



CONTRIBUTION OF CHHATRAPATI SHAHUJI MAHARAJ TO THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

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Abstract: *In the male-dominated society of India, women faced terrible problems from Vedic times due to wrong rituals and superstitions. Women were exploited in many ways like child marriage, Parda pratha, Sati pratha, restrictions on widow remarriage, exploitation of widows, Devdasi system, so being born as a woman was treated as a woman's curse. This system made the woman monotonous and she developed an inferior complex, which became the biggest obstacle in her personal, social and economic development. Many leaders like Mahatma Phule and Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj sacrificed their lives for the backward people and women. They mostly focused on education for all irrespective of caste, colour, creed, gender and poverty.*

Shahuji Maharaj was one of the most prominent revolutionary reformers of Maharashtra. He was considered a benevolent king because he was in favor of the cause of social reform. Maharashtrian society is an eco-political-cultural system based on certain ideologies, which is patriarchal in nature and whose mission is to impose a male hierarchy in almost all spheres of life and women are marginalized, excluded and dominated. He sought the best solution to the question of what education is; it could empower women. For this he established girls' colleges and hostels and gave scholarships to girls. He also tried to implement social changes that would introduce laws. He wanted to bring equality between men and women. It can give women a respected status and enable them to live with dignity, honor and sociality. He did not stop his efforts towards the state of Kolhapur but extended it to the whole of Maharashtra.

Through this article, tried to ensure the contribution Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj for the empowerment of women.

Key Words: *Women empowerment, education, social-economic status, implementation.*

1. INTRODUCTION :

Empowering women is a process that aims to keep them safe from all forms of violence. It also includes creating a healthy society and political environment where she can live without fear of abuse, arrest, surgery and discrimination. women's empowerment exists at the local, state, and national levels in many areas, including education, health care, gender-based violence, economic opportunity, and political participation. Women's empowerment is the process by which women raise their social, political and economic status in society. Indian women have a sex ratio of less than men compared to women in the world population, which is 50 percent. If we see the social status of women not equal to men in all areas, women in Western society have equal rights and status with men. In India today we see gender discrimination and disability As we can see from ancient times to medieval times, many reformers fought for women. In modern India, women have held many prestigious positions including president, prime minister, lok Sabha speaker, union ministers, prime minister , governor and finance minister nowadays as compared to ancient women are developing themselves.

**Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj :**

Society is an eco-political and cultural system based on certain ideologies. It is patriarchal in nature, working to impose hierarchy through various hidden means - through biology, politics and the social system, especially the social and political inequalities imposed by families. Women are excluded, marginalized and dominated in all spheres of life. It makes their lives miserable, miserable and miserable. It was necessary to remove them from this situation. King of Kolhapur and Bahujan leader Shahuji Maharaj worked for women empowerment. He introduced laws, established educational institutions, awarded scholarships and bursaries and made modern society (especially the women's section) aware of the evils. The social situation in Kolhapur during the period of Shahuji Maharaj is described in A Review of Education in Bombay State, 1855-1965 as follows: In the early 19th century, the social position of women in the state was far from satisfactory. Among the Hindus, women had almost no property rights; child marriages were extremely common or rather frequent; polygamy was allowed and quite common among the upper or wealthy classes; Hardly any profession was open to women and they were strongly discriminated by the social and moral code, widow marriage and divorce were forbidden among upper caste or upper class families, the evil of "Pardha" was widespread and its observance became almost a distinction of higher feudal status. It certainly enhances the status of women. For them, the hearth and the child were considered as their sphere of life. They were trapped in the house. Shahuji Maharaj started extending his hands of cooperation to empower women. She understood that education can bring change in the life of women. Thus, with his educational policy, he took the first step towards the empowerment of women. He said: Lack of education among non-Brahmans and Dalits has caused great harm to the nation. There were many priests in the temples and their absence should be stopped by making our schools temples, the knowledge of true religion should be revealed.

Free and Compulsory Primary Education for All:

Shahuji Maharaj encouraged women to get an education and made primary education compulsory for all. On September 8, 1917 he issued an order to establish a free and compulsory primary school for all in Kolhapur State. He not only passed the Compulsory and Free Education Act but also strictly enforced it by fining parents one rupee a month for the absence of their children. According to him, the development of any country is impossible without education. An illiterate country will never produce good leaders. That is why it is necessary to introduce free and compulsory education in Hindustan. This regulation was established on September 30, 1917.

Emphasis on higher education:

He promoted higher education in addition to basic education. To meet the needs of female teachers, she established the Women's Training College. It was compulsory for students to teach girls in school after completing their studies. He sent to Krushnabai Kelavkar Grant to Medical College for medical studies. In 1902, he appointed him Assistant Physician to the "Albert Edward Medical Hospital". He again gave her a scholarship for to specialize in gynecology in London. After successfully completing the course, people returned in 1903. In 1910-1911, he sent 15 students and 10 students for higher education in Bombay, Pune, Madras and other places in 1910-1912. He also sent students to Medical College, Bombay, Pune Medical School, Pune Training College and Deccan College. Once in a conversation with Tofkhane and Bhaskararao Jadhav, he said **"If women would get a proper education, which make them understand the difference between good and bad; if they would get it from the teachers of good moral, they would never go on the wrong ways."**

Establishment of Hostels:

Along with educational institutions, residential houses are also needed. So he decided to build dormitories for students in . Victoria Maratha Boarding House for Maratha Students started on 18th April 1901. Later it started hostel for Lingayat, Swarwati, Panchal, Jain, Muslim, Chamdevshilpi, Vaishya, Dhor-Chamar, Nabhik, Sutar etc. Each hostel building has open space, permanent means of production and other such things which made the poor students earn money for themselves.

Scholarships and Fellowships:

He gave scholarships and bursaries to encourage the Bahujans to pursue education. He announced financial aid for 15% students on May 20, 1911; it was first given to poor students and then to other students. He awarded a scholarship to Krushnabai Kelavkar, a brilliant student, to specialize in gynecology and was sent to London. He also



announced scholarships of Rs. 40 each, Shri Radhabai Akkasaheb Maharaj Scholarship and Shri Nandkunwari Maharani Bhavnagar Scholarship for first two girls in Iv Marathi School at Kolhapur and Bawda.

Inter-Caste and Inter-Religious Marriage:

Inter-Caste and Inter-Religious Marriage and Marriage Registration act was launched on 12 July 1919, at a time when the tradition of child marriage existed. He decided to implement Act after being influenced by the 1918 Patel Bill of the Central Parliament of Vithalbhai Patel. It stepped towards the annihilation of castes and the integration of religions.

Widow remarriage:

Established castes were free to remarry, but among the higher castes there was a strict patriarchal position that did not allow widow remarriage. In addition to that, the tradition of removing the hair of widows was practiced among Brahmins, they had to live a life of great deprivation, self-restraint and solitude. Shahuji Maharaj broke the shackles of such strong patriarchal practices; he passed the Widow Remarriage Act in 1917 in his state of Kolhapur. It also records the number of widows in the state.

Veil tradition:

The veil tradition was followed by upper castes, especially aristocratic families, Maratha knights and vatandars. It was a burden and restriction on the free movement of women at home and abroad. This affected women negatively so Shahuji Maharaj enacted the law.

Divorce Act and Security of Women's Rights after Divorce:

He launched the Divorce Act and Security of Women's Rights after Divorce. This law applied to all religions except Christianity and Parsi. Muslim women were protected by this law even when talaq was practiced; they and their children were protected. He also brought changes to the Inheritance Act in 1920.

Harassment of Women Act:

The law related to the prohibition of harassment of women came into force on August 2, 1919. According to the law, insults, beatings, verbal abuse and women doubts about a man's character were considered cruel. It included almost every form of cruelty and harassment against women. It brought changes in the backward class community and women.

Ban on Devdasi tradition:

In modern society it was a tradition to marry girls in the name of god and it was mostly practiced by the backward class. This created the traditions of Devdasi, Jagtin, Murli, Bhavi etc. The consecration of a girl in the name of God meant that she would become a child of God, severing all ties with her natural parents and having no right to inheritance or inheritance, remaining God, she received certain special privileges in these temples and also social legal status. There was an unfortunate group of women abandoned by their husbands. They were sexually exploited and marginalized in a certain field. It was also a stigma like untouchability. Shahuji Maharaj introduced a related bill to remove the stigma.

Annihilation of Caste:

He took serious note of the position of women in the caste system and the Varna system which exploits them vertically and horizontally. The caste system based on the varna system is ideologically constructed in such a way that it serves a certain section and rejects another. The caste system is directly related to patriarchy, which excludes, marginalizes and restricts women. They are expelled twice, first as a woman by outsiders and second by her male relatives as female family members. Thus, the destruction of caste and the dismantling of the ideological institution of patriarchy are important factors in women's emancipation. Thus he tried to destroy the caste system.

2. CONCLUSION :

It was not easy to eliminate deep cultural values or to reform traditions that perpetuate discrimination. Shahuji Maharaj dedicated their entire lives for the upliftment of the downtrodden and the untouchables. They also



fought for equal rights for all men and women. They have done work to make women dependent now and tried to start many schemes not only in their area but also in the whole country. Many laws are implemented to empower women in Indian society. Women have become more aware with education. They became aware of what is right and what is wrong in the field of science and began to question the elders who brought them down. Shahuji Maharaj tried to free women from the old religious tradition and caste even at the many years. Women are still exploited and harassed to a great extent. Age 21 in the century, also known as the age of information and technology. still prohibits a girl from aborting a female foetus, which is such a thoughtless thing to do in India. Even women face many new problems when it comes to studying and getting a job. Although there are many problems ahead, the position of women has changed with time. Women work hard to make him stable, free, equal. Even not only the society but also her family changed and respected her, this positive change happened only because of those leaders who sacrificed their lives for the resurrection of women. Shahuji Maharaj tried to unite a society that was divided into different castes, classes, religions, genders, etc. Realizing the position of women, he paid special attention to the empowerment of women by introducing education and passing certain laws. It not only empowered them but also gave them protection and a sense of security. Her contribution to the empowerment of women is important from a historical perspective and social significance.

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