

C H A P T E R   X I

THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF SAYAJI RAO: RIGHTS, CONFLICT  
AND RELATIONS WITH THE BRITISH.

CHAPTER XI

THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF SAYAJI RAO:  
RIGHTS, CONFLICT AND RELATIONS WITH THE BRITISH

The genesis of the rights, conflict and nature of relations between the Indian States' Princes and the Supreme (British) Government lay in the place, rights and authority of the former. In the political affairs, the importance of the Indian States in the nineteenth century was hardly recognised by the Paramount Power. A brief mention of the emergence of British Paramountcy in India is necessary to understand the points of view held by Sayaji Rao.

It is an undeniable historical fact that India's political framework was made by the British under the East India Company during the period of 1799 and 1819. With the eclipse of the Maratha power, the British became dominant and assumed the position of a Paramount Power. Lord Wellesley and his subordinates gave a clear expression of the doctrine of Paramountcy. Ochterlony was perhaps the first to make a mention of it in his letter of March 21, 1820 to Sir Charles Metcalf.<sup>①</sup> The process of annexing different territories and some Indian States upto 1857, consolidated and strengthened the doctrine of Paramountcy. The locus standi of the Indian States arising from the treaties, engagements and others signed with the British, was allowed to be forgotten. The sovereignty of the Princes, their independent status and powers were reduced. The removal of Maharaja Malhar Rao and of the rulers of Alwar, Nabha and Indore indicated the power of Paramountcy. This was the situation when Sayaji Rao ascended the throne.

In 1881, Sir T. Madhav Rao, the Dewan, in his discourse to young Sayaji Rao, gave sufficient advice on maintaining relations with the British Government. "Nothing is more important," said he, "than that the Maharaja should study carefully

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1. Edward Thompson, The Making of the Indian Princes (London, 1944), p. 283.

and thoroughly the relations of his State with the British Government. They involve many momentous, delicate matters of which the Maharaja should have an accurate and complete knowledge. Upon such knowledge depends in a very large measure His Highness's safety, honour, strength and happiness.<sup>①</sup> The Dewan laid emphasis on conciliating the British Government which possessed 'irresistable power'. He warned the Maharaja against provoking the paramount power. "It would be a great folly," said he, "for any Native Prince to provoke it seriously against him. Conciliation is an absolute and unavoidable necessity of the situation and circumstances."<sup>②</sup> He should never think of coercing the British Government by means of physical force."

Sir T. Madhav Rao also showed Sayaji Rao the way of conciliating the British Government. According to him the best means of conciliating the British Government would be to govern the "State well, and also to see that his arrangements are not in such conflict with those of the British Government as to be source of constant irritation or annoyance to the British Government."<sup>③</sup>

#### Position and Rights of the Indian Princes

Within a couple of years Maharaja Sayaji Rao understood the weakness of the political system in the country. In a friendly yet lengthy letter of January 20, 1897, to Lord Reay, a former Governor of the Bombay Presidency, Sayaji Rao stated that the imperfection of the political system was created more by a blind succession of historical events than by its adaptation to actual needs. "Its effect has been to weaken the old bases of power without satisfactorily replacing them," he wrote. He regretted that the Indian Princes were being made and unmade without much inquiry or were compelled temporarily to

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1. MH, p. 285.
  2. Ibid., p. 286.
  3. Ibid., p. 289.

transfer their powers to the Political Officer. He also disapproved the policy of the British to reward the servants of the States with titles without prior reference to the State Government.<sup>①</sup>

Sayaji Rao was much disturbed over the contents of the Curzon's Circular of August 25, 1900 which aimed to restrict the visits of the Indian Princes abroad. He considered the tone and language of the Circular harsh and humiliating. He called the British Government "... a paternal Government with vengeance." "Our rank and position is extolled to the seventh heaven, when anything is to be got out of us in the interest of the British Government."<sup>②</sup> He felt that if the Princes demurred or put any question they were promptly snubbed down and Rules as well as Precedents were made without their consent or knowledge. He wrote that, " We are made the subjects of common order and circulars, ... If we refer to and rely on our treaties, we are told that they are not worth the paper on which they were written."<sup>③</sup>

Sayaji Rao in a letter of October 18, 1900, to Lord Reay expressed his feelings regarding the Curzon Circular in this manner. He wrote, "Laws affecting beggars and peasants are promulgated for criticism before they become law, while the unfortunate <sup>P</sup>princes of India are treated worse than men of no position and property."<sup>④</sup> In another letter to Sir John Watson, he stated <sup>the circular most mischievous one and</sup> quite unnecessary. The Circular will affect the ruling power of the Chiefs and render them still less able to administer their affairs satisfactorily."<sup>⑤</sup>

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1. Sergeant, op. cit., pp. 279-81.
  2. SL (Compiled), Vol. I, Letter No. 520, September 23, 1900, pp. 383-84.
  3. Ibid., pp. 384-85.
  4. Ibid., Letter No. 524, p. 390.
  5. Ibid., Letter No. 527, p. 391.

Sayaji Rao also had a great deal of correspondence, both officially and unofficially, with Lieutenant Colonel M. J. Meade, the Resident at various periods between 1901 and 1909 at Baroda. The subject of his letter was on the rights of Princes Va. the dictation of the Curzon Circular. In a letter of May 1, 1903, to him Sayaji Rao wrote on the British policy towards the Princes and the reforms he had introduced in the Baroda State. He expressed his feeling that the British might not give facilities to the Princes for the journey abroad but it was raising difficulties which were indicative of the distasteful attitude of the Government towards the visits of the Princes to Europe and especially to England. He stated, "They seemed to me to be anxious to enforce the ~~ix~~ idea that the Prince descends from the powers and dignities of his position, when he absents himself from<sup>2</sup> the seat of Government."<sup>①</sup>

Writing from Constantinople in 1910 to his brother Sampat Rao on the position of Indian Rajas, Sayaji Rao wrote, "The position of Indian Rajas is certainly unenviable. It is not only anamalous but deplorable. They are worse for good treatment than paid manual servants. The separation between them and the State is being systematically carried out to a ruinous extent... the measure applied to Native States is quite different from what they (i. e. the British) apply to themselves. Discrediting, snubbing and finding faults, is the only work political officers like to do. Their power for mischief and hindrance in preventing solid good work done is immense and uncontrolled. It is a refined system of cruelty, which is demoralizing us."<sup>②</sup>

Such thinking of Sayaji Rao as it seems, led him to demand for greater degree autonomy.

#### Demand for Greater Degree of Autonomy

In 1892, Sayaji Rao indicated his objectives in introducing and maintaining progressive ideas in the governance of the Baroda

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1. Ibid., Vol. II, Letter No. 710, p. 517.

2. Ibid., Vol. IV (Suppl.) 1875-1915, Letter No. 2014, p. 2155.

State and stated that the task of governing the Indian States was "very arduous"<sup>①</sup>. He was in a sense, echoing the irking feelings of the Indian Princes who might have been experiencing their position and freedom fettered under the British system of administration.

The first decade of the 1900's was a period of reforms in the reign of Sayaji Rao. During that period he seriously pondered over the issues regarding the progress of the Indian States. In 1906, in a letter of August 21, to Sir John Morley, the Secretary of State, for India, Sayaji Rao wrote on the problem of granting more autonomy to the Indian States for securing their "natural and healthy development"<sup>②</sup>. He had more probably in mind the promises given by Queen Victoria in 1858. He further mentioned, "It was not intended that these states should be reduced to a subordinate position; and it is not desirable that the power of initiative and all distinctive features of administration should be crushed out them."<sup>③</sup>

He expressed his opinion that it was the right of man to have a good government, and in the present day the people themselves demanded it. Therefore, he felt that without "...independence of action and without a greater degree of trust and confidence being placed in Indian Princes, they find it difficult to advance the interests and the welfare of the people placed under their care; and any real progress of the Native States according to methods best suited for them becomes impossible."<sup>④</sup>

Exactly after one month, he wrote to Lord Morley and expressed satisfaction over the idea of forming a council of Indian Ruling Princes. He suggested a few points for consideration and for incorporating them while forming such a council. The

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2. File No. 345, "Notes on Important Political Matters and Short Notes on Important Subjects," Printed Letter, p. 1. (Confidential Section, Baroda Records Office).

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 2.

1. Newham, SAMSG, Vol. IV, p. 718.

Council should be framed on correct principles and entrusted with sufficient powers. It should be empowered to deal and dispose off the problems relating to the Indian States with the practical knowledge of their requirements. If such procedure was to be followed, it would give satisfaction and inspire confidence in the Princes. They would be prompted to discharge properly the high duties imposed on them.①

Similarly he also repeated some of his views about the Council of Princes in a letter of January 21, 1907, to Lord Minto, the Viceroy. He also criticised the interference by the Government of India which he defined as "unnecessary and productive of undesirable results." Therefore, he suggested that "the Native States of India require a greater degree of autonomy and a less fettered scope of action, to enable them to secure the utmost development on the healthiest of lines, of which they are capable."②

#### Chamber of Princes and Princes' Rights

Lord Chemsford, the Viceroy (1916-21), felt the necessity of procuring the active and unflinching co-operation of the Indian Princes in the War situation. Therefore, he convened a Conference of the Ruling Princes and Chiefs at Delhi at the end of October 1916.

After five days' deliberations, Sayaji Rao was requested by his brother Princes, to submit a brief account of the work of the Conference to the Viceroy. Speaking on behalf of the Princes and Chiefs, he expressed his optimism about the outcome of the Conference and hoped that "... in the fulness of time some of these Conferences will take an appropriate place in the Government of our mighty Empire." He put forth the ideal of Council of Princes with specified functions and well-defined powers and desired its realisation soon.③

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1. Ibid., pp. 1-2.
  2. Ibid., pp. 12-13.
  3. Widgery, SAMSG, p. 405.

In a Memorandum of December 30, 1917, Sayaji Rao referred to the scheme that was formulated at the Bikaner Conference in December 1917 regarding the creation of Chamber of Princes.

He envisaged the formation of the Council of Princes in common with his brother Princes, but he attached, "... utmost importance to the vital necessity of maintaining intact, and safeguarding absolutely the Izzat, dignity, privileges and prerogatives," which were "... established by solemn Treaties and Engagements and reiterated by Royal and Imperial Proclamation."<sup>①</sup>

He made it very clear that if these were endangered, he reserved his right to withdraw from any constitutional agreement. He opposed the idea of then being held in certain quarters which envisaged the merger of the Indian States with the British Territories. He wanted the Government of India to declare unequivocally and allay the apprehensions of the Chiefs and Princes, that the Government had no such intentions which would undermine their Izzat, dignity, privileges or prerogatives.<sup>②</sup>

In a private letter of November 7, 1917 to the Maharaja of Nabha, Sayaji Rao repeated his such ideas. He mentioned that the Government of India should certainly consult the Princes before coming to any conclusion in any matters concerning the Princes of India. He wanted to have a collective and organised voice of the Princes in order to have more weight than the solitary efforts of individual Princes. He anticipated joint action on the part of Princes to present their case before the Government.<sup>③</sup> The views of Sayaji Rao are significant in the

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1. File No. 341/1-A, 120, Chamber of Indian Princes and Chiefs-General Correspondence, p. 1 (Political Department, Baroda Records Office).
  2. Ibid.
  3. File No. 369, Copies of Letters Addressed to and received from H.E. the Viceroy, Governors and other High Personages by H.H. the Maharaja Saheb (Confidential Section, Baroda Records Office).

context of impending arrival of Mr. Montague as the Viceroy of India and the eagerness of the British Government to solicit Co-operation and seek more help from the Indian people. The formation of the Council of Princes was also heavily debated in the public.

Sayaji Rao also emphasised on the formation of a properly representative Court of Appeal in matters of dispute between the Government of India and the Indian Princes. He believed that the Government of India should allow the Indian Princes to fight 'legitimately' for their rights even by going to courts of law established for the purpose.①

It may be stated here that the Council of Princes was created under the Montague Chelmsford Reforms. It was to meet ordinarily once in a year to discuss an agenda approved by the Viceroy. The Viceroy, and in his absence, one of the Princes, was to preside over it. This clearly shows that the formation and powers of the Council of Princes fell much short of the expectation of Sayaji Rao. In the Simon Commission Report it was admitted that the Council of Princes had limited functions and since some of the most important States held aloof from its membership, it did not adequately serve the purpose of a <sup>federal</sup> organ.②

#### Demand for Restoring Sovereignty

In 1926, when Lord Reading paid a visit to Baroda, Sayaji Rao warmly welcomed him and in his speech praised the constitutional changes that were taking shape in the whole sub-continent. Speaking on behalf of the Indian States he expressed that the Indian States were watching with deep interest the progress of British India from stage to stage of self-rule. Under the circumstances, the claims of the Indian States should not be overlooked and a liberal treatment in the interpretation of

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1. Ibid.

2. A.C.Kapur, Constitutional History of India (1765-<sup>19</sup>70) (New Delhi, 1970), p. 276.

their much cherished rights and privileges be considered.<sup>①</sup>

He reminded the Viceroy of the beginning of relations with the British of the Baroda house over a hundred years ago. The British Government "... elected to mediate between my house and its tributaries ... and elected to collect the tribute on our behalf free of charge. It was a sacred trust then undertaken."<sup>②</sup> He suggested that in the interest of an efficient government, the British Government, should by then restore the ancient privileges to their Friends and Allies because "... it is only as true allies and partners in a Commonwealth of States that our Indian States can really become pillars of the Empire."<sup>③</sup>

His speeches and letters ~~shows~~<sup>shows</sup> that he was in the habit of putting before the British officials like the Viceroy and Governors of the <sup>p</sup>rovinces, statesmen in England and the distinguished audience in England the demands of the Indian States for the restoration of their privileges and rights and giving them due position in the British Empire. Whenever he spoke, he spoke not only for himself but on behalf of all the Indian Princes.

At a ~~banquet~~<sup>ban</sup>quet to Lord Irwin who visited Baroda in 1930, Sayaji Rao brought to the notice of the Viceroy the demands of the Indian States and stressed on "... the need for the complete autonomy of the State in the internal affairs; ... the strict observance of our (i.e. of rulers) treaties both in the letter and in the spirit; ... the establishment of an independent court of ~~arbitration~~ arbitration to which both sides can appeal as of right; and whereby all differences can be composed, and... the devising of some means whereby the States will be able to speak with weight in all matters that are common to them and the rest of India."<sup>④</sup>

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1. Newham, SAMSG, Vol. IV, p. 723.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Ibid.
  4. Saunders, SAMSG, Vol. III, p. 564.

Cherished Goal

At the Opening the First Round Table Conference in London, Sayaji Rao reminded the British Government and the British people of the noble words and promises given by Queen Victoria in her Proclamation relating to the Princes and States of India. He pointed out that the aspirations of the princes and of the people of India could be realised only when the spirit of the promises of Queen Victoria, were to be adhered to and put into practice. He expressed these words to support his contention: "In their prosperity will be our strength; In their contentment our security; In their gratitude our best reward."<sup>①</sup>

He hoped that for the attainment of that great goal, mutual trust and good-will will be reposed. Sayaji Rao's remarks are significant, when the people of India were in a fighting mood to achieve constitutional rights and freedom in the governance of the country.

Conflict, its causes and Relations:

The ideas underlined in the foregoing pages would reveal that Sayaji Rao was a conscientious ruler and was bent upon securing his 'legitimate' rights which would maintain his prestige, ~~his~~ dignity and privileges. But the Government thought otherwise. It was, therefore, natural in the case of Sayaji Rao to protest against the attitude and dictates of the British Government.

The factor that gave start to the conflict between him and the British Government, lies in the problems of undertaking foreign travels and the conduct of State administration during his absence. As has been shown elsewhere, he was forced to go to health resorts in Europe due to his bad health. The first travel was undertaken in 1887, and that was the beginning of a long drawn correspondence between the British Government and him.

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1. Ibid., p. 594.

The conflict and the nature of relations with the British Government that arose out these causes can be conveniently viewed in periods as under:

- (1) From 1887 to 1898
- (2) 1898-1905
- (3) 1905-1913
- (4) 1913-1918 and
- (5) 1918-1939.

All these periods have their own importance in so far as the attitude of Sayaji Rao was concerned. The study of these periods may now be taken up to find out whether the incidents and events justified the stand taken by Sayaji Rao.

First Period: 1887 to 1898

Before going to Europe, he planned change of place in India and decided to spend hot weather and the rains at Mahabaleshwar and Nilgiris. He made adequate arrangements to look after the administration of the State as he deemed fit. In a letter to Lord Dufferin, referring to his visit to Mahabaleshwar and Nilgiris, he stated, "This will most unfortunately result in my absence from the favourite field of my labours. I hate the idea of an absentee Maharaja ... I will make the best possible arrangements under the circumstances for the safe going of my State... "①

Later on he went to Europe for his health in 1887. Thereafter, he frequently went to Europe on his health ground. The Government of India and the Residents at Baroda did not view his such frequent visits to Europe with favour. The question of conducting the affairs of the State was significantly considered by them.

In 1892, Colonel E.S. Reynolds, then an officiating Agent to the Governor-General asked the Maharaja to supply a list of officers who would accompany him to his forthcoming European tour. He also advised the Maharaja to take one officer with him from the Political Department of the Government of India, at the expenses of the Baroda State. The Government of India at this time also advised the Maharaja to appoint a Council with full

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1. SL, Vol. I, Letter No. 28, dated January 16, 1887, p. 20.

powers in his absence. But Sayaji Rao refused to accept this advice and was willing to entrust only general powers to the Council<sup>①</sup> and remained firm in his stand.

Writing from Carlsbad (Germany) to Dewan Manubhai in Baroda, Sayaji Rao cautioned him. "You must not allow any room for the Residency to interfere in our affairs, as the tendency to do so is destructive of good government. I am moved by no unfriendly feelings towards the Residency, but the weakness of a Native Government requires that he (i.e. the Agent to the Governor-General) should absolutely let matters alone, unless to create difficulties be the object."<sup>②</sup>

In 1892, the Resident reported that the Maharaja "gave a good deal of trouble before he could be induced to delegate sufficient authority for the conduct of the administration during his absence." He specifically wrote to the Foreign Secretary that the Maharaja did not want that any Political Officer should accompany him in his travel.<sup>③</sup> This was written before Sayaji Rao left for England.

In 1893, the Maharaja in a conversation with the Resident at Baroda, emphasized on the reasons which comp~~elled~~<sup>elled</sup> him to travel for the sake of health and urged that the latter had nothing to do with the internal administration of which the Dewan would keep him informed. The replies from the Residents and their counter replies from the Maharaja ensued. The Resident maintained that he was responsible to the Government of India for the peace of the country, and must be fully aware of the details of arrangements during the Maharaja's absence. Sayaji Rao questioned the Resident's right to know the details of interval administration which could not possibly have any

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1. Doctor, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 199.
  2. SL, Vol. I, Letter No. 133, dated July 22, 1893, p. 98.
  3. Notes in Secret 1, December 1892, Nos. 41-90. FDGINS-1-P, No.45, January 1905.

relation to the peace of the country. Stanley Rice, the biographer of Sayaji Rao, has observed that the replies of the Resident were miscalculated and did not reflect the principles on which he acted.<sup>①</sup>

On some other occasion Sayaji Rao asserted his authority and questioned the propriety of the delegation of power by an Indian Ruler to the Resident who was not his servant. Such an act would be inconsistent with the integrity of the Indian States. The Resident replied that, "the integrity and dignity of the Baroda State will best be secured by attention to the advice which the Government of India is every way ready to give when occasion demanded."<sup>②</sup> In spite of such stand taken by the Resident, Sayaji Rao <sup>and left for Europe in 1893 after</sup> ignored him making necessary arrangements for the administration.

Sayaji Rao did not seem to have been happy over his differences with the Resident. This is reflected in his letter to Lord Reay. He wrote "... will I get a sympathetic Resident to assist me? Let me tell you frankly that any kind of assistance by the British will be most happily accepted by me. I wish them to help always and especially under the present circumstances of my delicate health. Many are inclined to think that I am so independent. I doubt whether the last is the right word to convey my idea that I do not care or value assistance."<sup>③</sup>

In the period under study, the "Bapat Case" has been generally regarded as a good example in which the Resident's interference in the State affairs in the absence of Sayaji Rao was regarded unjustified. V. S. Bapat was an Assistant in the Settlement Department of which F.A.H. Elliot was the Commissioner. Bapat was regarded as the right-hand man of Elliot and was

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1. Life of Maharaja Sayaji Rao III of Baroda, Vol. I, p. 175.
  2. Baroda Residency letter No. 4782, dated April 27, 1893 to the Minister of the Baroda State. Quoted by Rice, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 175.
  3. SL, Vol. IV (Supplementary), Letter No. 1449, dated September 5, 1894, p. 2104.

regarded by the villagers as the real person in power.

Lt. Col. N. C. Martelli (1894-95), the Agent at Baroda, wrote to the Dewan on June 13, 1894 about the petitions received by the Residency accusing Bapat with corruption and extortion and also drew his attention to an article in Ahmedabad Times. He wrote that if no action was taken it meant nothing to him but hinted that such a thing charged publicly, if not answered, would react upon the fair name of Baroda. He suggested that the Maharaja would expect the State Council to take action.

A lengthy correspondence ensued between the Council, the Agency, and the Maharaja in Europe, as a result of which a Committee of Enquiry was ordered. Bapat was prosecuted and later acquitted. In the end, he was restored to his place and pensioned off by the Maharaja for "the reasons of State policy."<sup>①</sup>

Sayaji Rao was deeply hurt by the manner in which the 'Bapat episode' was handled by the Residency. He wrote to Elliot that the Agent to the Governor-General had done a great deal of mischief by which his own power and position had been weakened and had made difficult for his good government to function smoothly.<sup>②</sup> He also wrote to his brother Sampat Rao in that connection, that, "The Residency is ever on the watch to take advantage of any seeming defects in our native administration." He also wrote to Kazi Shahabuddin, the Ex-Dewan, "The officers are much more afraid of this Residency now than I have ever seen them."<sup>③</sup> Sayaji Rao in a letter to Elliot dated December 13, 1895, admitted that if there had been any delay in the decision of the Bapat case, it was "... merely the result of extreme caution on my part, arising from the fear of the Residency."<sup>④</sup>

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1. Ibid., Vol. I, Letter No. 208, dated September 24, 1895, p.208.
  2. Ibid., (Letter No. 143, dated March 2, 1895), p. 105.
  3. Sergeant, op. cit., p. 94. Cited.
  4. SL, Vol. I (Letter No.225, dated December 13, 1895), p. 176.

Though the Bapat case was a trivial incident in the affairs of the Baroda State, it proved to Sayaji Rao a matter of "great ~~xx~~ worry from beginning to end." It also brought into prominence the attitude of the Agency in regard to the internal matters of the Baroda State.

Second Period : 1898-1905

This period is highlighted with the Curzon Circular affair and the sharp reactions of Sayaji Rao over the official attitude maintained towards him.

At the end of the nineteenth century the Government of India published the Curzon Circular<sup>①</sup> which required the Indian Princes and Chiefs to obtain the sanction of the Government of India before they proceeded abroad. The Circular proved irksome to them.

Lord Curzon shortly before issuing the Circular spoke about it at Gwalior. Referring to the Princes going abroad, he said that the ruler should not appear before "... his own people a frivolous and irresponsible despot. He must justify and not abuse the authority committed to them; he must be the servant as well as the master of his people... His figure should not merely be known on the polo-ground or on the race-work or in the European hotel... his real work, his princely duty, lies among his own people."<sup>②</sup> The tone of speech and the language of the Circular offended the Indian Princes. They felt it to be harsh, unfriendly and insulting.

The Circular stated, "... the first and paramount duty of a Native Prince or Chief lies towards his own State and people. ... the ruler shall devote his best energies, not to the pursuit of pleasure nor the cultivation of absentee interests or amusements, but to the welfare of his own subjects and administration. Such a standard of duty is incompatible with frequent absences from the State even though these may be represented as inspired by the pursuit of knowledge or by a

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1. Gazette of India (Supplement), dated August 25, 1900, pp. 1954-55.

2. Ronaldshay, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 28.

thirst for civilization. "① This Circular was <sup>not</sup> welcomed either in the India Office or even in higher quarters. King Edward VII mildly suggested that its language was strong and a friendly hint would have served the purpose better. "②

Perhaps more than other Indian Princes, Maharaja Sayaji Rao took this Circular seriously and expressed his injured feelings officially and through personal letters to friends. In a letter of September 23, 1900, to Sir John (Puleston), he wrote about the 'cruel and humiliating treatment' given to the Indian Princes by the British Government. " A Raja is asked to produce a medical certificate, if he desires to visit Europe for his health, a treatment which is so inconsistent with his dignity and rights. "③

In one of his letters Sayaji Rao gave reason of his anxiety and injured feelings about the Circular. He clarified that "... the public is under the impression as if the Order was directed towards me. Irrespective of this, I have often found that the treatment we get is not a very satisfactory. "④

The official attitude towards Sayaji Rao is best expressed in the letter of April 18, 1902 of Resident Colonel Meade to the Government of India. He mentioned that Sayaji Rao's "... absences would not, however, be so objectionable if he delegated greater power to those he leaves behind, and I am endeavouring to get him to do this when he goes to Murree next week. If the Maharaja appointed a Council to carry on the State business under the eye of the Resident, I am inclined to think he should not be discouraged from going away in the summer. "⑤

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1. Gazette of India, p. 1955.
  2. Sidney Lee, King Edward VII, Vol. II (London, 1924), p. 365.
  3. SLJ, Vol. I (Letter No. 520), p. 383.
  4. Ibid., Letter No. 524, dated October 18, 1900, p. 390.
  5. FDGINS - 1 - P, November 1902/24-25/105, p. 107.

In one Communication of May 28, 1902, Captain H. G. Carnegie, First Assistant to the Resident in charge at Baroda, wrote that Sayaji Rao who intended to go to a sea-trip "... has not in so many words asked for permission, but he has addressed me, as I find he has hitherto done on similar occasions, a letter through his Dewan, intimating his intention to go."<sup>①</sup> This was related to the Curzon Circular according to which Sayaji Rao was not ready to ask for permission but simply had expressed his intention for the trip. In the same communication Captain Carnegie stated that the Maharaja "...takes every opportunity of contesting the Government of India Orders" and that "... he first of all criticizes the Circular in 1900 in a very childish spirit, and then proceeds to say that, if the Government of India insist on his applying for permission, he may have to do so under protest, but more likely he will give up his sea-trip, which it will be to the detriment of his health."<sup>②</sup> This suggests that Sayaji Rao could not submit to the unjust and insulting Circular and if compelled to do so he would forego his planned trip.

Sayaji Rao's views regarding Resident's interference and the place of the Indian Princes and his opposition to the Circular were expressed in a personal interview with Colonel Meade, the Resident, on February 14, 1903, at Baroda. Captain Carnegie was also present at that time. Later on the discussions were reported by Colonel Meade to the Government of India.<sup>③</sup>

Sayaji Rao was quoted saying to Colonel Meade that " You must remember, we, Chiefs of India, cannot be compared with officers who go on leave, who while away have no connection with their work in India. We have hereditary rights and interests in the State. It is all very well for a Chief to entrust his administration to a Council presided over by his ~~Rajkumar~~ Dewan, but when you introduce the Resident as a consultative authority, you introduce an element over which we have no

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1. Ibid., November/24-26/p.112.

2. Ibid., p. 113.

3. Ibid., No. 20-29/March 1903, pp. 47-49.

control. We can find no fault with them."<sup>①</sup> Five days later, Colonel Meade also reported Sayaji Rao's intention to retain "all the control he can over the Administration during his absence."<sup>②</sup>

Though Sayaji Rao did not receive officially the copy of the Circular of 1900, he made representation against it and pleaded for the rights of the Indian Princes. Yet, the Government of India remained silent and did not answer. The Circular was never strictly applied and a change of policy was seen in a speech of Lord Minto at Udaipur in 1909. He reiterated the basis of the British policy towards the Indian States which was of non-interference with rare exceptions in the internal affairs of the Native States.<sup>③</sup> However, in 1920, the restrictions were removed and the Princes were left free to follow their own inclinations.

The impression of Lord Curzon about Sayaji Rao is to be found in the remarks that he put on the Administration Reports of the Baroda State for the years 1902-03 and 1903-04. He stated that, "... Gaekwar is too mixed in the main features of his character which are suspicion of others and particularly of the Government of India. Each Viceroy in turn has done his best to bring about a better state of affairs and to win the genuine confidence of His Highness. But we have failed, and I believe the problem to be insoluble."<sup>④</sup>

Since 1900 onwards, Sayaji Rao became well-known in official quarters as an obstinate ruler ready to disregard the Government's orders and bent on upholding his rights. Such a feeling created an unfortunate atmosphere of which Sayaji Rao fell a victim in 1911.

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1. Ibid., p. 47.

2. Ibid., p. 42.

3. Speeches of Lord Minto, 1905-10 (London, 1911), pp. 323-26.

4. FDGINS-1-P, 1905, November/16-18:19, p. 3.

The case of active interference in the Baroda State affairs, is noteworthy here. Lt. Colonel Meade, the Resident on January 27, 1904, gave an interview<sup>①</sup> to the Maratha Sardars and others whose incomes had been reduced by the Maharaja. Yeshwant Rao Raje Pandhare, a Barrister-at-Law and 1st Class Sardar at Baroda, was prominent among them. Colonel Meade sent a detailed account of his interview with a note on the grievances of the people of Baroda, to the Government of India. But no orders were passed on it.

Again Meade in a confidential demi-official, dated March 26, 1904 wrote on the treatment given by the Maharaja to the Sardars and other people of the State. He also related in it his interview with Maharaja on the matter. He stated, "The Maharaja, before discussing the particular question, spoke in a heated way against our interfering in such matter at all. He said his authority had been readily lowered by the general feeling his subjects had, that they can always appeal against his orders to the British authorities and that every day he found the task of carrying on his administration more and more difficult."<sup>②</sup>

Colonel Meade reported what was his reply to the Maharaja. He stated that it was not the intention of the Government of India to interfere in the internal matters of the 'Native' States but maintained that the subjects of Native States, like people living in British India, had a perfect right to apply to the Government of India if they wish and that in such matters the Government of India ought to be kept informed.<sup>③</sup>

To this, Sayaji Rao "gave a long, and rather disconnected reply" Colonel Meade stated. Sayaji Rao clarified that he was merely giving effect to the arrangements for the reduction of

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1. Ibid., 1905, January, No. 45, p. 2.

2. Ibid., p. 6.

3. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

the irregular forces of the State, a process that had been started during the administration of Sir T. Madhav Rao, the Dewan and that he had been liberal in dealing with all whose emoluments were touched by his Orders.<sup>①</sup>

A long exchange of demi-official letters and reports ensued between Lt. Colonel Meade and the Government of India. The study of this correspondence reveals that the Resident outlined almost all points illustrating Sayaji Rao's behaviour and policy with regard to his foreign travel, the Circular of 1900 and dealing with the 'seditious' activities in the Baroda State. The matter was often placed before the Viceroy for Orders.

At one stage Lord Ampthill, the Viceroy, on May 7, <sup>1904,</sup> ~~1903~~ wrote that "... the Government of India would not be justified in interfering in the case of these Sirdars as it stands at present... Resident is not altogether tactful in his relations with the Gaekwar, and makes a far too open show of authority and interference.. My opinion is that it is Colonel Meade who needs advice rather than the Gaekwar."<sup>②</sup>

The culmination of the long drawn correspondence is found in a letter from the Foreign Department to Colonel Meade. He was asked to inform the deputation of the Maratha Sardars of Baroda that "... in no case will His Excellency Lord Curzon be able to receive the proposed deputation." This has reference to the telegram dated August 31, 1904 from the Sardars and others who wanted to represent their grievances before Lord Curzon who was by then about to arrive in India.<sup>③</sup>

The Sardar Case affair clearly shows that the Residents did not let go any opportunity to interfere in the internal

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1. Ibid., p. 6.

2. Ibid., p. 14.

3. Ibid., p. 26. Letter No. 3960 - I.A., dated October 27, ~~1903~~ 1904. Quoted.

affairs of the States unduly. It also reflects the Government of India's reasonable attitude against interfering in such trivial matters which had no direct concern with them.

### Third Period 1905-1913

The third period is characterised with the 'sedition' controversy and the views and attitude of Sayaji Rao and secondly with the Delhi Durbar incident which created a controversy in both the official and non-official circles.

It hardly needs any discussion on the tense atmosphere of India in the first decade of this century. Patriotic feelings, nationalist activities, the use of pistols, the 'cult of bomb' and 'seditious' activities were the outstanding features of the period. Unrest and violence in Bengal were on the increase.

Under these circumstances, Lord Minto, the Viceroy and Governor-General, addressed a letter in August 1909, to all the Ruling Princes on the problem of 'sedition'. He wanted "... to seek their Counsel as to how we can best assist one other to stamp out the common enemy." He also hinted about the possibility of interfering in the internal administration of the States, but before it could be done, we wanted to have "... an occasion for close consultation and a clear understanding of common interests."<sup>①</sup> Sayaji Rao in a reply to this letter<sup>②</sup> wrote to Lord Minto wherein he also expressed his deep concern over a new element in the country which not only embarrassed the British administration but also worked "... only or covertly against the constitutional order of society." He also admitted that the 'seditious' people are endeavouring "... to establish their evil doctrines and practices in the Native States of India" and concurred with Lord Minto that the interests of the Ruling Princes and the Paramount Power were identical. Hence, a full, frank and friendly discussion was necessary on such a grave occasion.

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1. Rice, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 3. Cited.

2. SL, Vol. II, Letter No. 865, dated November, 19, 1904, p.643.

At the conclusion of the letter, Sayaji Rao assured Lord Minto stating that "... I am deeply conscious of my own responsibility in preserving peace and tranquility in my State. I shall welcome any opportunity for a close consultation in these matters with your Government, whenever necessary; and I shall ever be ready to cordially respond to any reasonable call for co-operation and assistance in repressing anarchy and sedition."<sup>①</sup>

The reply of Sayaji Rao had considerable effect in British circles. The Times construed it as a qualified assurance to the Government and that it was a prominent exception among the Chiefs of India. Sir Valentine Chirol commented sharply on the replies of the Princes and particularly of Maharaja Sayaji Rao which he found "... without striking any note of substantial dissent," and "marked by a certain coolness that has won for him the applause of the Nationalist Press."<sup>②</sup> The attitude of Sayaji Rao was taken to be of ignoring 'sedition' in the State against the British or his unpreparedness to perform his duty in suppressing 'sedition'. Deliberate efforts were made to mark the attitude of Sayaji Rao in cases of 'sedition' and searching eyes were fixed on his behaviour. No opportunity was left to defame Sayaji Rao both in India and in England on these counts.

The Shikshak Press of Mehsana<sup>③</sup> Affair was magnified to its larger limits by the British Government. A Gujarati version of the writings of Arabindo Ghosh had been issued by that Press. Shri Ghose had then retired to Pondicherry and had completely absolved himself from the political field. In spite of efforts by the British Government to exploit this Press affair against Sayaji Rao, nothing came out of it at that time.

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1. Ibid.

2. Indian Unrest, p. 193.

3. Now the headquarter of the Mehsana District.

In 1911, again the Shikshak Press came under suspicion and on inquiry it was found that it had printed secretly in Gujarati, a proscribed Bengali book. The book was bound in covers with misleading titles and other particulars. Further investigation also revealed that some clerks at Mehsana were involved in the spread of such literature. On the report about this, the Baroda State Government took appropriate action against the persons and the proprietor of the Press. But in the Court, the case against the Press ~~was~~<sup>broke</sup> down. Yet the Press was confiscated by the State. In this affair, the British authorities accused the State Officers of showing lukewarm support and lacking in efficiency in dealing with such cases.

In another case, the officers of the Bombay Government discovered the alleged use of certain objectional books in the Gangnath National School at Baroda.<sup>①</sup> It was reported that the School used books written in English, Marathi and Gujarati with misleading titles with the matter inside completely different. The titles of the books were listed and it was stated that these books were objectionable. The Resident at Baroda took the matter with the Dewan of the State and it resulted in the closure of the institution.

Regarding the 'seditious' activities which were seen through newspapers and literature in the Baroda State, Sayaji Rao had taken steps like modifying the Press Law and issuing notices as and when required. Even after the Mehsana Press Affair, he had issued the general notification clearly stating his firm determination to punish and suppress 'sedition' in any form wherever it was found within the limits of the State.<sup>②</sup> In 1909, before receiving communication from Lord Minto in that connection, he had specifically declared the friendly relations of the Baroda State with the British Government as unchanged, firm and loyal. He had mentioned that those "... who confound

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1. FDGIS-1-P, No. 38, February 1912. Enclosure, p. 4.

2. Widgery, SAMSG, Vol. I, p. 247.

liberty with licence and seek to undermine authority must be repressed with a firm hand."<sup>①</sup> He wanted to dispel suspicion among the British circles that he was not taking enough steps as desired and expected.

Here a question arises whether Sayaji Rao really helped or sympathised or encouraged 'sedition' in his State. The answer is in negative. There is nothing to show that he was involved in or tolerated activities related to 'sedition' in the State. It will be seen that during the period of 1901-1910, Sayaji Rao had been away in Europe three times ~~times~~ (Appendix III) and as such he only knew what was going on between the Resident and the Dewan and the Council of the State, over the issues of 'sedition'. The instances of 'sedition' were either misunderstood or coloured and inferences were drawn on insufficient data in such a manner that they reflected Sayaji Rao's connection with 'sedition'. Perhaps, the old dislike of Resident's interference by the Baroda Durbar and the Resident's insistence on that were the underlying factors in the cases of 'sedition'. Sayaji Rao always felt that the Residency was putting more pressure than he cherished.

#### The Delhi Durbar

In such an atmosphere of suspicion, the Delhi Durbar incident took place on December 12, 1911. Sayaji Rao was accused of deliberate insult to the King-Emperor by turning his back towards the latter after making obeisance. The behaviour of the Maharaja Sayaji Rao was sharply criticised in the Government circles at Delhi and a controversy developed out of it. Though Sayaji Rao tendered a written apology<sup>②</sup> expressing much regret to the Viceroy Lord Hardinge, an abusive campaign was carried on by the pro-British Press.

Sayaji Rao by his various letters to friends and explanations to the British Officers as well as to public through newspapers, complained that the whole affair was grossly exaggerated and entirely misunderstood. He repeatedly clarified his position, the act being, as he said, due to his nervousness caused

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1. SL, Vol. II, Letter No. 977, dated January 1912, p. 692.

2. File No. 457, "The Delhi Durbar Incident of 1911."

by indisposed health at that time. Dr. G. S. Sardesai who served the Maharaja from 1889 to 1925 as a Reader says that the Maharaja suffered from dysentery at that time.<sup>①</sup>

In spite of Sayaji Rao's clarifications and apology, the official attitude of the British remained critical. The British officials held that Maharaja Sayaji Rao aimed, "... to establish better standards of administration for the rulers of British India"<sup>②</sup> and he "... was out to show it and wanted to assert his independence to do it."<sup>③</sup> Stanley Rice, has observed that "The irony of history has made it necessary to devote pages to what ought to have been dismissed in a few words."<sup>④</sup>

The post-Delhi Durbar attitude of the British officials at Bombay showed no change in their opinion about the Maharaja. This has been observed in their communications to the Government of India. The behaviour and policies of Sayaji Rao regarding 'sedition' in his State and at the Delhi Durbar were continuously kept in view by them.

C. A. Kincaid, Secretary to the Government of Bombay, Political Department, in a letter dated September 29, 1912, to the Secretary Foreign Department, Government of India, stated that, "... the attitude of the Gaekwar has for some time been of thinly veiled hostility to the British Government. He has not hesitated to associate with, or at least to give countenance to persons of whose extremist views he must be well aware."<sup>⑤</sup>

Kincaid cited some examples to support his conviction. Sayaji Rao had accepted an Address from Babu Tarak Nath Das,

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1. Shree Sayaji Rao Gaekwad Yancha Sahavasnata, p.59.
  2. Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement, Vol.II, p.555.
  3. Ibid.
  4. Life of Maharaja Sayaji Rao, Vol. II, p.22.
  5. FDGIS-1-P, Notes: February, 1912, No. 38, p. 133.

a violent agitator in Vancouver. He had received very often Dr. Bumpus, a dismissed official of the American Natural History Museum, in New York. Dr. Bumpus had held meetings of the disaffected Indians in his house. In 1909, Sayaji Rao had visited the Sarvajanic Sabha at Poona and patronised it. Kincaid observed that Sayaji Rao had "... disregarded even the obligations of ordinary courtsey to Government."<sup>①</sup> He pointed out Sayaji Rao's friendliness with Arabindo Ghose and the supply of funds to Bepin Chandra Pal. He doubted whether Sayaji Rao visited Shyamji Krishna Varma, but charged that the Maharani had visited him and she was associated with Madam Cama.<sup>②</sup>

Kincaid observed that in Baroda and in its Ruler "evil influences of doubtless character" were far-reaching than the British Government would understand. "Baroda has acted," he stated, "and is acting a part of an unfriendly foreign power situated in the heart of the British territory and must now be regarded in this light."<sup>③</sup> At the conclusion of the letter, he urged the adoption of prompt and stern measures to put an end to evils which according to him were increasingly grave.

#### Fourth Period: 1913-1918

In spite of unfavourable official attitude towards Sayaji Rao, the British Government at home, did not take any measures against Sayaji Rao as were apprehended.

However, a change in the official attitude did come and it was softened during this period. Sayaji Rao gave full proof of his loyalty and friendliness towards the British, when the War of 1914 broke out. He placed all the sources of the State at the disposal of the British Government and contributed no less than thrity-five lakhs of rupees either directly or through subsidiary institutions, in addition to men, horses,

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1. Ibid., p. 134.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 135.

tents, railway services and material, gifts and others. A sum of Rs.12000 was paid monthly during the War-period to the British Government.<sup>(1)</sup> As a mark of appreciation of Sayaji Rao's loyalty and active co-operation, he was awarded with the title of 'G.C. I.E.' (Grand Commander of the Indian Empire).

This period may be regarded as a period of co-operation and manifestation of the bona fides of Sayaji Rao towards the British.

#### Fifth Period: 1918-1939

After the conclusion of War and upto the end of Sayaji Rao's reign in 1939, the relations with the British Government were cordial. There is no point that would reflect difference of opinion on the part of Sayaji Rao and his conflict with the British. This period may be regarded as a quiet period.

The study of the ideas of Sayaji Rao about the position of Indian Rulers, their rights and autonomy, his demand for restoration of 'legitimate' rights, his stand to protect and preserve the powers and position in an All-India Federation depicts him as a ruler who would not be ready to let go and undermine his powers and position. Though he envisaged and favoured a united India, he wanted it on the basis of partnership between Princely India and British India. He was determined to retain the separate entity of the Indian States with no curtailment in powers.

Many incidents and instances which manifested Sayaji Rao's nationalist feelings and attitudes, created in the minds of the British and impression that he was anti-British of independent nature and difficult to deal with. Sayaji Rao's endeavours to give proofs of his loyalty towards the British and dispel in them the suspicions, were due to the British line of approach towards him. Whatever may be the magnitude of nationalism and patriotism of Sayaji Rao, they were not of such nature as would endanger the British interests in India and abroad. He was a conscientious ruler and always remained within his limits in all his acts. This is the point which should be kept in view.

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1. GBS, Vol. I, pp. 621-22.

The protests of Sayaji Rao against the British interference in the internal matters of his State can be viewed from two points of view. Firstly, there is the British line of thinking. They held that after 1857, it became their responsibility to see that the peace of the country was maintained, the Indian States were administered well and gave no cause of worry to them. Therefore, through supervision, casual active interference and watch, they wanted to fulfil their obligations which were not even well-defined in the treaties and engagements with the Indian Princes. This they considered as a matter of right.

Secondly there is a thinking of Sayaji Rao. He regarded British interference unjustified and destructive of good government of the State. He did not question the right of the British to maintain peace, tranquility and integrity of the country, but considered it not relevant in controlling the internal administration of the State. He acted on this belief throughout his dealings with the British on the matter of interference.

The British suspicions about Sayaji Rao were due to his nationalist acts, his obstinacy to yield to the British dictates and his expression of views freely either in public or through correspondence. It cannot be denied that he had made the Curzon Circular a big affair projecting the Princes' rights ~~fix~~ vis-a-vis the British Paramount Power. In the case of Delhi Durbar of 1911, the accusation of deliberate insult to the King-Emperor was without ground.

If he had ventured to do so on such an occasion, he should be regarded as the boldest of all the Princes and Chiefs who had gathered there. If he deliberately did that what was his aim? A ruler like Sayaji Rao who was deeply conscious of his position and rights, would hardly prefer to enhance or earn popularity in the eyes of those who had gathered there by breaching due etiquette on such occasion. He was to gain nothing by it. Therefore, the British point of view of deliberate insult to the King-Emperor cannot be sustained. That his behaviour was due to indisposed health must be accepted as a real cause.

This cause has been revealed by the contemporaries of Sayaji Rao who were closely associated with him. Dr. Sumant Mehta, Dr. G.S.Sardesai and M.B.Nanavati have all stated it to be the real cause. They have also criticised the fallacious British point of view which hurt Sayaji Rao's sentiments and made him uneasy and aggrieved over it. They heard that it was a calculated move to give a blow to the prestige of Maharaja Sayaji Rao.

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