Chapter – IV

Diwan Bahadur, Sir, Ragunathrao Vyankaji Sabnis: His Life and Work

(1857-1948)
राजर्षि शाहु
दिवाण-बहादूर, स्थुनाथराव व्यांकाजी साहित
Chapter – IV
Diwan Bahadur, Sir, Ragunathrao Vyankaji Sabnis : His Life and Work
(1857-1948)

Like "Rango Bapuji", Diwan Bahadur R. V. Sabnis rendered great service to Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, of Kolhapur who is regarded as social revolutionary in modern India.

'Sir, Ragunathrao vyankaji Sabnis, B. A. Kt., C. I. E. (1857-1948) was the most trust-worthy and loyal Diwan of Kolhapur State, and was regarded as the "Grand old man, and Dadabhai Nauroji" of Kolhapur. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, of Kolhapur (1884-1922) was one of the greatest social revolutionaries ever produced by modern India. 'Shri, Shahu Maharaj, of Kolhapur remains immortal not as a ruler of the native state but as a champion struggling for the realisation of Social equality and social justice.

'Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj’ who dedicated his life to the cause of social reform in India, was undoubtedly the greatest ruler that ascended the throne of Kolhapur in the last quarter of 19th
century. 'Shri Shahu Maharaj' is remembered for his unique contribution to the intellectual formation and social upheaval in modern Maharashtra as one of the pioneers of social, liberation, movement in modern India. As a radical reformer, he was a link between 'Mahatma Jyotiba Phule', and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

In his (Shahu Maharaj) reign of twenty eight years, Kolhapur had made amazing strides both as regards the Industrial Progress and social reforms. He remained an indefatigable protagonist of the abolition of the caste, distinctions in Hindu Society. He established numerous schools for the benefit of the under privileged classes exclusively. He started students hostels, and donated generously to educational Institutions in Poona, Ahamadnagar, Nasik and other places. In his own state, he formulated laws, which sought to abolish untouchability in the spheres of medical treatment, and education. Shahu Maharaj championed the cause of the untouchables and worked hard for their uplift.

Such was a progressive Kolhapur State under Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj and luckily R. V. Sabnis was a loyal and faithful Diwan of Shahu Maharaj. Sir R. V. Sabnis served as a Diwan of Kolhapur from, 1898 to 1925. Earlier he was native tutor to Shahu Maharaj and then
Huzur Chitnis and Plague commissioner as well as C. R. O. for some time.

Chhatrapati Shahu's plans and measures were sincerely implemented by Sir R. V. Sabnis (Ragunathrao vyankaji Sabnis) a Diwan of Kolhapur State. When one can remember Shahu Maharaj's name, no one forgets Ragunathrao vyankahi Sabnis's service to the Kolhapur State. Sir Ragunathrao vyankahi Sabnis spent his whole life for the welfare and progress of Kolhapur State.

Sir R. V. Sabnis was one of the celebrated personalities and Jewel of C.K.P. community. He was silent worker. Therefore in this chapter an attempt has been made to study his role in making modern Maharashtra. It is interesting to know that Rango Bapuji served Satara Chhatrapati for getting justice while Sir R. V. Sabnis served the Kolhapur State and helped Shahu Maharaj's mission.

**Early Life of Sir R. V. Sabnis,(1857-1893):-**

Prabhus or Lords are returned as numbering '286', and as found scattered over the whole state. They are of two classes, Kayastha Prabhus and Pathare Prabhus. Most of Kolhapur Prabhus are Kayastha Prabhus. 'Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (1627-1680) had great faith in Prabhus and raised them to high military and civil posts.
The Kolhapur Kayastha Prabhus had believed to have come from the Konan and Satara, since the rise of the Maratha State of Kolhapur (1710). ¹

**Family History:**

The ancestors of R. V. Sabnis were migrated from Jnandavgad to konkan first and later on from konkan to Murud- Janjira and entered in the service of 'Senapati Ghorpade' who bestowed on them as 'Inam' the hereditary post of 'Subnis' of the fort of 'Gajendragad' which is now situated in Karnataka State and where one branch of the 'Ghorpade family' was ruling. ²

The post of 'Subnisi' continued in their family till Raghunath's father, a representative of the eldest branch broke away, seeking livelihood in Kolhapur State, at about the early forties. R. V. Sabnis's father 'Vyanketesh Raghunath Sabnis' later on entered the service of Kagal. Jahagir, which was one of feudatory Jahagirdar of Kolhapur State. The Jahagirdar of Kagal was Ghatage family which was as old as other Maratha ruling families. The Ghatage's acquired their Jahagir from Adilshahi ruler, first historical Jahagir Sir R. V. Sabnis's father joined the service in Revenue department. ³
Vyankatesh' the father of sir R. V. Sabnis was settled in Kagal town, where he stayed with his family. At this time Vyankatesh's salary was not very high and family was living in poor condition. Vyankatesh' wife was 'Saraswatibai'. She gave birth to a female child in 1852, whose name was Gayabai. After three years 'Saraswatibai' gave birth to a second male child whose name was 'Narayan', the elder brother of Raghunathrao.

Birth (01st April, 1857 A.D.):-

The year 1857 was important in the family of 'Sabnis' because in this year Raghunathrao was born on 01st April 1857, at Kagal.

'Raghunathrao' was a third child of 'Saraswatibai' and Vyankatesh. On 01st April 1857 was the day of Ramnavami, therefore, this third child was named as 'Raghunathrao' the another name of Lord Rama, and 'Raghunathrao' was also the name of Grandfather of sir R. V. Sabnis. But the pleasure and joy of this third son (sir R. V. Sabnis's) did not last long. Because at that time there was severe famine and epidemic of cholera that broke out in South India. Kolhapur state was also affected by this epidemic of cholera. Many persons were dying every day. And pious 'Saraswatibai'
received a severe blow of the death of her husband Vyankatesh in 1859, and Raghunathrao and brother and sister became orphans.  

Sabnis Family Shifted to Kolhapur (1859):-

At this critical time 'Raghunath's widowed mother, then had to seek shelter of one of her relatives, her sister's son 'Rajaram Vyankatesh Chitnis'. The later was an Inam holder. This family still is in the Kolhapur State. He was also a paid Servant of the state having served in the education and revenue departments.  

Early Education Of R. V. Sabnis:-

Raghunathrao's early education was started in Sardar School at Kolhapur and his one school mate was 'Jayasingrao Ghatage', who later on became the Jahagirdar of Kagal (Sr.) and the natural father of 'Chhtrapati' Shahu Maharaj' and 'Bapusaheb Ghatage'. This friendship and intimacy between Jayasingrao alias Abasaheb Ghatage and Raghunathrao continued up to the death of 'Jayasingrao Ghatage'  

Another royal students and companion of Raghunathrao was 'Nagojirao Patankar' who later on was adopted for the 'Gadi' of
Kolhapur by Babasaheb Maharaj and became future Chhatrapati of Kolhapur and renamed as 'Rajaram Maharaj.' (1866-1870)

This shows that sir R. V. Sabnis was fortunate to have good relations with the Chhatrapatis house of Kolhapur. Sir R. V. Sabnis continued his good relations and served Kolhapur Chhatrapati’s dynasty throughout his life.

Right from the beginning sir R. V. Sabnis was clever, hard working and studious. He liked English and Sanskrit subjects very much. The year 1872 was an important year in the life of sir R. V. Sabnis, because he completed his secondary education from Rajaram High School, Kolhapur, from where he passed his matriculation examination in 1872.

Marriage (1872):

Another important event that took place in the year 1872, was the marriage of Raghunathrao, with Janakibai, who was born in 1862, in the ‘Subnis family’ of ‘Torgal Jahagir’.

At the time of marriage, Raghunathrao’s age was about 14, and Janakibai’s age was about nine (09) years. At that time there was a practice of early marriages, which Raghunathrao had to face.
College Education:-

Due to the efforts of Rajarampant Chitnis, Raghunathrao went to Bombay and joined Elphinstone college, where he started his higher college education. He completed his college education with the help of his relatives, where he was staying because right from beginning Raghunathrao had to struggle very hard for subsistence or livelihood.

Raghunathrao liked Sanskrit and English Subjects which he selected for his B. A. course. He passed B. A. Examination of Bombay University in 1877, from Elphinstone college, with Sanskrit and English Subjects.\textsuperscript{12}

Sir R. V. Sabnis And Education Deptt. of Bombay Presidency (1879-1893):-

It is interesting to note the meeting between Raghunathrao and Justice M. G. Ranade and Vishweshwarayya, who were all serving in Dhule for sometime. These three men had good relations with each other.

While working as head master at Dhule Sir Raghunathrao came in contact with Justice Mahadeo Govind Ranade and Sir M.
Vishweshwarayya. The period was between May 1879 to 1881. Ranade was first class sub Judge, while Sir Vishweshwarayya was working there as civil Engineer. His meetings with Ranade were occasional, but he was greatly influenced by Ranade’s approach towards life. Both men had some common qualities. They lived a non-attached life amidst so many attachments. Both were very gently and never used harsh language. Both were by nature compromising and always tried to reconcile with opposite groups.

Sir Raghunathrao served in the Educational Department for 14 years i.e. from 1879 to 1893, in the capacity, as headmaster at 'Dhule', Poona and Thana. He taught English and Sanskrit to higher standards. He was very methodical in his work. He was always available to the students, to solve their difficulties. Many of his students rose to be eminent leaders, men of professions and social workers.  

His Family Life:-

As narrated earlier, Sir Raghunathrao was married with ‘Janakibai’ in 1872. In all Sir Raghunathrao and ‘Janakibai had 8 children. Their first child was female which died in infancy. The second female child Anusayabai was born in 1882. The third male
child Rambhau was born in 1883. The fourth female child Manful was born in 1884. The fifth male child Gajananrao was born in 1887. After that Janakibai gave birth to one male and one female child that died prematurely. Their last child was Laxmanrao alias Baburao whose birth took place in (1903).14

Thus, the family life of Raghunathrao was satisfactory and truthful.

R. V. Subnis And The Kolhapur State:-

The year 1893 was a memorable and important year, because in this year, Sir Raghunathrao was appointed as a native tutor to H.H. Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur and entered in the state service which continued up to his retirement from the post of Diwanship in 1926. Thus he spent many fruitful years in the state service.

While he was appointed as tuter to Shahu Maharaj in 1893,'Dhanajay Keer’ the famous biographer writers aptly about Sabanis as follows

"Sabanis came of a family belonging to the Kayastha Prabhu Community, which was well known in Maratha History for its loyalty, intelligence and ability in civil and military administration. There was a keen rivalry between the Brahmin Politicians and the Prabhu
Paliticians during peshawa rule and the later suffered socio-religious persecution at the hands of the peshawas. The Brahmins of Kolhapur tried to dissuade, the Maharaja from appointing Sabnis to the high post but failed. Sabnis shared Shahu's social views and outlook and he proved to be a loyal, able, and a bright stateman in years that followed.\textsuperscript{15}

The official record narrates the appointment of R.V. Sabnis in the following way.

"S.M. Fraser, I.C.S., the tutor and Guardian to His Highness was assisted by a native tutor Mr. Krishnaji Bhikaji Gokhale since 1889. But in 1895, Mr. Gokhale went on long leave for two years, and Mr. Raghunathrao Vyankatesh Sabnis, B. A. of the Bombay University, Acting Headmaster of Thana High School, whose service were lent to the state, by Government was appointed in his place. He joined his new appointment in January, 1893, at Dharwar. This new native tutor remained life long friend and trusted Diwan of Maharaja in later part of his life. Maharaja remained at Dharwar up to 15\textsuperscript{th} November, 1893, the date of the end of his tutelage.\textsuperscript{16}
Hujur Chitnis:-

After Shahu Maharaj was invested with full powers on the recommendation of his guardian S. M. Fraser, Raghunathrao Sabnis was appointed 'Hujur Chitnis' the new post created by Shahu Maharaj in 1894, 'Hujur Chitnis' means private secretary to H. H. Shahu Chhatrapati.17

On the 14th April, 1894 i.e. within a fortnight after his installation, His Highness 'Shahu Chhatrapati' specially created a new office called the "Huzur Office" of the secretariate for the supervision of the entire executive work of the state and a new post of principal officer, in charge of the office designated as "Hujur Chitnis" of the Chief Secretary. In addition, the experienced persons from the state service known for their efficiency were transferred to the "Hujur Office". Further all orders passed by His Highness were to be issued under the signature of "Hujur Chitnis", who had to sign in the name of "By order of His Highness the Maharaja". Raosaheb R. V. Sabnis, the former native tutor to Maharaja was appointed the first 'Hujur Chitnis' and he began to function as 'Hujur Chitnis' from the 14th April, 1894. This was the major, remarkable measure taken by His Highness, Shahu Chhatrapati, since the office ultimately succeeded in curbing to
a great extent the powers of the members of the Council of Administration.\textsuperscript{18}

**Chief Revenue Officer (1896):**

R. V. Sabnis worked well as 'Hujur Chitnis' for one and half year only, and Shahu Maharaj was very much pleased with the work of Mr. Sabnis. Therefore Shahu Maharaj promoted R. V. Sabnis on June 24, 1896 to the post of Chief Revenue Officer, in place of 'Vaidya' who had retired.\textsuperscript{19}

**The Appointed Of R. V. Sabnis as a Diwan Of Kolhapur State:**

Right from the beginning Shahu Chhatrapati desiring to raise the standard of efficiency in administration, was in search of good officers, who could be helpful to him in his administrative work. Diwan M. K. Taraporewala felt uneasy and began to go on leave now and then.

It was Shahu’s firm belief that a coalition of different castes in the administration would hold the balance properly. As a sursubhe (Chief Revenue Officer) Shri R. V. Sabnis did a great work and increased the income of revenue of the Kolhapur state. Shahu was
much impressed by the personality of R. V. Sabnis. Who was calm, astute and expert in an administration.

When Sabnis was Sarsubhe (Chief Revenue Officer) in 1896, at that time, ‘Meharjibhai Taraporewala’ was working as Diwan of Kolhapur. Shahu Maharaj was not happy with this Diwan. Though ‘Taraporewala’ was a perfect gentleman, he was just like a square peg in a round hole. He was alien to the state. Moreover, he being a choice of the ‘Bombay Government’, Shahu Maharaj was averse to a choice being thrust on him. He wanted to appoint his tutor, friend, guide and philosopher, ‘R. V. Sabnis’ as the Diwan of Kolhapur. He submitted to the ‘Bombay Government’ that his state being a small state and financially in bad condition, he may be allowed, to appoint Diwan on comparatively a small salary. As Taraporewala also was not keen to continue as Diwan, he resigned on grounds of health and Sir Raghunathrao was duly appointed as the Diwan of Kolhapur state.

But his appointment created a furore in the Brahmin Community. They were reconciled to a Parse rather than to a Diwan from any other community. All Brahmins were all against this appointment of a Non-Brahmin Diwan. Such thing had not happened
since the days of the Great Shivaji. A Kshatriya king should have a Brahmin Prime Minister, was their line of thinking. Hence they, with the help of Kesari group of Poona carried a character assassination campaign against Sir Raghunathrao. They adopted the meanest practice and tried to impress upon Shahu Maharaj that Sir Raghunathrao was a SPY of the Bombay Government, brought to keep a watch on him. Shahu Maharaj treated all the slandering with utter contempt. He challenged them to prove the charges which the slanderers could not prove Sir Raghunathrao was to get a salary of Rs. 500/- per month i.e. nearly 33% P. C. of what Taraporewala was getting. Shahu Maharaj deliberately fixed such a low salary.  

He wanted to convey to the Bombay Government that he could not afford to give higher salary to his Diwan. This was to avoid any other choice being foisted on him by the Bombay Government. But he was also aware that he was giving much less salary, than his Diwan deserved. So Shahu Maharaj arranged to give some other facilities to him in order to compensate the low salary. In addition his salary he was provided with three or four vehicles for transport and a post of servants. Besides Shahu Maharaj arranged to send daily
milk, vegetables and other household items to his residence. After some years he raised his salary to RS. 600/- per month.\footnote{21}

The appointment of 'Mr. Sabnis' as a Diwan or Prime Minister was not liked by the Brahmins. Because whatever the official position which 'Mr. Sabnis' occupied, he was his (Shahu's) Chief adviser, in all his work which he did for the non-Brahmins the Brahmins realized the dangers of an astute non-Brahmin politician like 'Mr. Sabnis. since Diwan was on the side of Maharaja and tried they to remove him. Three influential Brahmins, 'Mr. Tilak', who was then a member of the Bombay Legislative council, Mr. B. N. Joshi', who was Chief Judge of Kolhapur and 'Dr. Dhondopant Borkar', who was then the trusted physician of His Highness urged upon His Highness the necessity of sending Mr. Sabnis back to British Service, on the ground that they had evidence of his being a traitor to the Maharaja himself. The Maharaja asked them to prove it, which they never could do, and their attempt only strengthened his confidence in 'Mr. Sabnis'.\footnote{22}

Col. J. W. Wray was appointed political Agent on January 18th, 1897, 'Wray' was young and experienced to start with, he was on cordial terms with the Chhatrapati, the friend of his father. 'Wray's' relations with Diwan 'Meharjibai Taraporewala' were not good
enough. This Diwan went on long leave for one year from September, 5th 1898, prior to his retirement and so ‘R. V. Sabnis finally was appointed as a Diwan of Kolhapur from (September, 5th 1898). 23

Since ‘Khan Bahadur Meharjibhai Kuvarji’, C. I. E. Diwan was absent on privilege leave for 03 months from 14th March, 1898, Rao Bahadur Raghunathrao Vyankaji Sabnis, Chief Revenue Officer was appointed to act on his place. 24

Further on 26th August the Government notification came out regarding the appointment of ‘Khansaheb Rustomaji Palanji’, the Chief Police Officer as the officer on special duty in the office of Diwan from 21/06/1898 to 25/08/1898. 25

As a Diwan or Prime Minister of Kolhapur State ‘Raghunathrao Sabnis’ worked from 1898 to 1926. His tenure of Diwanship witnessed many ups and downs. During this period (1898 to 1922) his master and pupil, Shahu Maharaj had to confront with many difficulties. But Sir R. V. Sabnis supported the progressive policies of Shahu Maharaj and firmly stood behind Shahu Maharaj in hours of need and difficulty.
It is really difficult to assess the ‘Raghunathrao’s role properly in development and progress of the Kolhapur State. Due to his unattached and unassuming nature, he never tried to take credit for himself for the work which he did for the state. Hence it cannot be denied that he was one of the builders of the Kolhapur State.

He whole-heartedly, co-operated Shahu Maharaja’s policy of Harijan uplift movement. He was one of the main architects in making the education, a mass movement.

R. V. Sabnis – As Plague And Famine Commissioner

In addition to Diwanship Shri R. V. Sabnis worked as a famine and plague commissioner, from time to time, whenever there was necessity. As a plague and famine commissioner, Sir R. V. Sabnis introduced many new measures to prevent famine and plague, in the Kolhapur State. 26

Close on the heels of famine, a terrible epidemic of plague broke out early in 1896 in Bombay. From December 1896 spread over to Karachi, Bivandi and Poona. The Kolhapur Darbar had to forearm itself against the advent of this calamity which raged almost through out the year 1896. In villages belonging to the British Districts of Satara and Belgaum and to the Southern Maharashtra
State’s lying on the northern and eastern boundary of the Kolhapur State. Precautionary measures were adopted by the state against its invasion of the Kolhapur State, so far the measures had proved largely successful. This all work was carried on by Sir R. V. Sabnis.27

Measures were adopted to check the plague and the famine. Arrangements were made not only to sell grass on cheap rates but also to provide fodder, for those animals, which could not be cared for, by their owners. Suspension of land revenue, too was granted liberally.28

Sir R. V. Sabnis as a plague commissioner issued some important notification in which the strict rules were made to follow for the subject of Kolhapur, for preventing plague. As regards combating the menace of plague, which came to the Kolhapur State from the adjoining districts of Satara and the state of Sangli and Miraj. Sir Sabnis adopted following relief measures.

1) Appointment of special plague commissioner for the state.

2) Organization of Quarantine Camps.

3) Provision of medical facilities.

4) Provision of sanitation and clearing facilities.
5) Provision of hut settlement outside Kolhapur town.

6) Supervision of houses in Kolhapur town.

7) Making available the services of all Government officers.

Thus R. V. Subnis proved to be a most successful plague and famine commissioner. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj appreciated the work of R. V. Subnis.

R. V. Subnis As A Diwan of Kolhapur State (1898-1926)

'Sir R. V. Subnis' was a lifelong friend and trusted Diwan of Shahu maharaj. 'Sabnis' not only served under 'Shahu' but he had remained as Diwan, under Rajaram Maharaja, the successor of Shahu also. He was Diwan of Kolhapur from 1898 to 1926. Sir Raghunathrao's role in the development and progress of Kolhapur State was great and vital. Due to his unattached and unassuming nature, he never tried to take credit for any thing, which he did for the state. But it cannot be denied that he was one of the builders of the state.

Chhatrapati Shahu (1894-1922) was a one of progressive rulers and makers of modern India. Shahu Maharaj was also a great social reformer as well.
‘Shahu Maharaj’ spent his whole life for the spread of education among the non-Brahmin people and also started a crusade against untouchability. Due to the work of Shahu Maharaj Kolhapur State attained great name and popularity. All plans, measures, declared by Shahu Maharaj were executed and materialized by his trusted lifelong Diwan of R. V. Sabnis, who worked quietly and supported the progressive, social views of his master Shahu Maharaj firmly. Therefore Shahu Maharaj on many occasions, publicly declared that ‘Sabnis’ was his chief adviser.

Due to the support and help from ‘R. V. Sabnis’, Shahu Maharaj overcame many difficulties in his life. Sabnis’s greatness was that he never took the credit of any great work, even, though, he was behind that. He was a silent worker.

In his life time ‘Shahu Maharaj’ had to face, many problems, such as vedokt controversy, recruitment of non-Brahmin men in the state service, and spread of Education among non-Brahmin, and backward classes, opening of the various boarding for various castes, eradicating of untouchability from his state, etc. And R. V. Sabnis supported and executed all the plans and the measures, issued by
Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj for social equality. Therefore Kolhapur, owed indebtedness to ‘Sabnis’ equally as Shahu Maharaj.

The backward classes had long in suffering, socially and educationally, and superstition was one of the main causes of their depression. His Highness Shahu Maharaj had therefore to introduce reforms in the state that touched not only the social side but also affected deep-rooted convictions, concerning religion. The vedokta movement and the creation of the ‘Kshatra Jagadguru’ were the outcome of the intense desire of H. H. Shahu Maharaj to run the social machine on proper foundation. Thus the whole career of H. H. Shahu Maharaj a was all round a bitter struggle, against vested interests, both social and religious. It was a heavy uphill work, and in that work, Mr. Sabnis had to render him loyal help and there a great part of the odium that attached to the task. His Highness Shahu Maharaj had the satisfaction of seeing his work put on fairly sound basis.

Vedokta Controversy And Role Of R. V. Sabnis (1900 to 1905):

Unfortunately Rajarshi Shahu Chhatrapati was compelled by the circumstances to devote all his energies from 1900 to 1905 A. D.
firmly establishing his right to observe the vedic ritual, in place of the then current puranic ritual, in the performance of all religious rites, and ceremonies in his family, which were openly and vehemently challenged not only by his family priest Mr. Narayanrao Rajopadhye, but also by practically the entire Brahmin community of Kolhapur, strongly supported by the religious and social leaders of Brahmmins of Puna and other parts of Maharashtra. In this Vedokta Controversy Sir R. V. Sabnis extended all type of support to Shahu Maharaj. He also gave moral support to Shahu Maharaj. At the time when it was essential to Shahu Maharaj. At last this socio-religious struggle of a very intensive nature ultimately came to an end in 1905 A. D. with the declaration of the final decision of Lord Curzon, the Viceroy and Governer General of India.30

The Title, Rao Bahadur Ship (1905):-

The year 1905 was very important in the life of R. V. Sabnis because he received the title of Rao Bahadur from British Government. The Darbar of Kolhapur was glad and happy about the victory. Ferris held a Darbar on June 26th, 1905 and gave Rao Bahadur title to Mr. Sabnis. Ferris said on this occasion that “His marked abilities and clear intellect have contributed to bring the
Kolhapur state through the years of difficulty and to place it, as it is now in the position of one of the best administered native states of Indian Empire." By this quotation we understand that Mr. Sabnis was one of the best administrators. 31

The Society For The Promotion Of Education Amongst The Untouchable Classes (1908):-

The problems of untouchable were very dear to the heart of Shahul Maharaja. In the month of February 1908, he founded an educational society with the object of spreading education among the untouchable classes of the Kolhapur State. Rao Bahadur Sabnis was the president, and Shri G. K. Kadam and A. B. Olkar, B. A., were the secretaries. They had at time, secured an annual subscription of Rs. 300/- and the society expected a subscription help from his highness Shahu Chhatrapati.

Later on in 1908 Miss Violet Clerke 'Depress classes Boys Hostel' was started and Sir R. V. Sabnis became one of the members of the Managing Committee of this Boarding. Right from the beginning Sabnis was against the practice of untouchability. 32
Kayasth Prabhu Boarding (1912):-

In the year 1912, Shahu Maharaja started Kayasth Prabhu Boarding for 'Prabhu Community'. Shri Shahu donated a small building besides an annual grant of Rs. 50/- and Rs. 500/- were paid as donation by Rao Bahadur Sabnis. On the auspicious occasion of the thread ceremony of his youngest son. In 1915 Shahu Maharaja donated a sum of Rs. 500/- to this Institution and gave it the name of his trusted Diwan, Rao Bahadur Raghunathrao Vyankaji Sabnis. 33

Rajkumars And R. V. Sabnis (1915):-

When first world war broke out, Shahu's two sons were studying in England. They returned to Kolhapur in 1915. Then for some time they had joined the Evening College at Allahabad, but as the climate of Allahabad did not suit them, so they returned to Kolhapur. They continued receiving instructions in administrative work in the different departments of the state under Rao Bahadur Raghunathrao Vyankaji Sabnis Diwan of Kolhapur.

Thus prince Rajaram was working enthusiastically under the guidance of Diwan Sabnis. After much experience and encouragement, prince Rajaram in September 1918, praised him as
the "ablest minister, a friend of the royal family and one to whom his father had fatherly respect."  

C. I. E. (1914):-

Meanwhile in the new year's honours (1914) Diwan Sabnis was made a C. I. E. It was a further recognition of his great ability and steadfast devotion.

Arya Samaj And R. V. Sabnis:-

The Rajaram High School and College, the Premier Education Institution in the State were finding financial difficulties, on the advice of R. V. Sabnis, Shahu handed over these two Institutions to Arya Samaj in 1919. Both the Institutions were administered very efficiently by the Arya Samaj.

Grant of Patil-Watan And Gold Medal (1911):-

On June 22, 1911, George V was crowned in London, Shahu could not attend the coronation ceremony, as his visit would have put a great pressure on his purse. But he duly sent a congratulatory address, through the Government of Bombay. On June 22, Shahu held a Darbar declaring his loyalty to the king Emperor.
On the day of Darbar 22 June, 1911, Diwan Bahadur Sabnis was presented with a gold medal and a grant of Patil-Watan.  

Diwan was next to Chhatrapati in the administrative system of Kolhapur. Diwan was the Prime Minister of the State. Sir R. V. Sabnis was a successful Diwan and supervise all the administrative work of the state. Besides, the Diwan R. V. Sabnis controlled matters Judicial, Political and Feudatory of Police, Finance, Education and Medical and of Jail, Leper Asylum etc.

Death of Shahu Maharaj (1922):

The most tragic event in the year, 1922, that plunged the whole population of the state, into profound grief, was the sudden and premature demise, of His Highness Col. Shri Shahu Chhatrapati Maharaja – G. C. S. I., G. C. I. E., G. C. V. O., L. L. D., M. R. A. S., at Bombay on 06\textsuperscript{th} May, 1922.

Chhatrapati Shahu's death was a shock to all but it was severest below to Diwan R. V. Sabnis. Sabnis was very sad, because he served, Shahu Maharaj from 1893. Earlier he was Shahu's tutor, and later on became his trustworthy Diwan and lifelong friend and
philosopher and Guide. Therefore the day on which Shahu's death took place, was the blackest day in the life of R. V. Sabnis. 39

**Memoirs Of Shahu's Chhatrapati (1924):**

After Shahu's death, 'Rajaram' the son of Shahu became the next Chhatrapati of Kolhapur State, who ruled from 1922 to 1940. R. V. Sabnis continued as a Diwan up to 1926. His first great task was, to write a biography of Shahu Chhatrapati. Therefore Diwan R. V. Sabnis and 'Rajaram Maharaj', selected Prof. A. B. Latthe for writing biography of Shahu Chhatrapati. Prof. Latthe was earlier in the state service and Professor of English, in Rajaram College. Diwan Bahaddur, Sir R. V. Sabnis extended all types of helps, to A. B. Latthe, who wrote "Memoirs Of Shahu's Chhatrapati" into two volumes and published in 1924. 40

**R. V. Sabnis And His 'Notes On Kolhapur':**

Sir R. V. Sabnis, right from his studentship was studious and he had earned mastery over English language. But unfortunately, he did not produce any great literary work. His only writing and book known to us is the "Notes On Kolhapur." Which he wrote at the instance of Kolhapur Darbar, in 1928. The book runs into 88 pages and it has
two parts. The part first deals with, situation and Aspect, Early History of Kolhapur, Mauryas, Marathas, Shivaji the great (1674 to 1680), Sambhaji, Rajaram, and Shivaji – II (1700 to 1712), Sambhaji, II (1712 to 1760), Shivaji, III (1760 to 1812), Shambhu (1812 to 1821), Shahaji (1821 to 1837), Shivaji, IV (1837 to 1866), Rajaram, II (1866 to 1870), Shivaji, V (1870 to 1883), Shahu, II (1874 to 1922) and minority period, Rajaram-III, and in the part II, he narrated an account of Temples, Public Buildings, and Places of Interest.  

Honour Of Kt. (1925):-

On the new year of 1925, British Government conferred on Sir R. V. Sabnis with the title of “Knight Hood”, for the efficiency of administration and great service rendered to Kolhapur state. In this connection Sir Leslie Wilson, Governor of Bombay and W. B. Ferris, former political agent of Kolhapur, congratulated him, by sending their letters to R. V. Sabnis, for his success.  

R. V. Sabnis’s Work After Retirement From Diwan-Ship (1926-1948):-

Sir R. V. Sabnis retired from Diwanship of Kolhapur State at 2\textsuperscript{nd} January 1926. But he stayed in the Kolhapur city himself. Fortunately Sabnis was associated with some important works during
his retired period. He was fellow of the Royal Society Of Arts, Asiatic Society of Bombay Branch. He also assumed some important honorary posts of the State during this retired period.

**Chairman Of District Rajaram Maharaj Ilakha Panchayat:**

Rajaram Maharaj the successor of Shahu Maharaja introduced Ilakha Panchayat system in his state on 14th April, 1927. This was a bold step undertaken by Rajaram Maharaj and the president of this body was R. V. Sabnis for some years. The panchayats have been divided into three classes: the Ilakha Panchayat, the Talukha Panchayat and the Village Panchayat. The Ilakha Panchayat was the head of this Panchayat system. The Ilakha Panchayat is not merely one institution but a complete net-work of self governing local institutions in the village in the state. The panchayats have been introduced with the object of training the people in the administration of their civic affairs, through their elected representatives. The President of the Ilakha Panchayat is an ex-officio member and chairman of the standing committee in addition to the five members.
Chairman Of The Bank Of Kolhapur (1926):-

In 1926 the Bank of Kolhapur was established in Kolhapur for meeting the needs of people. Sabnis was a Social worker and he became the Chairman of the Board of Directors of this bank right from its inception. He remained Chairman of this Bank, for more than 10 years and the Bank of Kolhapur achieved great success and financial stability under the chairmanship of Sir R.V. Sabnis. Even today the Bank of Kolhapur is famous and working for the poor and common people.45

A Judge Of The Supreme Court Of Kolhapur (1931):-

On the anniversary of the Coronation day i.e. 31st May, 1931 there was welcome change in the administration of the Justice. His Highness Rajaram Maharaj was pleased to establish an Independent High Court, consisting of three judges and the Supreme Court of his Highness.

Mr. Sabnis was appointed as Honorary judge of the Supreme Court of Judicature Kolhapur in 1931.
As a Diwan of Kolhapur, he studied the State and British laws and revenue laws. Therefore, Rajaram Maharaj appointed him as honorary judge of the Supreme Court. R.V. Sabnis discharged this duty honestly and disposed of some cases impartially. He also gave sound advice to Rajaram Maharaj when there were knotty and complicated cases before him.46

A Chairman Of The Kolhapur Sugar Mills Ltd. Kolhapur (1932):-

Sugarcane was major crop produced in Kolhapur State. The land was fertile on the banks of rivers Panchaganga and others. Therefore, to prepare a sugar from a sugarcane, Kolhapur Darbar started The Kolhapur Sugar Mills Ltd., Kolhapur at Kasaba Bavada and R.V. Sabnis was the Chairman of Board of Directors.47

Bhakti Seva Vidyapitha:-

Chhatrapati Shahu had a good contact with Theosophical Society and had a good contact with his Akabarian Zeal. Shahu had already tried to establish contact with the theosophical society, through his friend W.D. Tophankhane and had invited Dr. Annie Besant and other leaders to Kolhapur in 1915. Sir R.V. Sabnis was a
friend of Tophakhane also, who was the founder of Bhakti Seva Vidyapitha. Sir R.V. Sabnis was also a Chairman of Vidyapitha Society for some time and worked in the Managing Council of the Society.  

**Satyashodhak Movement And Sir R.V. Sabnis:**

The leader of the Movement was, of course, the dynamic Shahu Maharaj, the ruler of Kolhapur from 1884 to 1922. There were also others who played an equally significant role. These were his, Diwan, R.V. Sabnis, his Revenue Commissioner, B.V. Jadhav, a staunch Satya Shodhak, Rao bahadur Dongare and Prof. A.B. Latthe, the Non-Brahmin leader and the biographer of Shahu. All of them had been fully exposed to the intellectual climate of the time and were 'active Satyashodhaks'. Shahu Maharaj too was highly appreciative of the Philosophy of the 'Satya Shodhak Movement' and some of his reforms have, as their basis, the Satya Shodhak Philosophy.  

**His Death (1948)**

Ultimately Sir R.V. Sabnis breathed his last on Friday, 17th September, 1948 at Midnight 00.15 due to old age. He lived for 91 years, 5 months and 15 days i.e. about 92 years.
Balasaheb Patil, the Editor of Satyavadi, wrote editorial and writes that "R.V. Sabnis was grand old man and Dadabhai Nauroji of Kolhapur. He adds that with "the death of R.V. Sabnis the Maharshi of Kolhapur was passed away from the earth. R.V. Sabnis was a great and visionary link between past and present."50

The ruling Chhatrapati Shahaji Maharaj (1948) said about R.V. Sabnis on his death "He desired it, he deserved it and he had rendered" distinguished service to the Gadi and the royal house of Kolhapur."51

Rajaram Maharaj in one speech (1924) speaks very high about the work of R.V. Sabnis in the following words before Governor of Bombay, who had arrived in Kolhapur.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I cannot now even leave this subject unless I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to my Diwan Rao Bahadur Sir R.V. Sabnis. He has all along been staunch and loyal friend of my family. But since the death of my father he has been more than a friend to me. Ordinarily his long and meritorious service would have and entitled him to a rest both long and happy. But I know that he has love towards me that has inspired him to stay
by me in this rather difficulty period of my life and Gentlemen, as days pass, I have learnt to value his counsel more and more. 52

Lastly, we conclude with the opinion expressed by Rajarshi Shahu Chhatrapati regarding the greatness of R.V. Sabnis on February 11th, 1922, he wrote to 'H. Thompson', member of the Viceroy's 'executive council, that 'Bapusaheb was his brother and was a great help to him in all the administrative branches of his state and he had been also very fortunate in having a Diwan like Sabnis. Had it not been for Sabnis, Shahu said, he did not know if his state would have been as safe and secure as it was in his days. I considered myself, he concluded, very fortunate indeed in having such a brother and a Diwan. " 53

An opportunity to graft men of his choice came quite early in the Maharaja's administration. Difference of opinion regarding the appointment of an Assistant Surgeon, led to the retirement of his Diwan, Taraporewala in 1898, and the appointment of 'R.V. Sabnis' as Diwan. This was, perhaps, the most important event. Sabnis was formerly Shahu Maharaja's tutor and therefore, was known to him. More important than this, was the fact that, 'Sabnis' was a 'Prabhu' by caste, who were known for their attitude of hostility to lead Brahmins.
The Brahmins were equally hostile to 'Prabhus' because of their ability to compete successfully with Brahmins. 'Sabnis' remained Diwan till 1926. Gradually, most of the British officials left, either because they were due for retirement or because they could not tolerate a very close supervision by Shahu Maharaj.  

Revaluation of the work of “Diwan Bahaddur, Sir Raghunathrao Vyankaji Sabnis : His life and Work”:-

The famous writer, ‘Mr. K.G. Suryawanshi’ in his famous book, ‘Rajarshi Shahu’ : Raja Ani Manus’ in Marathi, says about, Diwan Bahaddur, Sir R.V. Sabnis, ‘that, “Sabnis Sir, became Sir Sabnis. The teacher changed as noble. Mr. R.V. Sabnis, was the teacher of Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj but Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj took to his teacher, Mr. R.V. Sabnis on the Political stage, even Mr. R.V. Sabnis remained still as a teacher and guide of Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj and he maintained always the sacredness in his own morality and thoughts. Mr. R.V. Sabnis was the respective point and ideal of 'Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur in Social and Political fields, and he had a respect as a father in the court of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur.” Thus at that time Diwan Bahaddur, Sir R.V. Sabnis was helping and guiding Shahu
Maharaj by heart in the field of Social, Political and Education and they became close friends of each other.

The famous writer, 'Mr. D.S. Banne' writes that, "Diwan Bahaddur, Sir R.V. Sabnis, was very loyal to royal dynasty of Kolhapur and he was an active man, hard worker and of the straightforward nature. Mr. R.V. Sabnis always used to give consult to Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur and due to his consultancy Rajarashi Shahu Maharaj always brought reforms in every department of his Kolhapur State and also in the religious, Social and other fields. And due to these reforms, we have lose administration in every thing, thus Brahmin people were thinking, So they complained to Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj, against Diwan Bahaddur Sir, R.V. Sabnis, with incorrect way, and they tried to drive away Mr. R.V. Sabnis from Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj. But there was no fault, found by Shahu Maharaj, in case of Diwan Bahadur, Sir, R.V. Sabnis, so, nothing happened there as castism peoples expected." 56 Diwan Bahadur Sir, R.V. Sabnis remained very loyal in his own duty and work of the state of Kolhapur Brahmin could not do anything against him.

"The Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu Samaj Kolhapur, Amruhit Mahostav issue of 1990, writes about, "Diwan Bahaddur. Sir,
Raghunathrao Vyankaji Sabnis' that, "He inspired in his Kolhapur State, the templentry, public dinner, Purification in case of untouchable, Hindu-Muslim unity and Swadeshi movements with a sinciarity. He protested against child marriage system. Widow hair cutting system, dowary system, these worst, social system, that existed in Hindu Society, at that time in India and also in Kolhapur State. He supported the idea of women education, intercaste marriages, widow remarriages, these important and welfare things of the society among the people of the Kolhapur State. He also criticised superstitions of the Hindu Society like, untouchability, castism, ghost or specter, rituals, sacrifices, and mantratantras, which was very harmful to the society and for the welfare of the people of Society and to the development of the nation." "Thus he was the man of foresight and was cared for the welfare of the people of Kolhapur state."

Mr. A.B. Latthe, the farmer Diwan and famous biographer, of 'His Highness Rajarshi Shahu Chhatrapati of Kolhapur', writes that, "Mr. R.V. Sabnis, the intimate and life long friend and trusted Diwan of the Maharaja joined the party at Dharwar in 1893 A.D. as indian tutor to his future master."
Again, Mr. A.B. Latthe writes that, "Rao Bahaddur, R.V. Sabnis, C.I.E., whose life-work in Kolhapur is so closely, interwoven with the story of His Hihness, (Shahu Chhatrapati of Kolhapur) himself and whose association with him helped him in no small measure to foster the spirit thus created among the people of his state."\(^{59}\)

The famous writer of the biography of Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur, Mr. A.B. Latthe, who was the former Diwan of Kolhapur State, and a leader and a social worker of antibrahmin movement of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur writes about 'Diwan Bahaddur' Sir R.V. Sabnis that, "Equally fortunate, it is here appropriate to mention, was the Maharaja of Kolhapur, to find in his Tutor, Mr. R.V. Sabnis (now Rao Bahaddur, R.V. Sabnis, C.I.E.) an officer who served him as Diwan for twenty four years. Loyal, able and upright, it is most gratifying to know that Mr. Sabnis still holds, the same responsible office under H.H. Rajaram Chhatrapati Maharaja the Son of his old pupil, friend and master."\(^{60}\)

Famous biographer, 'Mr. Dhananjay Keer' writes that, "In January, 1893 A.D., Government, appointed another Indian tutor, 'Raghunath Vyankaji Sabnis, and his studies (Shahu Maharaja's)
continued now under Sabnis. A Graduate of Bombay University, Sabnis was acting headmaster of the Thana High School and his service were lent to the Kolhapur State by the Bombay Government. Born on April 1, 1857 A.D., at Gajendragad in Dharwar District, Sabnis, though in strained circumstances, worked hard and studied patiently at Kagal, Kolhapur and Bombay and served in Education Department from 1879 to 1893 A.D. By disposition he was serious, truthful and genial as also methodical in his work and wellversed in English and Sanskrit. He had a deep regard for the life and mission of Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj and was a strong supporter of the cause of the untouchables.61

Again Mr. Dhananjay Keer writes that, "Sabnis, came of a family belonging to the Kayastha Prabhu Community, which was well known in Maratha History for its loyalty, intelligence and ability in civil and military administration. There was a keen rivalry between the Brahmin politicians and the Prabhu Politicians, during peshawa rule and the latter suffered socio-religious persecution at the hands of the peshawas. The Brahmins of Kolhapur tried to dissuade the Maharaja from appointing Sabnis to the high post, but failed. Sabnis shared
Shahu's social views and outlook and he proved to be a loyal, able and upright statesman in the years that followed.62

Dhananjay Keer, pointed out that, “Mr. Ferris held a Darbar of Kolhapur on June 26, 1905 A.D. on the birthday of His Majesty, the King-Emperor, at that time, while paying glowing tributes to Diwan Sabnis, Ferris said that, “His (Sabnis's) marked abilities and clear intellect have contributed to bring the Kolhapur State through years of difficult and to place it, as it is now in the position of one of the best administered native states of Indian Empire.” “Mr. Sabnis Ferris concluded,” has worked single mindedly and unselfishly and with no eye to self aggrandisement.”63

Mr. Dhananjay Keer remarked about, Sir R.V. Sabnis that, “Sabnis was praised for his loyalty, ability and uprightness not only by the people of Kolhapur and by high Government officials but also by a student of economics. Writing from Godhra, the student of economics observed. “you are perhaps the only Diwan, who had the fortune of enjoying the Diwanship for the longest period in one state and it will not be too much to expect your name to be permanently assoicated with the economic progress of the state.” Sabnis was indeed the man behind Shahu and his policies. Indeed Diwan Sabnis stood loyally
and irrevocable by his ruler in every delicate or dangerous situation and handled it patiently, diligently and in statesmanly way, besides cherishing the same aim as his master, the elevation of the Backward and Depressed Classes."
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