



## Social Reformer Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad

Social reforms were taking shape in the 19th century in India. The role of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad has been vital in it. Social Reforms Means Religious Reforms was Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad ji's opinion. That is why the Maharaja took many decisions in the ruling state to modify the social customs and tradition and he believed that the state decision and punishment are not enough, so he adopted the effective social reform and law equation. That is why 'what Barode does today, Hindustan will do tomorrow.' This was the saying for "Sansthan" under Sayajirao Ji rule.

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad started 18 schools in the princely state of Barode for untouchables in 1882 and started his social reform work. In 1891-92, in Patan, Amreli, and Barode, he built Hostels for the Antyaj students and provided food along with their studies. The education system which is for upper caste people should also be for the untouchables; this was the thinking of Maharaj Sayajirao Gaikwad.



Despite being Maharaja, he suffered for his work to get social support and acceptance. He has told his experience in a speech. "I want to bring upper caste teachers to the school of Antyaj, But only Muslims and Aryasamaji people came forward. Antyaj students, who come to study in hostels, we can see the changes in them so much in 2-3 years that people consider them only upper-caste students. Still, the people of the upper castes do not have the

sensitivity to give the rights they want for themselves to others. Shouldn't you give rights to the antyaj from the same element from which you want state rights? (Mumbai, 23 March 1911) Sayajirao had asked such a question to society. Society does not look at the untouchables wisely. He sees only selfishness and does not understand society's broader interest. That's why Maharaja Sayajirao Ji has been continuously trying to unravel this obscenity with his speeches.

Maharaja Sayajirao Ji made the Law of free education in 'Sansthan.' After that, the schools of untouchables increased to 247 and students to 9269. and allowed untouchables to enter hospitals, libraries, courts, and government offices. Maharaja Sayajirao Ji opened the doors of all government temples to the untouchables. That's why Arya Samaj has bestowed the honor on him as a Patitpavan. Maharaja Sayajirao Ji had said in a speech to Arya Samaj that "The rights created by the caste system are only to be obtained by birth. Those rights should never depend on the caste system". (Arya Samaj, Lahore 18 October 1903).

Maharaja Sayajirao Ji also encouraged inter-caste marriage. For that, they formed Baroda Special [Civil] Marriage Act. Because of this, provision was made for Anulom-Pratiloma inter-caste marriage. Because of this, the then Jaat Panchayat will not be able to punish and exclude any person; such a provision was also included in it.

Sayajirao Ji did remarkable work on bread practices. Tables and chairs were used in Sayaji Vihar except for the first pangat. After some time, castes groups kept tables in the same Diwan. Then the distance between those two tables kept reducing a little bit and one day, in the same diwan, everyone started eating together at a kind of table. Sayajirao Ji did not make any haste in this process. And he organized many such meals. (Fakiruddin Bennur, 2013, p.19)



In a speech in Mumbai, he said that "trade and bread practice should be started among all castes and even marriages between sub-castes should be started. If we make such reforms, the bitter differences and difficulties between us will go away". (Mumbai, 30 December 1904) He showed this not only by saying but also by doing it. And they go on to say that "Caste differences cannot be broken today, so it is better to do something than sit idle. Therefore,

we have to eliminate the external organs of caste discrimination and the small things under it". (Mumbai, 30 December 1904)

In 1918, Sayajirao was the President of the All-India Council for the Prevention of Untouchability in Mumbai. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was received a scholarship for his education at American Columbia University by Maharaj Sayajirao Gaikwad. After that, in 1913, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Ji was offered a place in state power as a representative of the Depressed Classes in the Dhara Sabha of Baroda Sansthan. In 1933, he also presented the question of the oppressed in the Council of World Religions of Chicago.

Sayajirao Ji had a great love for the people. He chose the medium of power for the service of the subjects; that is why the progress of Bahujan and untouchable society was at the forefront in Barode Sansthan. He tried to eradicate untouchability by creating a feeling of love amongst them by awakening the mind of the society and not only through the policy of punishment. Although it is not enough to give his work in one article, I end it by writing one of his quote because of the limitation of words.

"No other organization has done so much damage and misery to our society as this unfortunate and ignorant caste system." (Arya Samaj, Lahore 18 October 1903).

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