu's direct administration started in 1894 and lasted upto 1922. During this period of 28 years rule, Public Works Department made much progress under the guidance of Shahu Chhatrapati.

Fortunately during Shahu's period, number of public buildings railway line were constructed. More over Radhanagari Dam which proved to be boon on Kolhapur people was undertaken by Shahu himself. Palace theatre, and khasbag wrestling akhada, which is even today a unique feature of Kolhapur was built by Shahu Chhatrapati himself, establishment of Shahupuri and Jaysingpur settlement were undertaken again roads and bridges, Palace were built during this period and Kolhapur state spent major amount on this Department.

Chh. Shahu constructed large number of roads through P.W.D. with the object of connecting big villages and towns with Kolhapur link roads and other big roads passing through the state. Such policy, which was broadly based on the findings of the Industrial Survey of Kolhapur state (1895, Report), ultimately was to encourage small-scale industries, cottage industries in rural areas and internal commerce. These roads were both metalled and 'murum' roads; the latter were, particularly, useful for the transportation of hirda by bullock-carts from jungle areas to Kolhapur and for sikar, surfaced roads of considerable length were laid down in Kolhapur city by the Darbar owned Municipality during the last two decades of Chh. Shahu's rule. The metalled roads are useful throughout the year, while "murum" roads become unusable during monsoons.

Every year more than seven lakhs of rupees were spent on this Department. In the year 1921 to 1922 the amount spent on public work was Rs. 7,08,156. This figure shows that P.W.D. was one of the major and vital Kolhapur State Department.

During the minority period of Shahu (1884 to 1894) Mr. R. S. Shannon B.A. C.E. was the State Engineer of Kolhapur state, who was an English when Shahu attained full power in 1894 there was clashes between the Shahu Maharaja and old state officials, who did not obey the orders of Chhatrapati therefore Shannon was

removed from the post of State Executive Engineer and D.A. Vichare L.C.E. was appointed as a new State Engineer of Kolhapur state in the year 1896. Like Bhaskarrao Jadhav, Prof. A.B. Latthe, Diwan Bhadur, R.V. Sabnis, Dajisaheb Vichare rendered yeomen service to the Kolhapur State. Under his supervision the buildings of Maratha and Muslim hostels were constructed, prepared detailed plan and estimate of Radhanagari dam, and started the work of this dam under his guidance, in 1908. He retired from the service of Kolhapur state in 1919. subsequently he got elected to Bombay Legislative Council. He was also President of Local Board for three years. It is interesting to note that he started newspaper 'Shahu Prabha' for some time when the foundation stone of Shivaji Memorial in Pune was laid down by the hands of Prince Wells. At that time D.A. Vichare was the Chief Engineer, who supervised the memorial work. He breathed his last in 1927.

In 1897 due to total failure of crops in the state on account of drought, people suffered from scarcity of food. While scarcity prevailed in the state the famine had full sway in the Karveer taluka, Shirol and Panhala Peta. To overcome the situation relief works were started all over the state.

There was no field work and people clamoured for relief works. At first small relief works were undertaken, irrigation works were incharge of Imperial Public Works Department.

When the Maharaja ascended the throne there were no irrigation works, Kolhapur with ranges of hills here and there, is apparently favourably situated. There were no canals except a few Pats or water-courses which dried by January or February, and except at Kolhapur, where were the Rankala and one or two other lakes and few acres of garden land. There were no lakes or reservoirs large enough to water any considerable area. Therefore the Maharaja had undertaken many projects of irrigation and day and night he thought of great irrigation schemes. The undertaking demanded vast finance, preserverance and patience.

Like D.A. Vichare, Mr. S. S. Gupte, Mr. B. P. Jagtap were State Executive Engineer and rendered Yeomen service to the Kolhapur State. These officers of the P.W.D. were very loyal to Shahu Chhatrapati and executed various plans ordered by Shahu Chhatrapati therefore Kolhapur state attained great progress by all directions.

To sum up Rajarshee Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj; may justly be called as one of the authentic makers of modern Maharashtra. During his all-too brief regime in Kolhapur state (1884-1922 i.e. of 28 years) the State underwent a sea change in all walks of life. He regulated administration and made changes in the personnel of the administration, took industrial survey to set-up industry, undertook large irrigation project and regulated administration orders for

the benefit of his subjects. Thus, Shahu Maharaja finally succeeded in making the administration oriented to the people and earned from millions that meed of praise which no other ruler of his time ever received.