

Chapter 25

Investing the Gaekwad with Power to administer the State.

In the personal life of the new Gaekwad Sayaji rao, after his adoption and installation to the Baroda Gadi, the most eventful year was that of 1881, when he was invested with full powers of the administration of his State on his attaining majority.

In the political life of the State also the 28th December 1881* will be remembered as a turning point and a ~~led~~ letter day as after nearly six years of minority administration, during which many fateful decisions were taken regarding Baroda State, the state of normalcy was restored on handing over the rule of the State to the lawful ruler Sayaji Rao Gaekwad. The proclamation issued by the Gaekwad on that day read follows ~~ameu~~- announcing the change over that was taking place.

"Be it known to all concerned that we have this day assumed the Government of the Baroda State.

"2. It will always be our earnest desire to preserve and promote the welfare of our people.

"3. In this object we rely on the sympathy and support of the Imperial Government and we expect a loyal cooperation of the various officers and dignitaries of the State and of all our subjects in general.

"4. We invoke the blessing of the Almighty on the career we have this day commenced."%

The sympathy and the support asked for by the new Gaekwad of

*Baroda Administration Report Year 1881.
%Residency File No. 555.

the Imperial Government was however promised to be given as will appear from the speeches of the representative of the Paramount Power Sir James Fergusson, Governor of Bombay, who had specially come to Baroda for the purpose and from the letters of the British Government that preceded and followed the event. These opportunities were well utilised by the British Government to impress upon the Maharaja the arduous task that awaited him viz. that of governance of the State and the need of unflinching loyalty on the part of the Gaekwad to the British Crown, and wished him God-speed^{too}. The Baroda Darbar also expressed his desire to remain faithful to the British Government and asked for their Goodwill towards the State. Thus the occasion was marked with mutual exchanges of good relationship.

On the 12th December 1881 while intimating the Gaekwad of his Government's decision to instal him to power, the Viceroy Lord Ripon wrote:

" x x I have every confidence that your rule will be characterised by unswerving loyalty to the British Government and it is my sincere hope that recognising the great responsibilities which have now devolved upon you and assisted by the able officers who have already done so much for Baroda State, you will conduct the administration with justice and wisdom so as to secure the affection and promote the prosperity of your people.

" I assure your Highness that I shall always continue to take a strong interest both in your welfare and in that of the Baroda State and Your Highness may always rely on my advice and support in carrying out measures necessary to the just, wise and

honourable administration of the territories under your charge."

Sir James Ferguson's Advice.

At the Investiture Darbar the Governor Sir James Fergusson made an important speech with regard to the future relationship of the States in General and Baroda in particular with the British Government. At the very outset he declared that "the continuance of the dynasty of Baroda in the person of Your Highness is a fresh proof of the will of Her Majesty the Empress that the Native States of India shall be continued in their integrity and independence. Your Highness' adoption was graciously and willingly accepted by Her Majesty's Government descendant as you are in the direct line from the gallant founder of the Gaekwad family, Pillaji rao."* It will be seen here that the importance of the continued existence of the Native States by the British Government was recognised in view of their part played in stemming the tidal wave of the Mutiny of 1857. However, the new Gaekwad was ~~cautioned~~ cautioned by the Governor of the change of values of kingship and its functions in the new era and the end of feudal overlordship of a Ruler. He said , " The time has gone by when territories and populations could be regarded by the most powerful sovereigns only as the instruments of their personal glory and pleasure. The throne of the Queen Empress itself, the functions of us, her servants, the dynasties of the Native Princes, exist for higher ends than personal gratifications. The responsibilities which attach to power, the welfare or sufferings of others, so largely dependent upon its exercise, might well oppress the hearts of those to whom are committed such means of good and evil. Happily there are rewards for the faithful discharge of duty, which are continuous and increasing as life goes on and which will console in failures and imperfect achievements incidental to human efforts. But to gain these rewards there must be kept over in view an aim above self gratification or even

human praise, self-denial of that which would injure others or impede our own usefulness a high principle as the rule and guide: for these are needful to preserve him who is raised above his fellowmen from the perils that beset high places."*

This was a good piece of advice to the new Ruler, and its importance could be realised only if one looks back on the circumstances under which the ex-Gaekwad was deposed and the new selected. The young Gaekwad was also told to keep constantly, in view that higher power "by whom alone kings reign and Princes decree justice."

These sentiments were in equally eloquent words, reciprocated by the Gaekwad and he prayed to the God to give him strength to fulfil the expectations of his people and his well wishers, and thus set out on an important career of his life.