

### Chapter III

#### THE ASSENDENCY OF FATEHSINGRAO IN BARODA AND GROWING POWER OF THE PESHWA

The death of Damajirao introduced a new factor in the already troubled relations between Poona and Baroda. As a result of the succession dispute among his sons, the Bombay Government, which had already occupied Surat in 1759 and also about to seize Broach in 1772, was enabled to have an increasingly influential role in the affairs of Baroda. To this aspect therefore, which made the conflict between the Peshwa and the Gaekwad, a triangular one reference may now be made.

In 1768, it was observed, that the Third Battle of Panipat had dealt a heavy blow but not a shattering one to the Maratha confidencency. It had led to the rise in the powers of the Sardars and inspite of the efforts of Peshwa Madhavrao, the internal cohesion of the confederacy was by slow degrees being eroded. Of this, the English were reaping the benefits and the relative freedom with which they acted in Eastern and South India was an index to the degree of immunity, they had been able to get as a result of Maratha weakness.

Madhavrao Peshwa during a short period of 12 years was in a position of regaining the lost prestige of the Marathas. He had overcome a number of adverties. This work of Madhavrao I of consolidation of the Maratha power was viewed with great danger by the Britishers, "The growing power of the Marathas" wrote president Hughes of Bombay in his council, "is a subject much to be lamented and has not failed to attract our attention as well as that of the Presidencies of Madras and Bengal in order that nothing either in their power or ours should be omitted to check the same as much as possible."

During his life time Damajirao had come in context<sup>act</sup> with the British mainly because of his hold on the main trading centres of Gujarat, where he had also established his rights of collecting chauth and customs. The British in order to protect themselves and to get their goods safely transported kept this local ruler in good humour by large presents. But as noticed above the succession dispute almost led to the invitation being given to the English to intereere in the domestic problems of the Gaekwad.

#### The Plans of the Britishers on the West Coast of India :

The British East India Company had sent embassies to Poona to secure British interests on the western coast, and definite instructions were given to ambassadors like

Mostyn, not to loose any opportunity of sowing seeds of dissension in the Maratha State, so as to weaken it and render it incapable to be of help to any Indian Power.<sup>1</sup> The court of Directors wrote to the Government of Bombay in their letter dated March 31, 1769 to "be ever watchful to obtain the island of Salsette, and a few other pleaces and to keep them as a constant objects. We are always to have in view in all treaties, negotiations, and military operations."

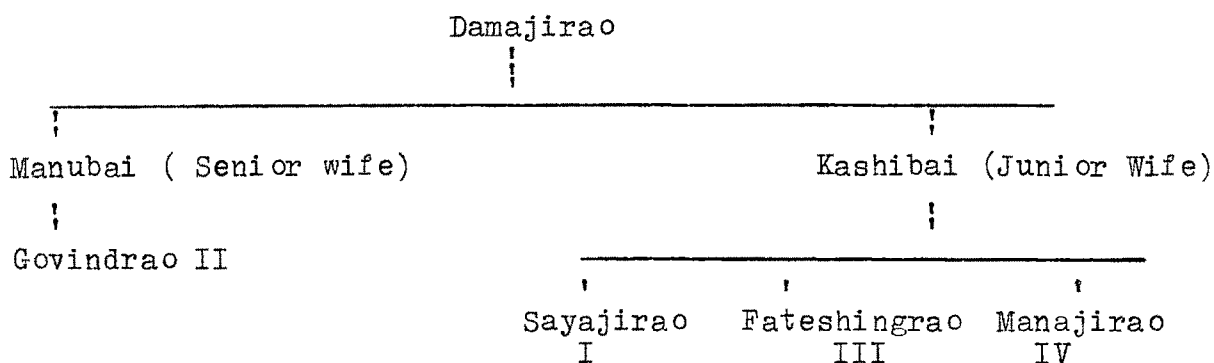
The Possession of the English company on the western coast consisted of Bombay, Surat and small inslands near Bombay. But the Bombay authorities were consciously awaiting to obtain material advantages, so that their presidency might become financially independent of other presidencies and expand its territorial possessions. The English had signed a treaty of peace on March 10, 1755 with Peshwa. They had attacked and taken possession of Surat castle on March 5, 1759 after obtaining an assurance that Damajirao would observe strict neutrality. The English had their plans on Surat, Paragana of Surat, Chaurasi Paragana, Broach and the area round about. The family contests among the sons of Damajirao and the scramble for power at Poona therefore appeared as suitable opportunities for them to serve their ends.

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1 Forrest selections : Maratha series, Vol.I.,p.142.

### The Succession after Damajirao :

Damajirao had seven sons. The eldest was Sayajirao but his mother Kashibai was junior to Manubai. Manubai's son Govindrao was younger than Sayajirao. The third Fateshingh and fourth Manajirao were full brothers of Sayajirao i.e., they were Kashibai's children. We do not hear about the mother or mothers of Morarrao, Ramrao and Jaysinhrao and they also did not take active part in this struggle. Damajirao's brother Khanderao and his son Malharrao also participated in fanning this quarrel.



Sayajirao, the eldest son was mentally weak. He was supported by Fatehsingh. The most capable of Damajirao's sons. Fatehsingh supported Sayajirao with the hope that he might himself obtain the administration of the State. Sayajirao being the eldest was the first claimant to the Gadi.

The second claimant was Govindrao. He was of a weak and vacillating nature and he selected unwise advisers. He had military experience and in this capacity he had come in close contact with Raghunathrao.

According to the Hindu law, the succession could be claimed by both Govindrao and Sayajirao. Govindrao claimed the Gadi by his right of being the son of the first wife, even though he was younger than Sayajirao. On the other side Sayajirao claimed the Gadi as the eldest, even though he was the son of a junior wife.

In order to get the claims established, it was necessary for the rival claimants to secure the title, the necessary investiture and the authority from the Chhatrapati of Satara. Consequently the power of deciding between rival brothers was placed in the hands of the Peshwa for it was he, who exercised authority in the name of the Chhatrapati.

Madhavrao, the shrewed ruler he was, seized the opportunity of weakening the family of his rival Damajirao by putting one claimant against another. The last treaty which was signed by Damajirao before his death had not been fully implemented. When Damajirao died Govindrao was in prison at Poona. Being close to the Peshwa and then in an advantageous position Govindrao, after negotiations agreed to ratify the treaty of 1768. The Peshwa in return recognised<sup>2</sup> him as the Sena-Khas-Khel, the title of the Gaekwad rulers. On this occasion Govindrao agreed to pay a sum of more than fifty lakhs. He had to pay twenty-three

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2      Gense and Bhanaji : The Gaekwads of Baroda, Vol.II, Introduction, p.81.

lakhs by way of fine for the rising in 1768,  $5\frac{1}{4}$  lakhs as last years tribute, one lakh for the new conquest from the Babis and in addition to this sum, twenty lakhs and one rupee as <sup>N</sup>azar for the confirmation of his title of Sena-Khas-Khel with fifty thousand rupees for Darbar expenses. Govindrao agreed to share half the city of Ahmedabad and revenue for the port of Surat. All other items of the treaty of Damajirao were agreed by Govindrao.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Situation at Baroda :

Govindrao, though recognised as Sena Khaskhel, was not in a position to move towards Baroda and he was at Poona for about two years. The terms of the treaty did not lay down that Madhavrao Peshwa should help Govindrao either by men or money and Madhavrao did not help him. Moreover Govindrao was considered as the partisan of Raghunathrao, so it was in the interest of Madhavrao that Govindrao should not be powerful. However, when Madhavrao learnt that there was dispute for succession, which he did not like, wrote a letter wrote a letter to Fatehsingh on December 21, 1768. Madhavrao addressed this stern rebuka to Fatehsingh<sup>4</sup>. It is reported that you are quarrelling with your brothers and on that account damaging the interests of your possessions and estate. We cannot tolerate any disturbances of this kind and have sent Appaji Ganesh with orders to take charge of

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3 Aitchlson : Treaties, Sanads & engagements, Vol. app.III.

4 Sardesai : Vol. II, p.531.

the State, and conduct the administration independently of you. Please hand over the management to him and report immediately to Poona for whatever representation you may have to make. Govindrao is already here and in the presence of you all we shall decide your dispute; and our decision will be binding upon you all. No excuse will be accepted. It is our duty to decide who is fit and who is unfit among you. We do not allow any mischief to be created. If you have any regard for your interest, you must implicitly obey this summons and act without hesitation. If you disobey you will have to suffer heavily. Please take head and act."

On the contrary for all important purposes in Gujarat he wrote to Fatehsingh at Baroda. Madhavrao I asked Fatehsinghrao to supply him horses for his army and he also entrusted him to punish<sup>5</sup> one Vasta Rathod of Miyagam, who played treachery against the Peshwas's Officers. In his letter dated May 10, 1770 Madhavrao asked Fatehsinghrao to punish the Moghals at Surat and Broach, who harassed the Peshwa's agent Magoram and he had added to set the matters right and to recover the money from them. This correspondence shows that Fatehsingh was recognised as the rightful ruler of Baroda. On the other hand Fatehsinghrao had also correspondence with Madhavrao for the revenues of Ahmedabad, arrangements of Ahmedabad and other administrative purposes. Fatehsingh, after strengthening his party at Baroda, came

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5 His. sel. from Baroda State Records, Vol. III, letter No. 3 of 24-8-1769.

personally to Poona in 1771 for presenting his case before Peshwa Madhavrao.

The Success of Sayajirao and Fatehsinghrao :

Govindrao was not in a position to pay the promised Nazranah even after the lapse of six months of the signing of the treaty, while Fatehsingh was prepared to pay the whole amount. Besides this the law of Primogeniture, as interpreted by Ram Shastri, noted Maratha Jurist of the age, supported Sayajirao. This added weight to the side of Sayajirao.

Moreover the relations of Govindrao with Raghunathrao were well known, so Peshwa Madhavrao sought a compromise.

The compromise was that Govindrao was to be allowed the title of Sena-Khas-Khel but on condition of his being satisfied with a small Jagir at Padra. Sayajirao was now proclaimed Sena-Khas-Khel. He being too weak minded, Fatehsingh was appointed his Mutalik or deputy. Fatehsingh was allotted the Gaekwad territory as well as the army and the title of Sena Karta.<sup>6</sup>

Madhavrao and Sayajirao :

Sayajirao and Fatehsinghrao agreed to all the promises made by Govindrao to the Peshwa, not only that but the amounts given by Govindrao were not taken into account. Sayajirao had

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6 Y.V.Khare : Aitihāsik lekḥ Sangrah, Vol.I.



to spent more than fifty lakhs of rupees by way of fine, arrears and Nazar. After accepting Sayajirao as a rightful claimant to the Gadi of Baroda an agreement was signed by Madhavrao Peshwa and Sayajirao Gaekwad in 1772. In the agreement the Gaekwad often refers to the Sarcar by which he presumeably means the Government of the Chhatrapati as the legal head of the Maratha confederacy and the Peshwa as the representative of the Chhatrapati and the defacto head.

The agreement between Sayajirao and Madhavrao :

The Peshwa as a higher authority sanctions the accession of Sayajirao to the Gadi of Baroda and promised not to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Baroda provided Sayajirao kept the agreement made by his father. The Gaekwad particularly begged the Peshwa not to support his disaffected relatives, who may creates trouble for him. (See Appendix III on p.243).

The Policy of Madhavrao :

It can be said to the credit of Peshwa Madhavrao that managed very wisely for himself the case of succession. He proved his right, if not to appoint the successor to the Gaekwad Gadi, at least to confirm and ratify the accession of the new ruler.<sup>7</sup> Fatehsingh gave the promised Nazaranah.<sup>8</sup>

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7 Gense & Banaji. The Gaikwad aids of Baroda, Vol.II, Introduction, p.ix.

8 Edward Scott Waring : History of the Marathas, appendix Note, No.32, pp. 225-26. According to this book, Madhavrao gave the Sanad to Fatehsingrao for which he paid seventy lakhs of rupees.

Thus it can be said that even before the contest for succession had fairly started, Peshwa Madhavrao had managed to secure for himself the determining voice.

Madhavrao created vested interest in Gujarat and tried to cut down the independence of Sayajirao by giving Padra to Govindrao. It was intended that Govindrao would serve as a check or a thorn in Sayajirao's back, due to the nearness of Padra to Baroda. Moreover the ruler of Baroda would not be in a position to leave Baroda as Damajirao did in 1751. The intension of the treaty might be whatever, but it hastened up the family feud in the house of the Gaekwad which soon invited the Britishers.

In this treaty there is no mention of Gaekwad's right of direct dealing with any other state or power. It was presumed that the rights of making treaties, exchange of territories, financial transactions and others of the Gaekwad family were unlimited. Moreover there is no provision for the settlement of disputes with each other. The disputes regarding financial dues, its payments, mode of payment, military services and other matters were bound to arise. Under such conditions disputes were to be settled by negotiation or by appeal to arms on both the sides.

Fatehsinghrao seeks and alliance with the British 1772 :

Peshwa Madhavrao by huge exaction of money taught a stern lesson to the Gaekwad family, but it seems Fatehsinghrao was not all happy about the terms of the treaty. He never felt himself secure against Govindrao and Khanderao. In order to be in a position to control his brother, he withdrew his contingent of horse from Poona to Baroda. Instead of this military service he agreed to pay every year Rs. 6,75,000. This sum subsequently came to be considered as a fixed charge. Adding this sum to the tribute the Peshwa's demand amounted to Rs. 14,54,000 every year.<sup>9</sup> Fatehsingh was very much disgusted with Madhavrao and there was the feeling of distrust towards the Poona court. With a view of severing his relations with the Poona court he made proposals through the Chief of Surat Factory, to the Governor of Bombay on April 17, 1772 for an offensive and defensive alliance with the Honourable Company.<sup>10</sup> Fatehsinghrao wrote that all the country of Gujarat and as low down to the

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9 Fatehsingh did not pay the money compension willingly for the expression used in the Baroda Record is Sayajirao Gaekwad being intimated by the threat of the Peshwa, he would confer the chieftainship on Govindrao agreed etc. Baroda Gazetteer, p.468.

10 Lest there should be any surprise at the Gaekwad's intriguing with the British against the Peshwa, let us bear in mind what Elphinstone wrote when Commissioner after Bajirao's fall. The Gaekwad was oppressed and subdued, a vassal rather than a confederate. He joined the first power that appeared against the Marathas in this part of India and has adhered to his alliances to the last. Gazetteer of Baroda, p.464.

southward of Daman was under his Government and was conquered by his grand father Pilajirao and his father Damaji on a visit to Poona in the time of Nana (Balaji Bajirao) was detained upwards for three years until he gave up half of the Surat Pargana to the Brahmins (Peshwas). But from the late treatment he received having had two pistols fired at him, he has thought of withdrawing the same from them, and intends preventing them from collecting any part thereof this year. Fatehsingh requested the company to assist him in case the Brahmins come against him with one thousand sepoy, 300 Europeans with 20 guns and ammunition and artillerymen for the guns for which he would pay what might be agreed upon. He proposed to give the share the Brahmins received on account of the Surat Pargana to the Company and to assist them with any number of men they want at any time. Fatehsingh also supplied to the English the estimate of the income of Surat Pargana and the share of the Peshwas in these districts.<sup>11</sup>

By this proposals which Fatehsingh made to the English it would be usual to speak of his having betrayed Madhavrao. Really speaking Fatehsingh and Madhavrao were never allies in the proper sense of the word. Even the relations of Damajirao and Madhavrao had not been happy.

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11 Elliot : The Rulers of Baroda, Vol.II, pp. 78-84.

The English did not accept these proposals of Fatehsingh as they feared that the proposals would lead them to a conflict with the Marathas. But at the same time they thought it much for their interest to keep on good terms with Fatehsingh. The English and Fatehsingh signed a treaty for the town of Broach on January 12, 1773. This treaty between Fatehsingh and English is very important regarding the relations of Gaekwad and the Peshwa. This is the first treaty signed by the Gaekwad and the English. The Peshwa was not consulted and his approbation approval was not sought for, not only that but it was signed against the wishes of the Poona Durbar.

#### The Case of Broach :

Broach like Surat was well known for its trade and the English had their factories at Broach. In the beginning of the 17th century Marathas began to invade it. Mominkhan, a Muslim Governor was helped by Pilaji Gaekwad in maintaining his authority so he had given orders for a share in the revenues of Broach to Pilaji. Later on the Muslim Nawabs acted independently. But Damajir Gaekwad has asserted in 1744 that he had a considerable share in the revenues of Broach.

The English wanted the possession of Broach and they put their claims to the Nawab of Broach. According to the English the Nawab of Broach was largely and justly indebted

to the Nawab of Surat for the Phurja of Broach,<sup>12</sup> and he had charged the English goods for last six years. This action of Nawab had put the English to a loss of one lakh and fifty thousand rupees and the Nawab of Surat to rupees twenty eight lakhs. The English attacked Broach and Nawab was hardly in a position to protect himself. An agreement was signed between the Nawab of Broach and the English on November 30, 1771 but Nawab was not in a position to fulfil the terms of the penalty in time. So the English attacked Broach second time and captured it on November 18, 1772. Madhavrao Peshwa died on the same day.

The Gaekwad and the Peshwa for Broach :

Damaji Gaekwad had established his rights in the revenues of Broach; and when there was partition of Gujarat between the Peshwa and the Gaekwad the revenue of Broach was left with the Gaekwads. The English attacked Broach in 1771. Fatehsingh tried to assert his claims in the revenues of Broach, but he did not help the Nawab. He had asked Peshwa Narayanrao for a help against the English in Broach.<sup>13</sup> Narainrao Peshwa did not help Fatehsingh. Fatehsing tried his best to secure Broach for himself. He offered to the English

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12 Elliot : The Rulers of Baroda, Vol.II, pp.86-87.

13 Gense & Banaji : The Gaikwads of Baroda, Vol.II, letter dated 16th Dec. 1772 from mostyan's Diary published by G. and Bannaji. 'The Third English Embassy at Poona,' p.48.

Company six lakhs of rupees together with a sum of Rupees sixty thousand every year from the revenues of Surat for the town and territory of Broach.

Broach was an important trading centre so both the Peshwa and the Gaekwad were anxious to get its possession. As soon as Narayanrao was acknowledged as Peshwa his government lodged a complaint to Mostyn, the British Ambassador at Poona, asserting Maratha rights on Broach.

The English wanted to make a good bargain of Broach between the Gaekwad and the Peshwa. But the Peshwa did not offer more than six lakhs rupees. Failing in these proposals Mostyn<sup>14</sup> tried to get from the Peshwa some advantageous places near Bombay in lieu of Broach. Fatehsing was tired of these delaying tactics of the English and he cut off all communications between Surat and Broach and he gave an idea of garrison to the English in Broach.<sup>15</sup> Not only that but Fatehsing warned the Nawab of Cambay against helping the English. Appaji Ganesh, Peshwa's Governor at Ahmedabad helped Fatehsing against the English.

The Poona government was not ready for the exchange of territories and it was also not ready to surrender its claims upon Broach. So at last the English signed a treaty with Fatehsing on January 12, 1773. (See Appendix IV, p.246).

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14 Ibid, p.133

15 Elliot : The Rulers of Baroda, Vol.II, pp. 165-68.

### The ~~Violent~~ Changes at Poona :

Peshwa Madhavrao died in 1772 and his younger brother Narayanrao got the munsud of the Peshwa. He was only a young man of eighteen years so his uncle Raghunathrao more often known as Raghoba, managed the State affairs.<sup>16</sup> Within a short period of ten months Narayanrao was murdered and Raghunathrao became the Peshwa. Raghunathrao was generally suspected of being a chief instigator of the plot of the murder. Towards the end of 1773 Raghunathrao, who was then undisputed Peshwa reversed the decision made in favour of Sayajirao.

It is a well-known fact that Raghunathrao was in Gujarat from 1753 to 60 and he was very well served by Damajirao and Govindrao. Moreover Govindrao was to the side of Raghunathrao in 1768, when Raghunathrao had risen against Madhavrao and both Govindrao and Raghunathrao were imprisoned by Peshwa Madhavrao after the battle of Dhodap. Moreover Peshwa Madhavrao had once accepted him as the rightful claimant to the throne as he was born of the senior wife of Damajirao, though younger in age. But he was dropped later on and Sayajirao was accepted as the legal ruler of Baroda.

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16 Grant Duff : Vol. II, p.250.



Govindrao was for all the time in Poona<sup>17</sup> and he was suspected by Madhavrao as a partisan of Raghunathrao, and Govindrao thought that he had received the set-back due to Raghunathrao. Govindrao attended on Raghunathrao when the latter was in charge of Peshwaship during the regime of Peshwa Narayanrao. Raghunathrao became Peshwa, Govindrao expected a favourable attitude from Raghunathrao to support his claims.

The leading members of the Gaekwad family were divided among themselves, ever since the death of Damajirao, but these dissensions would before long have gradually died out, if the smouldering embers - live piece of or wood had not been fanned into leaping flames by Raghoba. Raghoba in 1773 reversed the Poona decision of 1771 and restored to Govindrao the title of Sena-Khas-Khel. Govindrao paid a sum of 22 lakhs of rupees.<sup>18</sup> He was also invested with the Subedari of Gujarat instead of Fatehsing. Govindrao was assisted with some guns and 2000 men. Raghoba had also given him recommendatory letters to the English.<sup>19</sup>

#### Govindrao in Gujarat :

Govindrao with a large army supported by Raghunathrao entered Gujarat in January 1774 and after capturing Songadh invaded the Paragana of Surat. He by the beginning of February 1774 had an army of 12000 troops. He had correspondence

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17 Mostyn's diary Poona dated 3-1-1774, p.197.

18 Edward Scott Waring : History of the Marathas, Appendix No.32, pp. 225-26.

19 Mostyn's Diary Poona, dated 3-1-1774, pp. 247-90.

with the Chief of the English Company for help, but the English authorities did not entertain the proposals.

Fatehsing had the possession of Baroda and ~~the~~ was at a greater advantages as he was in Gujarat after the death of his father Damajirao, Govindrao had to depend on his arms and the help of Raghunathrao. In the initial stage of the conflict Fatehsing was in a superior position, but Govindrao was helped by his uncle Khanderao of Kadi and Appaji Ganesh, the Peshwa's Governor of Gujarat, with all their forces. The support to Govindrao proved very effective and Fatehsing was besieged within the walls of Baroda, and Govindrao got decidedly the better of his opponent. Fatehsing had the city of Baroda while Govindrao had the possession of open land from which he collected Chauth and revenues. The contest between two brothers lasted till December 1774, and it was believed that Govindrao would succeed. Fatehsing had asked for the help to Poona Government but he was not helped by the Poona government. In December 1774 Raghunathrao who was now not in power at Poona and who was chased by the ministerial army of Poona, entered Gujarat. With the entry of Raghunathrao in Gujarat the succession contest in Gujarat took a new turn. The family feud now assumed a great political importance and the place of conflict of the Peshwa family also shifted from Poona to Gujarat.

Fatehsing's Cooperation to Poona Army :

Fatehsing was besieged in the fort of Baroda by the combined forces of Govindrao and Khanderao. Raghunathrao with his army joined govindrao against Fatehsing. The arrival of the ministerial army obliged them to raise the siege and to move towards north. Fatehsing came out of the fort and in company of the ministerial army chased them. The ministerial army had minor engagement but Raghoba took every care to avoid a pitched battle. Raghoba was on the other side communicating with the English Company but the final terms were not settled.