



# Dharma And Governance: A Study Of Ahilyabai's Leadership And Self-Restraint In Maratha Confederacy

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## ABSTRACT

The political scenario of the eighteenth century in India saw an episodic rebellion in various parts of India breaking out due to continuous political disturbance and war; the Maratha confederacy was also experiencing a similar situation. In this milieu, an ancient indigenous philosophy of dharma and governance brought out by a female ruler, Ahilyabai, marked a significant change to glorify the ages, which transformed the power structure and ushered in social and economic changes in the Maratha confederacy. A female Godly personality popularly known as Rajmata or Devi Ahilyabai Holkar (1725-1795) emerged as a new hope for the Malwa region mainly due to her policies of Dharma (law) and governance, which had changed the notion of medieval state and gave new hope for prosperity and equality, and identity for the Indians. This paper will examine one of the important texts called Ahilyakamdhenu (Ahilyabai's philosophy of Dharma), compiled by Khusaliram in 1771 in 1500 pages encompassing the duties of the ruler. Each chapter, called Vastra or calf, represents an aspect of Governance or ritual. Ahilyabai's concept of Dharma (Law) was based on the philosophy of social welfare and prosperity for all.

It also answers the important questions about how her vision of Dharma not only shuns absolutism and arbitrariness, but also rejects the subordination of societal interests to any other interest, and focuses on the happiness of people as a whole. What challenges did she face while she sent a strict message to the Maratha sardar for the protection of minors, women, and the helpless? How does her vision of Dharma provide a new era of duties, obligations and liabilities for Saranjamdar or the king? Why did Ahilyabai sacrifice her interest and material desire not only for her family, village and for her kin but also for the country through her idea of revival of Hindu culture, the construction and repairing of Hindu temples and pilgrimage sites in different parts of India? How did she give the new goal to the Maratha confederacy, which had maximum efforts for ensuring of prosperity of individuals to fulfil their desires and happiness and conformity with Dharma to secure the happiness in the Malwa region throughout her reign, 1768-1795 A.D?

**Keywords:** Ahilyabai, Dharma, Justice, Holkar State, Maratha Confederacy

Ahilyabai's concept of Dharma<sup>1</sup> was based on *Nyaya* (justice), which was- what was right in given circumstances, moral, religious, pious or righteous conduct, being helpful to living beings, giving charity or

<sup>1</sup> P.V.Kane, *History of Dharmashastra*, Vol. I, Bhandarkar Oriental research Institute Poona, 1930. p.1, *Dhamra* is one of those Sanskrit word that defy all attempts at an exact rendering in English or any other tongue. In the hymn of Rgveda the words appears to be used either as an adjective or a noun and occurs at least fifty six times. The word is clearly drive from root *dhar* to uphold, to support, to nourish. In Chandogya Upanishad there is an important passage bearing on the meaning of the word Dharma 'there are three branches of Dharma one is constituted by sacrifice, study and charity and second austerities (stage of being hermit) third is brahmacharin

alms, natural qualities, law and uses or customs having the force of law.<sup>2</sup> How was Ahilyabai's Dharma different from the Ancient Hindu rulers and other dominant dharma, which was written by Hindu jurists from time to time to guide and regulate the kinship authority in India, and why did most of the medieval rulers adopt the same concept of Hindu kinship in the name of Hindu revival? Answers can be found in the different sources of Maratha law and Mimansha that provide detailed information about the contradictions and continuity of Indian society. Ahilyabai's experiment was different; she used all the available Hindu literature, appointed a special pandit to explain the complicated codes and provisions of Dharma, but she modified and defined the law according to the requirements of the time, which was a most important tool for the strengthening of the Maratha confederacy. If we look at the available literature, we find that the debate about the concept of Dharma is not new, and it is indeed most difficult to understand. The Mahabharata open the debate about the meaning of Dharma when Yudhishtira asked to Bhisma Pitamah – 'What is Dharma?'

Bhisma Pitamah replied;

तादृशोऽयमनुप्रश्नो यत्र धर्मः सुदुर्लभः। दुष्करः प्रतिसंख्यातुं तत्केनात्र व्यवस्यति।।  
प्रभवार्थयि भूतानां धर्मप्रवचनं कृतम्। यः स्यात्प्रभवसंयुक्तः स धर्म इति निश्चयः।।  
धारणाद्धर्ममित्याहुर्धर्मेण विधृताः प्रजाः। यः स्याद्धारणसंयुक्तः स धर्म इति निश्चयः।।<sup>3</sup>

(It is most difficult to define Dharma. Dharma has been explained as that which helps the upliftment of living beings. Therefore, that which ensures the welfare is surely Dharma.)

Taitriya Samhita states:

धर्मो विश्वस्य जगतः प्रतिष्ठा लोके धर्मिष्ठ प्रजा उपसर्पन्ति धर्मेण पापमपनुदति धर्मे सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितं तस्माद्धर्मं परमं वदन्ति ॥ ७ ॥<sup>4</sup>

Dharma constitutes the foundation of all affairs in the world. People respect one who adheres to Dharma. Dharma insulates against sin- full thoughts and actions. Everything in this world is founded on Dharma. Dharma, therefore, is considered supreme.<sup>5</sup>

Ahilyabai understood all these challenges, and took her bold decision after the death of her Husband, Father-in-law and son. She decided to take command of Holkar State and perform the task of Saranjamdar of the Maratha Confederacy. In the wake of Malerao's untimely demise, vultures of ambition began to circle the Holkar kingdom.

The wisdom of Yajnavalkya Smriti echoed through time, offering guidance in this moment of crisis-

उपायाः साम दानं च भेदो दण्डस्तथैव च। सम्यक्प्रयुक्ताः सिध्येयुर्दण्डस्त्वगतिका गतिः ॥ १.३४६ ॥<sup>6</sup>

Here are four methods of dealing with enemies: negotiation, bribery, sowing dissension, and, as a last resort, punishment or war. A wise ruler was expected to employ these strategies judiciously, based on circumstances at hand. (Such advice is also found in Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas.

Raghunath Rao and some other Maratha sardars opposed her decision to become the next successor of the Holkar house, because the Poona Darbar fully agreed with the classical tradition of Hindu Kingship, where there is very little chance for women to become the successor of the Confederates. Diwan Gangadharpant approached Ahilyabai with a proposal laced with ambition, suggesting that she adopt a son and install him as subedar. A Secret invitation has been dispatched to ambitious Raghoba, tempting him to take control of Malwa. Raghunathrao, in his way of returning from the North, came to know about the death of Ahilyabai's son Malerao on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1767. He decided to improve his own selfish advantage by seizing the wealth of the lady on the pretext that the Holkar state was now heirless and deserved to be confiscated. The spirited Daughter-in-law of Malharrao Holkar, who had given her very best to the Peshwa house, was not to be easily down. When Raghunath Rao, on the evil advice of Gangadhar Chandchud and Chinto Vithal, ordered an attack upon Indore, none of his followers obeyed him. The question of choosing the heir for the state of Indore was referred by Ahilyabai to the Peshwa at Poona, in which Raghunathrao could not override it. Ahilyabai became very angry when she came to know the junta of Raghunathrao and Chandrachud and replied to Raghunathrao:

“यह वैभव मेरे पुरखों ने हँसी-मसखरी में या नाच गाकर प्राप्त नहीं किया है। उन्होंने अपना खून-पसीना एक कर व तलवार के जोर पर यह राज्य स्थापित किया है। मैं एक अबला हूँ, असहाय औरत हूँ, ऐसा कोई नहीं समझे। हाथ में भाला लेकर सामने अड़ जाऊँगी तो सारी योजना धरी रह जाएगी – मैं पेशवा के अधीन रहने को सदा तैयार हूँ पर किसी ने मेरे राज्य की ओर आँख उठाई तो वह कभी सफल नहीं होगा”<sup>7</sup>

dwelling in those house of his teacher and himself stay with the family of his teacher till the last, all making to the world of meritorious men.

<sup>2</sup> Justice M. Rama Jois, *Legal and Constitutional History of India*, Universal Lexix Nexis, New Delhi 2016, P.3.

<sup>3</sup> वेदव्यास महाभारतम्, द्वादशपर्व, महाभारतम्-12-शांतिपर्व-109

<sup>4</sup> महानारायणोपनिषत्) याज्ञिक्युपनिषद्, तैत्तिरीय आरण्यक प्रपाठक १०

<sup>5</sup> Justice M. Rama Jois, *Legal and Constitutional History of India*, Universal LexixNexis, New Delhi 2016, P.

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<sup>6</sup> याज्ञवल्क्य स्मृति

<sup>7</sup> Heeralal Sharma, *Ahilyabai*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 2012, pp. 25-26.

She was busy in strengthening her military power, and many other sardars were ready to help Ahilyabai against Raghunathrao. Raghunathrao imagined it to be easier to capture the Holkar state, but in reality, he was shocked when he received Ahilyabai's diplomatic letter in which she clearly stated:

“आप सेना लेकर मेरे राज्य छीनने आये है, पर आपको यह इच्छा कभी पूरी नहीं होगी। आपने मुझे अबला समझा है पर मैं कैसी अबला हूँ, इसका पता आपको रणक्षेत्र में चलेगा। आपसे शीघ्र ही रण क्षेत्र में भेट होगा। मेरे अधीन महिलाओं की सेना आपका सामना करेगी। मैं हार गयी तो कोई भी मेरी हँसी नहीं उड़ाएगा और आप हार गए तो कभी भी मुँह दीखाने लायक नहीं रहेंगे। फिर एक अबला पर आक्रमण करने से आपके नाम पर जो कलंक लगेगा, वह कभी मिट नहीं सकेगा। इन सारी बातों पर विचार कर लीजिये तो ही आपके लिए अच्छा है। इसी में आपका हित है”<sup>8</sup>

Raghunathrao understood the situation and replied to her that he had come for the condolences of his son. Ahilyabai answered, “If you came for congeniality, then why did you come with a large army? You are my guest. Come in, Palki. This is your home.” Finally, Raghunathrao went to meet her, and Ahilyabai became the successor of the Holkar state <sup>9</sup>.

Although, it was not first time in the political history of India, that a women was ruling despite of number of challenge posed by patriarchal orthodox believe of power structure. There were many female rulers who ruled successfully in different parts of India even before the reign of Ahilyabai. In Kashmir, queen Sugandha ruled for two years (904-906 A.D.). Queen Didda occupied the throne in 980 A.D. and ruled for twenty-three years till her death on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the bright half of Bhadrapada month in the year 1003 A.D.

In Orissa when a king by name Subhakar Dev-V died, his queen ascended the throne and after that her daughter, Dandi Mahadevi<sup>10</sup> also became next successor. She was described as 'Parama Bhattarika Mahara-jadhiraja Parameshwari', and ruled the realm for a considerable period.<sup>11</sup> There were a number of other instances of women rulers. Some of them ruled independently or as provincial Governors in some parts of Karnataka. These all woman rulers have challenged the patriarchal domination of society.

In absence of male member in the Holkar family, Ahilyabai claim to became head of the Holkar state was the best decision and it was also the requirement of the time. Ahilyabai moved swiftly to consolidate her power. Taking charge of the state, she stationed Tukojirao, her trusted general, at Indore as the commander-in- chief, while she retreated to her new residence on the tranquil banks of the Narmada at Maheshwar. She oversaw state affairs and Khasgi from there.

Ahilyabai's attitude towards her duty reflects what king Rantidev asked for as a boon in Bhagvat Purana-

“न त्वहं कामये राज्यं न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भवम् ।

कामये दुःखतप्तानां प्राणिनामार्तिनाशनम् ॥”<sup>12</sup>

King Rantidev said, “Oh Vishnu! I seek not kingdom while I live, nor do I seek the heavens after I die. All that I wish for is to end the sufferings of all my subjects men, women, animals, and all the living beings in my kingdom.”

Ahilyabai's approach to governance was deeply rooted in the ancient concept of Raj-Dharma, the righteous duties and responsibilities of a ruler. This philosophy, expounded in texts like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas, provided a comprehensive framework for just and effective rule. Daily, Ahilyabai immersed herself in these texts, absorbing their wisdom and applying it to her reign. Her understanding of Raj-Dharma is encapsulated in her statement: "Sarkar is not mere government. It is the people's maay-baap (mother and father)."

Ahilyabai's approach to governance is a sentiment echoed that is echoed in this teaching from the Arthashastra:-

प्रजा-सुखे सुखं राज्ञः प्रजानां च हिते हितं ॥ ०१.१९.३४अ ब ॥ नऽत्म-प्रियं हितं राज्ञः प्रजानां तु प्रियं हितं ॥ ०१.१९.३४च् ॥<sup>13</sup>

A king's well-being and happiness lies in the happiness and well-being of his subjects. A king's happiness lies not in his own well-being, or in his own likes and dislikes.

The origin of the State (Rajya) as well as the office of the king and the conferment of power on the king to maintain the rule of law has been explained in Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata. At the end of the epic war of Kurukshetra, Yudhistira requested Bhishma, who was master of Rajadharma, to reveal the law governing kings.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> Pushpa Paal, *Ahilyabai Holkar*, Ministry of information and broadcasting, Government of India, 1992. On the issue of legitimate successor, Ahilya said “जिस वंश के लोगों ने इस राज्य पर शासन किया है, उनमें से एक ही मैं पुत्रवधू हूँ, दुसरे की पत्नी हूँ और तीसरे की माता। इस नाते मेरा यह अधिकार ही नहीं बल्कि कर्तव्य भी है कि शासन-व्यवस्था को अपने हाथ में ले लूँ जिससे प्रजा-जन को कोई कष्ट ना हो। पेज संख्या- १

<sup>10</sup> Archana Garodia Gupta, *The Women who Ruled India: Leaders, Warriors, Icon*, Hachette India, New Delhi, 2019, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Justice M. Rama Jois, *Legal and Constitutional History of India*, Universal LexixNexis, New Delhi 2016, P.592.

<sup>12</sup> Deepali Patwardkar, *Ahilyabai Holkar: The Guardian of Indic Civilization*, Notion Press, Mumbai, 2024. p.

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<sup>13</sup> अर्थशास्त्रम्/अधिकरणम् १/अध्यायः १९

The chapter on Rajadharma in Shanti Parva incorporates Bhishma's authoritative exposition about the origin and purpose of the State, the rule of law, the institution of kingship, and duties and the powers of the king. Great stress is also laid on the personal character and qualities which a king, in whom vast political power is vested, must possess for the proper and effective discharge of his functions. Rajadharma so clearly laid out, is vast like an ocean and consists of invaluable and eternal principles worthy of emulation under any system of polity and by all persons exercising political power.<sup>14</sup>

Ahilyabai was a different figure from all of them, not mainly because of her vision and kindness towards people of the Maratha Confederacy, but mainly because of her logical approach towards the best available books of the time. Books were the counsellors of Ahilyabai; much more than a human living being. She used to keep a wide range of literature.<sup>15</sup> Sir John Malcolm took great interest in the affairs of Devi. His minute enquiries have brought to light the name of Ambadas Puranik. He read the Puran to Ahilyabai. The effect was extraordinary. Thus Puranik became, unconsciously, a master doing the work of a minister quietly and unperceived. The list of books in Ahilyabai's library<sup>16</sup>, these books on religion, Hinduism, Philosophy, ritual and Hindu administration, was not only for mere show, but it was mental equipment the Devi ensured for herself from the books. We have to remember that there was no printing press in India, so all books were in the form of manuscripts, which was then a life occupation for some families. Nirnay Sindhu<sup>17</sup> was mostly used by Ahilyabai to understand the judicial challenges of Ancient and Medieval India.

In connection with the topic of 'progression of knowledge", we have to make a respectful reference to the name of the work called Ahilya-kama-Dhenu. With a keen desire to know her duties, the Devi summoned a circle of contemporary pandits and entrusted them with the compilation of a work, 'The Duties of Rulers'. It is composed of eighteen chapters, Vatsas (Claves, since the entire work is styled as 'Celestial Cow'.<sup>18</sup> The work deals with different branches of administration. It is a collection of selections from previous work with names of the authors, together with the precepts historically arrived at for future guidance. In short, it is a collection and an encyclopaedia of Indian arts and Sciences.

### Decision related to the Administration of Justice

The administration of justice was soft yet speedy, practical yet spiritual, restraining yet re-forming. She cares equally care for all the people. If we read the letter dated 26 November 1775 A.D., in which she sent an order to Kamisvidar, Khando Baburao, pargana Indore, - "women and children of Pemlya and other Bhills are kept imprisoned in the Kasba. Supply the prisoners, women as well as children- one full ser of Jwar per day per person after the roll call, as long as they remain under watch".<sup>19</sup> This letter shows how much she cares about the prisoner and the tribal people.

There was a calculation of every penny/rupee of income and expenditure of the state. She tried to maintain a corruption-free state. Letter No. 13. Daily account book of 16 February 1792, where the public money which by mistakenly deposited in the treasury. This letter, talking about the three cases, speaks of rupees and annas returned for the sake of justice. The first case was related to Tiwari, who was working as a cook in the household of Raghunathsingh. Tiwari was managing his affairs. Tiwari died childless. Then Mallatdar credited 426-3-6 to the government treasury, mistaking the amount as Tiwar's. The amount really belongs to Raghunath Singh, who has left behind a son named Bhawansingh. After deducting 25% as government dues, the sum of Rs. 319-11-6 is to be returned to Bhawansingh.<sup>20</sup> Letter no. 01 exhibits justice tempered with mercy. However, Letter No. 13 reveals the innate desire to do justice, justice first, prestige afterwards. Similar incidents reported in the letter dated 01/09/1792, where she ordered Bharmal Dada -

“परगना थार्नेल मोजा बाघाडी के जखोजी जगताप पर आरोप लगाकर उससे 400 रूपये वसूल कर तुमने खजाने में जमा किए, जाँच करने पर जगताप निरपराध पाए गये, अतः उसे 400 तुरंत लौटाया जाये. एक बार एक अधिकारी ने किसी लावारिस मृत व्यक्ति के 1200 रूपये सरकारी खजाने में जमा कर दिए . थोड़े दिन बाद मृत व्यक्ति के भाई ने अहिल्याबाई के सामने दावे प्रस्तुत किये. देवी उनके प्रमाणों से संतुष्ट हो गयी और उस वारिस को खजाने से जमा रुपया लौटा दिया.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Justice M. Rama Jois, *Legal and Constitutional History of India*, Universal Lexix Nexis, New Delhi 2016, p. 575.

<sup>15</sup> V. V. Thakur, *Life and Life's work of Shree Devi Ahilyabai Holkar*. C.M. Shah printers, Indore, 1910, p. 83.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. pp. 83-84.

<sup>17</sup> Nirnay Sindhu and Vivad Tandava of Kamalkara, who was jurist of the seventeenth century. His works are not confined to civil law only. P.V. Kane observes that in the whole range of Nirnay Sindhu, there is hardly any other writer who has contributed as many works as Kamalakara has done and thain the Nirnay Sindhu he quoted one hundred Smritis and over three hundred Nibandhas with the name of their authors. See in Justice M. Rama Jois, *Legal and Constitutional History of India*, Universal Lexix Nexis, New Delhi 2016, p.49.

<sup>18</sup> V. V. Thakur, *Life and Life's work of Shree Devi Ahilyabai Holkar*. C.M. Shah Printers, Indore, 1910, p. 90.

<sup>19</sup> Devi Ahilyabai Holkar, Letter No. 01, p. 23.

<sup>20</sup> Devi Ahilyabai. Letter No. 13, Date – 16 February 1792. p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> Heeralal Sharma, Ahilyabai. National Book Trust, New Delhi, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, 2012, pp. 60-61.

These incidents are the best example of timely justice in modern concept of Janta Darbar. She never accepts any type of injustice or corruption.

She tried to implement the law that was morally applicable and best suitable for the people of Holkar state. In a letter sent to Subedar Tukoji Rao Holkar, who was trying to implement the Deccan system in the Malwa province, Ahilyabai clearly pointed out the differences of land tenure followed hither and thither. Mirasee and Patilkee systems had grown with the people of the Deccan; not so in Malwa. The implementation of the former in the letter now would end in disaster. The distinction is clearly prevailing and perceived and intelligibly preached; he is also dissuaded from his intentions of taxing the old saranjamis; and thus a great disaster is averted by a happy union of the Devi's head and her heart<sup>22</sup>

She recognised the system of revenue collection and gave standing orders to officers to be lenient at the time of assessment. She took care to protect the agriculturist and recognised the right of *Watandars* (Proprietors of the land). The account of receipts and disbursements was kept with scrupulous exactness, and the channels of wastage and extravagance were plugged. As a result of this strict supervision, the wealth of the house of Holkar was immensely increased.<sup>23</sup>

Art and literature benefited from her patronage: trade and industry flourished in her time. The City of Maheshwar was developed enormously, and Indore rose from a village to a wealthy city. The most important trait for Ahilyabai's character was her love for justice. She sat for a considerable period in the open darbar, referred causes to court, and invariably administered even-handed justice. She divided her time between religious observances and public duties. She daily fed the poor, as also the beasts, the birds, and the fish; during the particular festival, she arranged entertainment for the lower classes and poorer people of her state.<sup>24</sup>

She built numerous temples, ghats and Dharmshala, and well throughout the Holkar possession in Malwa and sent support to holy establishments in various parts of India, especially to holy shrines of Varansi, Puri, Dwarka and Kedarnath and Rameshwaram. At the great coast, she made arrangements for the regular sully of Gangajal to many temples in southern regions, and once, made arrangements for a north Indian tour of ten thousand pilgrims from Deccan. She spent as much as sixteen crores of rupees on all this. The Name of Ahilyabai has a permanent place in the heart of every Hindu.<sup>25</sup>

Despite this honesty in administration, the Peshwa's record shows the Subedar's annual revenue amounting to the figure of seventy-five lacks. The Holkar record of Ahilya Devi's times raised the figure to One Crore, five lakhs and thirty-seven thousand.<sup>26</sup> There was a reign of peace and consequently of plenty. During her regime, there was famine in Rajputana, Bundelkhand and Bengal; in Marathi, it was recorded as Bhukhe Bengal. The Ahilyabai regime suffered no pain of famine. Famines are due to excessive or a scarcity of rain. Storage of grain in every village, under government control, is a preventive measure against the irregularities of nature. This measure was in vogue in those times. Her vision was based on peaceful policy, simple living and higher thinking, store of grain, and administrative policy inspired by the example of the ruler were the central causes of flourishing justice and prosperity in the region.

Ahilyabai Holkar's reign stands for its exemplary system of justice. Her deep understanding of human nature, coupled with an unwavering commitment to justice and her people, made her court a beacon of hope for the aggrieved and oppressed. Ahilyabai's reputation as a just and impartial judge drew people from all walks of life to seek her counsel. Her judgments, delivered with precision, left even the most contentious parties satisfied. The cases that came before her were diverse, ranging from land disputes and matters of adoption to financial matters and murders, and each was handled with equal care and consideration. Ahilyabai's court was particularly noteworthy for its accessibility to women. Her empathy for their plight and her staunch defence of women's dignity set a new standard for gender equality in judicial matters.

### Conclusion

Chhatrapati Shivaji and his successor developed the consciousness in India for the revival of glorious past of India as well as reform of Hinduism on a wide and national basis wherever they expanded the Maratha power. Ahilyabai was also doing the same throughout the length and breadth of India. In fact, the Maratha revival, among other achievements, can claim to have built up what was broken asunder by alien nature and the ruthless nature of earlier Islamic rulers of medieval India. She basically rebuilt the lost identity of the Maratha confederacy in post Panipat phase through her visionary concept of Dharma and timely justice to all.

<sup>22</sup> V. V. Thakur, *Life and Life's work of Shree Devi Ahilyabai Holkar*. C.M. Shah Printers, Indore, 1910, p. 90.

<sup>23</sup> Sudhindra Nath Qanungo, *Jaswant Rao Holkar; The Golden Rogue*, Abhinav Bharat Printers Lucknow, 1965. p. 6

<sup>24</sup> John Malcolm, *Memoirs of Central India*, Vol. I, Parbury, Allen & Co. London, 1839, p. 188.

<sup>25</sup> Sudhindra Nath Qanungo, *Jaswant Rao Holkar; The Golden Rogue*, Abhinav Bharat Printers Lucknow, 1965. p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> V. V. Thakur, *Life and Life's work of Shree Devi Ahilyabai Holkar*. C.M. Shah Printers, Indore, 1910, .p. 94.

Ahilyabai's principle of Dharma made a complete and whole Hindu identity without any conquest or coercion through providing an open space for all the people with equal care and concern. Her administration remained vigilant and empathetic, ensuring that justice was accessible and impartial to all through which she successfully established the honest and corruption-free administrative policies in the expansion and consolidation of the Maratha confederacy. At heart, Ahilyabai was the queen of the entire Bharat. Her patronage of holy sites across India revealed a national perspective that encompassed the entire subcontinent. Her effort to rejuvenate the glorious Hindu past was not a mere act of devotion, but a carefully orchestrated symphony of development that touches every stratum of society.

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