

Chapter VIII

CONCLUSION

The period from 1707 to 1818 is the formative period in the history of Modern India. The building up of the Maratha confederacy with the powerful Peshwas and then its disintegration under ambitions and crafty Maratha Sardars busy carving out their own independent principalities is a recurring theme of this formative period. The story in Western India revolves round the family of the Gaekwads. The Gaekwad rule in Gujarat from Damajirao I to the last powerful ruler Anandrao has been studied here. This period is of significance as in the first phase the early Gaekwads had to do lot of spade work and create a ground in order to establish themselves in Gujarat. Starting as mere subordinates to Dabhades, they had to prove their merits and capabilities to become independent rulers of Gujarat state at a later date. They had to overcome many odds created by the Mughal rulers in the initial phase, the internal family quarrel amongst the Gaekwads in the later phase and the constant interference of the Peshwas to exercise their superiority. Another important party which emerged during that period was the English. The English made frequent alliance with Peshwa and Gaekwads suiting their interest.

The process of getting disenthral² led from the clutches of the Poona Government was not without its pains and when the price was paid to the British to achieve the short lived independence it was a sad experience of moving from frying pain to fire. They finally settled to become a subordinate powers of the English which the Gaekwads resented but by then could do precious little to retrieve their position.

The Maratha rulers were lured to include Gujarat into their fold because of its strategic importance. They tried to exercise considerable influence in the state. By the time Shahu accended the Satara throne, imposition of Chauth and Sardesh-mukhi had become a regular practice.

During the early part of the eighteenth century, the Mughal power disintegrated considerably. The major parties who were trying to establish themselves in Gujarat were the Senapati Dabhade, his officers and the Peshwa. They wanted to have rights in the collection of Chauth in Gujarat. Both Senapati and Peshwa had personal conflicts in which each of them wanted to assert his importance although both were the officers appointed by the Chhatrapati of Satara.

From the Mughal times one of the sources of revenue was imposition of collection of 'Mulukgir,' tributes,

'Muluk giri' expeditions therefore became an annual features. Khanderao Dabhade had established his authority to collect the tribute in Gujarat and Kathiawad. He was granted this authority by Chhatrapati Shahu. Khanderao Dabhade had authorised Damajirao Gaekwad I, one of his trusted Officer to collect the tribute from Gujarat on his behalf. Thus the Gaekwads came in the picture in the Gujarat history.

Brief review of uneasy relationship between Baroda and Poona :

The Gaekwads in the early part of the eighteenth century lived under the banner of Khanderao Dabhade as his subordinates. The Marathas in those days were making incursions to collect tributes from Gujarat. Perhaps to prevent, Dabhade from appropriating the entire revenue of Gujarat, Poona Government also deputed one Kadam Bande to collect revenue from the side of the Panchmahals. Kadam Bande and Khanderao Dabhade the two chiefs of Chhatrapati Shahu therefore carried out these incursions separately. Damajirao I and later Pilajirao assisted Khanderao Dabhade in these activities.

Pilajirao Gaekwad took the lead in putting Gaekwads on a firmer footing in Gujarat. He created good relations with the local tribes of Kolis and Bhils and small Chiefs around Baroda and its neighbouring areas. Pilajirao

representing Senapati Dabhade, and with the backing and good will of the local people could significantly consolidate his position in Gujarat.

During Shivaji's time the post of Senapati and that of Peshwa in his court of ministers had equal significance. But after the accession of Shahu, Peshwa gradually took all powers and post of Senapati was pushed in the background. This was the origin of the discontent of Dabhade. Khanderao Dabhade as well as Pilajirao Gaekwad were not able to reconcile the rising power of the Peshwa.

Pilajirao wanted to establish an effective rule in Gujarat. Frequent changes in the appointment of Vice roys in Gujarat by the Mughal Emperiors helped Pilajirao to strengthen his position. In place of Nizam as new Viceroy Sarbulandkhan was appointed. Thus there was a conflict between the previous viceroy Nizam and the new viceroy for getting the hold over the province. Pilajirao and Kadam Bhande took advantage of this situation. By helping Hamid Khan the deputy of Nizam to out'st the deputy of the new viceroy, he could secure the right to collect the Chauth of Gujarat. This was a clever diplomatic move of Pilajirao. Besides the collection of Chauth from the various districts of Gujarat, both Pilajirao Gaekwad and Kadam Bhande had started carrying out extraction of extra money by way of 'Khandani' in those

districts. This was causing an unrest in the area. The viceroy was not able to check these activities of the Maratha chiefs. He wanted a lasting solution of the problem and so tried to negotiate with Pilajirao for a settlement regarding the collection of tributes from Gujarat.

Peshwa Bajirao came to know of these developments regarding grant of Chauth to Pilajirao and Kadam Bande by the Mughal viceroy. He wanted to collect the tributes himself and thereby continued his hold in Gujarat. He argued that Senapati Khanderao Dabhade had been authorised by Chhatrapati Shahu to collect the tributes of Gujarat. Pilajirao was acting on behalf of Dabhade and hence the tribute should go to Chhatrapati through Peshwa. In this issue a conflict took place between Pilajirao and Kadam Bande on one hand and Peshwa's agent Udaji Pawar sided by the new viceroy Sarbuland Khan on the other hand. This was the beginning of the open conflict between Peshwa and Gaekwad. Pilajirao successfully laid a siege at Dabhoi, and a battle took place. Finally Udaji Pawar had to leave, Pilajirao occupied Baroda and Dabhoi along with the right to collect the Chauth and Sardesh mukhi of those places. Skirmishes continued with Peshwa after that. Finally it resulted in a civil war fought at Dabhoi in 1731, between Senapati Trimbakrao Dabhade and other Maratha confederates to suppress the interference of

The Peshwa. A stray shot from behind killed Trimbakrao Dabhade and Peshwa's victory was completed.

Peshwa Bajirao intended to secure the Chauth of Gujarat for himself without minding the interest of the other Maratha Sardars such as Dabhade, Bhande etc. This personal emotion of Bajirao brought him into trouble with the Maratha generals in Gujarat, Trimbakrao and others tried to protect their rights, in Gujarat. If Bajirao had the interest of the Maratha Court at heart & he could have helped Dabhade and others against the Mughal Subdedars.

The Mughal Emperor was also unhappy over the grant of tributes to Pilajirao. Abhesing was appointed the next viceroy in place of Sarbulankhan to meet the situation. Peshwa Bajirao already in conflict with Pilajirao promised to help Abhesing to protect the territories from the depredations by other Maratha Chiefs. Chhatrapati Shahu wanted to settle the differences of the Peshwa and the Gaekwads but his power vested in Peshwa could not bring about the desired effect differences between Pilajirao with Peshwa continued as before.

Pilajirao consolidated his position still further, Abhesing could not control the rising power of Pilajirao and hence with a pretence to enter into a final settlement treacherously got Pilajirao stabbed in this meeting thus bringing to an end the life and career of the great founder

of Gaekwad fortune in Gujarat.

It may be observed that Peshwa as well as the Mughals were feeling embarrassed by the steep ascendancy of Pilajirao. They could not check his command in the province. Even after getting him killed treacherously, they could not bring the desired effect of diminishing Gaekwadi influence. On the contrary Pilaji's successor Damajirao II came out with still more influence in Gujarat. Damajirao with the help of an old ally of Pilajirao the Desai of Padra and Mahadji could recapture the territories from the Mughal possession which had been lost during the turmoil that had followed Pilajirao's death. Thus in 1734, Damajirao could get back Baroda which remained under the rule of Gaekwad family till the state merged with Indian Republic in modern times. By 1740 Damajirao could secured a peaceful right to collect the revenues from number of places in Gujarat. He, thus expanded the Maratha dominions considerably and brought fortunes of the Gaekwad family to a very high pitch.

In order to be free from the domination of the Peshwa, Damajirao tried to cultivate good relations with foreign powers. To stabilise and strengthen his position in Gujarat he won over many Maratha leaders and purused them to make Gujarat their permanent residence.

Both Peshwa and Damajirao were jealous of each other. Damajirao looked for an opportunity to measure swords with the Peshwa and his party. This basic antipathy of each other was the root cause of the subsequent conflicts between the Peshwas and the Gaekwads. The death of Bajirao Peshwa in 1740 gave an opportunity to Damajirao to do what he desired for a long time.

In 1749 Shahu Chhatrapati died childless and there were intrigues for the succession. There were many supporters, including Rani Sakvarbai the senior most wife of Shahu for the pretensions of Shambhaji, Raja of Kolhapur, nearest relative of Shahu. But Shambhaji had been debarred from coming to the throne of Satara. At the insistance of the aged queen Tarabai one Ramraja was adopted and crowned as Chhatrapati Tarabai tried to dominate the Peshwa by keeping Ramaraja under her thumb and within no time mutual hostility had arisen between Tarabai and Peshwa Balaji Bajirao. Tarabai's party was later on supported by Umabai Dabhade and Damajirao Gaekwad for their personal reasons.

The Dabhades were reduced to insignificance and they were deprived of their estate and Subah of Gujarat was divided equally between the Gaekwads and the Peshwas. Umabai in her distress looked to Tarabai for help and the two ladies made a common cause. They raised a cry that Chhatrapati's Raj had been usurped by the Brahmins and they called all

Maratha leaders to come to their help. The ladies wanted to reduce the Raja of Satara and all Maharashtra from the power of Brahmins. They induced Damajirao to take the lead and head their cause. Damajirao was not slow to accept the invitation of Tarabai and Umabai. He advanced rapidly towards Poona with an army of 15,000 men. But Peshwa defeated Damajirao and captured two sons of Damajirao with Umabai and Yashwantrao Dabhade as prisoners. Damajirao and his minister Ramchandra Baswant were also imprisoned in Poona. This step of Peshwa gave a blow to allies of Tarabai, Umabai and their Followers.

In the meantime Peshwa sent Raghunathrao to occupy forcibly possessions of all the settlements of Damajirao in Gujarat. Raghunathrao could not manage affairs alone in Gujarat and thus Damajirao's assistance was again needed in Gujarat. In this way Damajirao was released and in 1752 a formal treaty between Peshwa and Gaekwad was signed by which whatever Damajirao II and Dabhade had acquired by their joint efforts had to be divided between Peshwa and Gaekwad. Thus inspite of rising power of Damajirao II, Subordination of Gaekwads to Peshwas could not be ruled out. However, from his inner most heart Damajirao II could not enter the Maratha confederacy where the Peshwa was to have an upper hand. In accordance with the latest treaty Damajirao II

became the sole Maratha representative in Gujarat and the claims of Dabhade over Gujarat were totally abandoned. Damajirao II had to pay huge arrears of the tributes which were due since the times of Pilajirao. He had to cede half of his dominions to Peshwa and further had to yield similar half in his all future conquests.

This was a political gain of the Peshwa over the Gaekwad. After partition treaty, they jointly captured Ahmedabad and shared a joint rule. Hereafter it seems Damajirao changed his attitude towards the Peshwa and he helped the Peshwa not only in Gujarat but in other parts of India also.

After the death of Damajirao II in the year 1768, a dispute arose regarding, the succession of in the Gaekwad's family, the succession dispute between the two brothers was another set back in the Gaekwad history. It created a crack in their own power and gave opportunity to the foreign power to interfere in their economic and territorial gains. In spite of all this Fatehsingrao came out successfully from all that mess. Considering Fatehsingrao more powerful the foreign power did not want to enter any conflict with him.

After the partition treaty Peshwa secured the right for approval of the appointment of successor to Baroda 'Gadi.'

It would be seen that the period of ten years from the death of Damajirao II in 1768 till Fatehsingrao became the legal heir of the 'Gadi' in 1778, had been a period of great scramble for power in the Gaekwad history. It was definite that Peshwas were asserting their superiority by passing orders of succession. But there in Poona court too the Peshwa and his uncle Raghunath Rao were having an internal conflict amongst themselves for the Peshwaship. When Raghunath Rao became Peshwa he sided Govindrao but on their side the ministers insisted contrary to Raghunath Rao passed order in favour of Sayajirao. Due to these confusions in the succession orders, the Gaekwads could not consolidate their power. Their energies were diverted in fighting among themselves in a bid to hold their own territories and not allowing it to go into the hands of the other brother. At this stage appeared another power viz., the English in a big way. They took advantage of this disarray and started siding Govindrao or Fatehsingrao as it suited to their interests. Whatever might have been the consequences of this conflict in these ten years, the English gained a lot of territories in Gujarat and were the main beneficiary.

Madhavrao, the shrewd ruler that he was, seized the opportunity of weakening the family of his rival Damajirao by putting one claimant against another. Peshwa Madhavrao sought a compromise. It meant 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 of wee, mind Fatehsing was appointed his Mutalik or deputy. Sayajirao had to send more than fifty lakhs of rúpees by way of fine, arrears and Nazar. An agreement was signed by Peshwa Madhavrao and Sayajirao Gaekwad in 1772. As time passed Fatehsingrao got 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. The English settled with Fatehsingrao by signing the treaty of Kundhela in 1780. The English promised to defend Fatehsingrao against all foreign enemies and against any offensive affairs of Peshwa.

The signing of this treaty at Kundhela between English and Fatehsingrao was considered a good diplomacy of Fatehsingrao. Eventhough he was friendly with Peshwa still he chose to be an ally of English. The reason being simple Fatehsingrao wanted to be independent from Peshwa's subordination and his successors would be free from paying tribute to ^Peshwa.

Thus Fatehsingrao could achieve the goal of consolidating his Gujarat Possession by having an effective rule without any interference of Peshwas. He had full cooperation of English. Peace and tranquility prevailed in Gujarat till his death in 1789.

After Peshwa Madhavrao his younger brother Narayanrao became the Peshwa. Within a short period ten months Narayanrao was murdered and Raghunathrao became the Peshwa. In 1774 Raghoba, as he was called, was dispossessed of power and was chased out by the rival ministerial army of Poona. This scramble for power lasted for more than seven years and has far reaching effects on the relation of the Peshwa and the Gaekwad. They were to become now dead enemies of each other and did not mind approaching the English often for their selfish ends at the turn of the century.

Fatehsingrao died in 1789. His younger brother Manajirao assumed the charge of regency on behalf of Sayajirao. Now he required the sanction of the Peshwa. Manajirao had to face a severe and loud opposition of Govindrao at Poona.

Manajirao presented a Nazar of Rs. 53,13,000 and promised to pay Fatehsingrao's arrears which amounted to Rs. 36 lakhs. After extorting this huge amount the title of Sena-Khas-Khel was conferred on Manajirao by the Poona Darbar. On his occasion Nana Fadnis and Haripant Phadke bound themselves by an oath not to interfere directly or indirectly in the Government of Baroda. Even after these promises after about a year, under Mahadji Sindia's pressure the Poona Darbar failed to keep their part of the bargain and started negotiations with Manajirao's rival claimant Govindrao.

Mahadji had given his daughter in marriage to Anandrao, Govindrao's son. Therefore he did not like the arrangement made by Poona Darbar and supported Govindrao.

Nana Phadnis's, already apprehensive of the growing power of Mahadji, considered that compliance in this aspect would lead to the addition or extension of Mahadji's influence in Gujarat. So with the assistance of Gulabrao, Manaji's agent he effectually frustrated Govindrao's manoeuvres. Mahadji Sindia, after due consideration of Govindrao's claims, and on account of representations and receipt of presents from Manajirao agreed to drop his support to Govindrao. Thus Govindrao lost his case.

Manajirao had not been sure of the support of the Poona Durbar and he had therefore started negotiations for help with the English. He had also asked for armed support on the basis of the treaty of Kundhela of 1780.

But direct intervention was also difficult because Manaji had no issue and after Manaji's death, the headship of the Gaekwad family was likely to pass to Govindrao or his sons. In such a case the Poona government could be immensely benefitted, even though they seemed to be against Govindrao.

The British due to these considerations maintained good relations with Manajirao but no commitments were made and the British, scrupulously avoided involving themselves in the affairs of the Gaekwad brothers.

Manajirao had to keep Mahadji Sindia and Nana Phadnis in good humour by giving valuable presents. Thus he maintained good relations with them. The Poona authorities often complained to Manajirao for the non-payment of the dues and for the non-fulfillment of the agreement signed by Manajirao. He was also asked for the payment of Govindrao Gaekwad's expenses and of debts to creditors made by him. Manajirao, no ever, after a few days of illness incidently died on July 26, 1793, leaving Govindrao to claim the Gadi of Baroda. Manajirao was recognised twice as Sena-Khas-Khel within a short period of three years. He was not in a position to satisfy Nana Phadnis for money, though in a short period of his require he had paid more than fifty lakhs of rupees.

Manajirao's death brought a turn in the wheel of fortune in favour of disheartened Govindrao. Now there was no one to contest Govindrao's claim to the leadership of the Gaekwad family.

Nana Phadnis was already negotiating with Govindrao and he appointed, an officer named Gabaji Ballal as the Manager of the Baroda State affairs. Govindrao and his mother were directed to go to Poona where he was detained by Nana Phadnis, till he signed an agreement. The agreement proved disastrous to the interest of Baroda Government. Govindrao accepted this agreement as he was impatient to be the ruler.

The agreement reveals that heavy obligations were forced upon Govindrao. The policy of Nana Phadnis was harsh and extortionate which caused a decline in the prosperity of the Gaekwad family. Govindrao in his eagerness to become the ruler made an oath and sword to make over whatever money jewels and even clothes that might be more in the treasury of the fort of Baroda. Govindrao's reign marks a turning point in the fortunes of the Baroda State and the sovereignty of the Gaekwads even their possession in Gujarat. With the heavy extortations of the Peshwa the Baroda State was under great financial stress. Govindrao expired, in September 19, 1800 and history repeated itself again as his death was followed by fresh disturbances for power.

Anandrao was the eldest of all and he was acknowledged as Govindrao's successor. It was known to all that he was a man of weak intellect and addicted to drugs. As Anandrao was of a feeble mind, he was treated as a nominal head in the State and shrewd politicians tried to make capital for their own ends. During the regime of Anandrao the relations of the Gaekwad and the Peshwa took a peculiar turn and came to an end.

Peshwa Bajirao II surrendered himself to the British in 1818 and the family of the Gaekwad was freed from the Peshwa's authority forever.

The Gaekwad family was freed from the control of the Peshwa but at the same time the British desired the expansion of their own power. The British insisted that the subsidiary forces at Baroda should be increased and the additional expenditure should be met from Ahmedabad from of the Gaekwads and the tribute from Kathiawad. The cession of this rich city of Ahmedabad was covered by the company and it got it from the Gaekwads. In order to consolidate the British possessions in Gujarat there were exchanges of territories which were recently acquired from the Peshwa. The exchanges were made on the principle of the location of the places. These exchanges consolidated British possessions in Gujarat.

The Peshwas were held in highest esteem for extricating the Maratha sovereignty from confusion during the most critical period. This may be a fact yet they cannot escape criticism of weakening the Maratha empire for personal and selfish interests. In order to gain their supremacy they tried to subdue other powerful chiefs of the Maratha empire. The other chiefs had contributed in the expansion and consolidation of Maratha rule in whole of the country. The Peshwa had shown their ego for attaining power for themselves and thus weakened the Maratha power instead of strengthening.

However, the scenerio of the eighteenth century throws very good light on how the lord and the vassel contest each other's claims and authorities; how unremunerative and unsound economic policies of the Maratha confederacy paved way for final bankruptcy, the irreparable damage caused by unspoken but keen Maratha - Brahmin animosity accentuated by the role of women and non-Maharashtrain Officials of the Maratha confederacy in general and the Gaekwad's interest in particular for later Gaekwads, any price was fair to return to power and this lust for power was fully exploited by the British in 1817-1818 A.D.

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