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Shri. Shahu Chhatrapati Mills, Kolhapur: Reasons for Closure

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Abstract:

With the main purpose of liberating the people of Kolhapur state from inhumane serfdom conditions, Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj established Shri. Shahu Chhatrapati Mills. The Shahu Mills gained special importance at that time due to the impact of industrialization, but during the decade of 1980-90s, the textile industry sector suffered from various problems and these problems started affecting the efficiency of Shahu Mills and the mills closed down. In the present research article, the researcher has presented a detailed arrangement of the main four reasons that led to the closure of the Shahu Mill, which were pointed out from informal discussions with the workers, administrative officers, labor leaders in Shahu Mill. Based on these discussions, the researcher has concluded that, the main reason behind the closure of Shahu Chhatrapati Mills is the indifferent policy of the government.

Keywords: *Shri. Shahu Chhatrapati Mills, Industrialization, Closed down, Informal Discussion, Government Policy*

Introduction:

In the pre-independence era, Shahu Mill was established by Rajrishi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj on the auspicious occasion of Dussehra on 27th September, 1906. As this period was an important period in the industrialization phase, Shahu Mill flourished with the help of new technology and Kolhapur would emerge as an industrial area. Therefore, Shahu Mill has an important contribution in the economic progress of Kolhapur state before independence and Kolhapur district in the post-independence era. During the decade of 1980-90s, various problems started arising in the textile industry sector which adversely affected the performance of Shahu Mills and finally on 31st August, 2003, Shahu Mills closed down. For almost 97 years, Shahu Mill was in operation, providing employment to the people of Kolhapur, helping to control problems serfdom that had affected generations of workers. Almost two generations of workers experienced the journey

of Shahu Mill. Therefore, an important place in the development of Kolhapur state and Kolhapur district and the result of the far-sighted vision of Shri. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj. The researcher has tried to shed light, what could be the reasons behind the closure of Shahu Chhatrapati Mills? through the present research article.

Research Objectives:

Only one objective has been determined for the present research article is to determine the causes of closure of Shri. Shahu Chhatrapati Mills.

Research Design:

An exploratory research design has been used for the present research essay. Because, finding the reasons behind any phenomenon is the primary objective of exploratory research design. The present research is mainly based on primary sources of information, including discussions with Shahu Mill workers, administrative officers and contemporaneous labor leaders. Through this informal discussion, the researcher has interpreted the available information and arranged that information in a descriptive form.

Major reasons for closure of Shri. Shahu Chhatrapati Mills, Kolhapur:

While collecting information regarding the research, various aspects of Shri. Shahu Chhatrapati Mills have been discussed with contemporaneous workers, administrative officers, labor leaders and through this discussion the researcher observed that, major four reasons were responsible for the closure of Shri. Shahu Chhatrapati Mills.

1) Discrimination by Government in Textile Industry Sector:

At the time when Shahu Mill closed down, there were large number of private textile mills in the areas of Ichalkaranji, Malegaon, Bhiwandi and even today. There is a huge disparity between the power supply required by Shahu Mill and all these private textile mills and the unit rate charged for electricity, this disparity exists even today. These textile mills still get subsidy on electricity bill from the government. A discussion with the administrative officers and labor leaders of Shahu Mills revealed that, at the time when Shahu Mills closed down, the private textile mills was charged Rs.1.50 Rs. per unit, the same rate for Shahu Mill was Rs.4.50. to 4.75 Rs. per unit. This resulted in additional burden of electricity tariff on Shahu mills as compared to private textile mills. Due to this, the production cost of Shahu Mill increased and the price of the manufactured goods also increased. As a result, cloth from Shahu Mills was expensive as compared to other private textile mills, so the market consumption of Shahu Mills's products decreased and the financial situation of the mills started to deteriorate.

2) Shortage of Textile Upgradation Fund from Government:

Regular textile upgradation fund is provided by the government to any government textile mill for the upgradation of new technology in production, facilities, buildings etc. But the researcher

observed that regular textile upgradation funds were not provided to Shahu mills by the government. Therefore, the production process in Shahu Mill was being carried out on the basis of old technology. The extent of this was falling on the goods manufactured in Shahu Mills and better quality goods were available in the market at cheaper prices than Shahu Mills. As a result, Shahu Mills was losing financially.

3) Apathy towards labor laws in private textile mills:

Till 1967 Shahu Mill was managed by Budhgaonkar Trading Company, in 1967 Shahu Mill came under the supervision of Maharashtra Government. Due to the control of Shahu mill by the government, Industrial dispute act, Minimum wages act, PFI act, Payment of bonus act, ESIC act etc. all the laws were strictly followed as compared to the private textile mills and the workers got the benefits of all these laws despite the financial condition of the mill. As a result, the balance between the economic profit and the remuneration paid to the workers was disturbed. Instead of the government focusing on this situation and meeting all this from the financial benefit of Shahu Mill, it was necessary for the government to meet some financial part of this, this would have helped to improve the financial situation of Shahu Mill.

4) Irregular supply of raw materials:

After 1967, Shahu Mill came under the control of the Government of Maharashtra, but it was noticed that there was no regularity in the raw material supplied to Shahu Mill by the Government. These include cotton, coal, materials required for chemical processes on textiles, etc. The researcher got information from the respondents that for 2 to 3 months before the closure of Shahu Mill, workers had no work in Shahu Mill due to irregular supply of raw material. From this it is clear that due to the indifferent policy of the government, the financial condition of Shahu Mills worsened. It has to be mentioned here that in the post-independence era, there were eight textile mills namely Solapur, Amravati, Nagpur, Kalmeshwar, Mumbai, Nanded, Amalner and Shahu mills under the control of the Maharashtra government and all these eight textile mills have closed down today due to the apathetic policy of the government.

Discussion and Conclusion:

After reviewing all the above information, it can be concluded that a substantial contribution in the industrial policy of Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, as well as in the economic development of the contemporaneous Kolhapur and the Kolhapur district in the post-independence era, Shahu Chhatrapati Mills appears to have gained an important position. Through these mills, Shahu Maharaj embraced global industrialization and also promoted the scientific approach in production methods. Over time due to various reasons Shri. Shahu Chhatrapati Mills closed down. The most important and major reason for closure of Shahu Mills is the wrong and indifferent policy of the government towards Shahu Mill and other government textile mills. At the same time, lack of

acceptance of changing technology is also the reason for the closure of Shahu Mill.

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