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RAJA SHAHJI'S WORK FOR PUBLIC WELFARE Special - Reference to Satara Raj (Including Bijapur)

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ABSTRACT

Raja Shahji ruled over Satara for a short period of about 7 years (From 1839 A.D. to 1848 A.D.). In contemporary circumstances of political instability. He fully cooperated British Government for the well being of common people and continuation of Shivaji's Raj.

In present research paper, with the help of many references, progressive and constructive character of Raja Shahji has been revealed. He himself was follower of Hinduism but he ruled over such a territory of Satara, where people in big

number were follower of Islam Religion. Many historical monuments and worship places were cared, secured and developed by Raja Shahji. So Raja Shahji's mindset of secularism can be traced easily with the help of this Research Paper.

KEYWORDS :Public Welfare , Raja Shahji's Work , political instability , progressive and constructive character.



INTRODUCTION :

Maratha history has been Unique in many respects Raja Shahji's Regime in Bijapur is one of them. Raja Shahji (Appa Saheb) Succeeded to the throne of Satara on the deposition of his brother in Raja Pratapsingh on 5th Sep. 1839. Shahji ruled Satara from 1839 A.D. To 1848 A.D.. Bijapur was a territory

of Satara Raj Charles ovens was resident of Satara at that time. It should be mentioned here that in 1818 A.D., British government became the ruler of Peshwa Land and Raja Pratapsingh followed by Raja Shahji were mere puppet rulers for Britishers. In contemporary circumstances, Raja Shahji, for the well being of common people and continuation of Shivaji's Raj, fully cooperated British government. On many places Raja Shahji is abused for his flexible behavior towards British government. In spite of his negative impression, (he was Considered as obstinate and ill disposed lad with very low vicious habits) Shahji's Seven years on the thrown of Satara, were of piece and quite. He was congratulated for his mild administration and constant activity in the department of public works[1]. With the help of following

points we can easily understand Raja Shahji's Participation in the development of Satara territory in special reference to Bijapur.

Public Works:- Raja Shahji was known for his constant activities in public works. Raja constructed a bridge over River Yena and in the Same Way another bridge on River Krishna was constructed these bridges were very important for the economic development and connectivity of Satara Raj (Including Bijapur).

A plan of embankment at Mahabaleshwar and bring water to the town of Satara (Including Bijapur) from etheshwar a mountain was also in process.

Besides this, construction of a large "Cutchurry" (town hall), A new hospital building in Satara town was very important. New Roads from Satara to Mahabaleshwar and Mahabaleshwar to Malcom Peth were constructed. A high road from Satara to Poona with travelers bungalow made a positive impact. Various small works as reservoirs, wells etc. were repaired and built by Raja Shahji[2].

Preservative works in Bijapur:- When Raja Shahji came to know about the decaying condition of Historical Monuments and worship places, he immediately took steps for the betterment, Repair and conservation of the finest specimens of Mahomedan Architecture in the Deccan. Raja shahji Repaired goolee goomuch and Ibrahim Rauza[3].

Raja Shahji constructed rest houses for travelers so that there was no need to disturb monuments for accommodation.

Raja Shahji appointed Captain R.E. Hart for Repair work of Bijapur monuments and other historical and religious buildings. Raja Shahji restored water supply at Jamimasjid[4]. It is said that by the order of Raja Shahji Northern and Southern walls of Jamimasjid had been constructed.

Medical works to provide Aid – Raja appointed one medical officer on the salary of Rs. 15 per month for territory. A vaccination programme was also carried for children. Children from country and neighboring areas were vaccinated against many diseases. This was great contribution of the Raja for the public of Bijapur.

Arrangement of English Currency – With the efforts, taken by Raja Shahji, the market value of Chandori Rupee was replaced by company's rupee and the market value of company Rupee was 41/2% above of Chandori Rupee. English Government was determined to circulate their currency. So Raja Shahji worked as mediator between common people and government.

Transit Duties - The Raja had placed transit duties on the same footing as they were in other British territories.

Education - Raja Shahji was interested in education for all and was in favour of English language as a need of time and circumstances. But the people showed no inclination to have their children taught English.

Abolishment Of Slave System- Buying and selling slaves was abolished by the proclamation of Raja Shahji of Satara under date 20th July 1841. Slaves were called a mild species of domestic bondage and this specie of traffic was completely put a stop by Raja Shahji.

Abolishment of "Suttee" Tradition - In the same way another social evil which was practiced on large

scale was "Suttee". This social evil was abolished by public proclamation all throughout his country.

In Raja Shahji's administration the, Small Number of Petitions were received against jageerdars, it cleared that the whole affairs were justly and mercifully administered.

Raja Shahji made many administrative reforms also. In spite of all above mentioned reforms and political activities, he became victim of British Conspiracy and finally after the death of Raja Shahji, in lack of heir, Satara Raj (Including Bijapur) was annexed by British Government in 1849 A.D.[5]

The last of the great Shivaji descendants consigned to the flames which closed the story of Satara.

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