

CHAPTER TWO

FORGING AN ADMINISTRATION

Consequences of the Death of Pilajirao Gaekwad

Abhay Singh made a prompt resolution to exploit the confusing situation into which the Marathas must have fallen following the death of their leader. His general, Dhokal Singh, with a well prepared army, advanced with rapid pace on Baroda and captured both the fortress and the city, which were then transferred to the protection of Sher Khan Babi. The Marathas, after they lost control of Baroda, retreated to the south to Dabhoi, and held their own there.¹

The Recapture of Baroda and the Spread of Gaekwad Power

Indeed Abhay Singh's success ended here as did the dissuasion of the Gaekwads. Damajirao Gaekwad II (1732-68) after cremation of the body of his father at Savli, a place which is still respected on that account, took retirement in Karnali and began preparing for making retaliatory moves "in the direction of Ahmedabad".² The old ally of Pilajirao Gaekwad, the *desai* of Padra, aroused the Bhils and the Kolis all over Gujarat in order to throw the Mughals into a confusing situation. At Songarh the Gaekwads assembled their forces together and called upon the late Senapati's widow, Umabai, to assist in the campaign.³

These vigorous measures had good results. The raid of Damajirao Gaekwad II on Ahmedabad was partially successful. When the Mughal army crossed the Mahi, Damajirao Gaekwad II dispatched his uncle Malojirao Gaekwad from Jambusar for the purpose of opposing it which the latter carried out with success.⁴ In 1734, Damajirao Gaekwad II succeeded in recapturing Baroda from Sher Khan Babi, who, at the commencement of the siege, was in Balasinor, and was worsted when he tried to march to assist the town. Since 1734 the city of Baroda has remained in the possession of the Gaekwad House. Damajirao Gaekwad II, after the conquest of a number of important places in eastern Gujarat, marched towards the neighborhood of

¹ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, pp. 173-174.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

Jodhpur, endangering the ancestral domains of Abhay Singh and thus forcing the Maharaja to quit Gujarat, after the appointment of his *bhandari*, Ratan Singh, a man known for his dexterity and deceitfulness as his deputy.⁵

In 1737 the Mughal Court removed Abhay Singh, who had been forced to leave Gujarat for Jodhpur, as the viceroy of the province, and he was replaced by Momin Khan I, the governor of Cambay. But, realizing that it was impossible for him to expel the Marwaris without the help of Damajirao Gaekwad II, and in great consternation to become an independent ruler at any cost, Momin Khan I allied himself with the Marathas by ceding one-half of the produce of Gujarat with the exception of Ahmedabad and some lands in its neighborhood, and the port of Cambay; he afterwards added to these giants half of the city of Ahmedabad and the whole of the district of Viramgam. This peculiar alliance was faithfully maintained till the death of Momin Khan I in 1743; though it was a vicissitudinous alliance and there was a natural growth of suspicions, and even clashes occurred between the Marathas and the Muslims.⁶

The allies first decided to lay siege to Ahmedabad and drive Ratan Singh Bhandari who was deputizing for Abhay Singh out from it, and at this moment, Damajirao Gaekwad II made his agent Rangoji, the commander of half of the city and of many of its gates. After the conquest of Ahmedabad, Damajirao Gaekwad II made exertions to increase his possessions in Sorath, and was also engaged in the suppression of the Kolis around Viramgam; he also conquered Bansda, and though he could not take Bharuch, which was still in the possession of the Nizam, he, nevertheless, attained success in acquiring a part of its revenues.⁷

In general, Damajirao Gaekwad II during this period gave little consideration to his possessions in Gujarat. He left the maintenance and increase of them to his agent Rangoji. From his mountainous fort of Songarh he was keeping a close eye on the unfolding of events in the Deccan, and with great consternation, was looking for an opportune moment to fight a battle with the Peshwa and the Brahmin party. For now he was not an opponent who could be looked upon despicably, but a man who possessed a large territory “and the real chief of his party”⁸; for even though Yashwantrao Dabhade was the nominal Senapati, he was a mentally deficient person who did not possess the qualities required by a leader in times of peril. Moreover, Raghuji Bhonsle who was during this period the greatest rival of the Peshwa, was

⁵ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 28.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

his ally too; but of late there had been a tremendous increase in the power of Bajji Rao I. Under his leadership, the armies of Sindhia and Holkar had reached the gates of Delhi; he had completely worsted his old foe the Nizam and compelled him to give way; the invasion of Delhi by Nadir Shah alone for some time restrained his triumphant career. However, when he was at the pinnacle of his glory, his death occurred suddenly in April 1740; and Damajirao Gaekwad II was hopeful that the opportunity he had been waiting for had at last arrived.⁹

He made common cause with Raghuji Bhonsle in supporting the pretensions of a relative but a foe of the late Bajji Rao I for the post of Peshwa. The man they were supporting was a rich banker and a frustrated creditor of the Peshwa's named Bapuji Naik of Baramati. Despite all the resistance, the son of Bajji Rao I, Balaji Bajji Rao (1740-61), succeeded in becoming the new Peshwa, and Damajirao Gaekwad II sought consolation in successfully raiding Malwa. This step, which Raghuji Bhonsle persuaded him to take, induced Balaji Bajji Rao to adopt a reconciliatory attitude towards Anand Rao Pawar, the latter of whom having received authority from the former for founding a kingdom in Dhar for the purpose of sentineling the movements of the Gaekwad in Malwa.¹⁰

In 1743-44 Raghuji Bhonsle and Damajirao Gaekwad II attacked the Deccan contemporaneously from opposite directions when the Peshwa was busy fighting Nawab Alivardi Khan of Bengal, but he rapidly returned and quickly defeated the troops of Raghuji Bhonsle thus ending the schemes of the two allies. Shortly afterwards the Peshwa bribed Raghuji Bhonsle by granting him permission for the collection of the revenues of Lower Bengal. Damajirao Gaekwad II stayed in the Deccan for some time longer but could not accomplish anything and there was an urgent requirement of his presence at home.¹¹

The Partition Treaty of 1752

But soon events in the Deccan took such a turn that they prevailed on Damajirao Gaekwad II to pick up a fight with the Peshwa. In 1749 there was planning and counter planning of a number of underhand plots around "the death-bed of poor Shahu at Satara".¹² There was bitter enmity between Rani Sakwarbai of the Shirke family and Balaji Bajji Rao, and she proclaimed her support in favor of the Raja of Kolhapur to succeed Shahu. Damajirao

⁹ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Gaekwad II therefore made common cause with her. In 1750, there was a point-blank refusal by him to attend a ceremony at Poona when he was sent for by the Peshwa to represent the mentally weak Senapati, but he was unable to pose a hindrance to the formation of a confederacy which appointed Balaji Baji Rao as the head and Poona as the capital of the Maratha Empire. In 1751 the Peshwa put forward a demand that Yashwantrao Dabhade should cede one half of his territories in Gujarat to the Court of Poona but there was a blatant refusal on the part of Damajirao Gaekwad II to comply. In the same year Damajirao Gaekwad II swiftly answered the call from Rani Tarabai to set the young Raja of Satara free from the thralldom of the Peshwa, and the entire Maratha Empire from the domination of the Brahmin party.¹³

Subsequent to sending for Damajirao Gaekwad II to help her, Rani Tarabai took hold of the person of her grandson Rajaram forcibly, whom she had declared as the successor of Shahu, and making good use of the favorable circumstances owing to the absence of the Peshwa at Aurangabad “shut herself up in the fort of Satara”.¹⁴ Marching down from Songarh through the Salpi Pass with an army of 15,000 men Damajirao Gaekwad II hurried to relieve Rani Tarabai. The officers of the Peshwa in spite of assembling 20,000 men retreated before him on Nimb, where Damajirao Gaekwad II succeeded in catching up with them and defeating them. He subsequently joined Rani Tarabai and gained the support of the Pratinidhi to their cause. The Peshwa, Balaji Baji Rao, on hearing the news, hastened back from Aurangabad, and on his arrival found that the great peril which he had anticipated was over. Nana Purandare had led an offensive which drove back the troops of Damajirao Gaekwad II to Jore Khora, where they waited in vain for the promised help from the Pratinidhi, and for succor from Gujarat. Frightened by the approach of the army of the Subahdar of the Konkan, Shankaraji Pant, Damajirao Gaekwad II told the Peshwa to spare him, whose false promises enticingly led him into his neighborhood, and then Balaji Baji Rao devised a plan to bring about his arrest. The Peshwa immediately demanded that Damajirao Gaekwad II must pay the full amount of arrears due from Gujarat by Yashwantrao Dabhade, and make cession of a part of his territory; and when he entreated earnestly that it was impossible for him to this, several members of the Dabhade and Gaekwad families who were then at Talegaon were all of a sudden taken into custody by the Peshwa and he also pillaged the camp of Damajirao Gaekwad II. The unlucky chief and his minister, Ramachandra Baswant, were put in solitary

¹³ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, pp. 31-32.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

confinement in Poona; his eldest son, Sayajirao, was also imprisoned at Mangalvedha; however, his younger sons Govindrao and Fatesingrao were safe and sound at Satara with Tarabai.¹⁵

Such a misfortune never befell the Gaekwad family since Pilajirao Gaekwad had died, but, again they rose to the occasion this time too as they had done previously. The cousin of the Minister, Balaji Yamaji, after assembling the *pagas*, *patkas* and *kamavisdars* at Songarh placed them under the command of Kedarji Gaekwad.¹⁶

There was a collection of dues from Bharuch and the extraction of one-third of the revenues of Surat from Safdar Khan, who had been assisted by the Marathas in becoming the governor of the city, although, in 1752 Raghunath Rao successfully siphoned off half the proceeds to the Peshwa, and in 1759 there was a division of the annual sum, of which the unlucky town was swindled between the Peshwa, the Gaekwad and the British; Shankaraji Keshav Phadke, Subah of Bassein, who led an invasion of the Surat *Atthavisi* and laid siege to Parnera had to ignominiously flee because he was driven back; and finally the brother of the Peshwa, Raghunath Rao made a spirited attempt for the annexation of Gujarat but was prevented from achieving his objective, though he managed to conquer Rewa and Mahikantha districts. The behavior of one Gaekwad only, Damajirao Gaekwad II's own brother, Khanderao, made things uneasy and confused the advisers of his party. He, therefore, had a strong desire to be released from his solitary confinement which had been made stricter since his minister Ramachandra Baswant managed to escape, and from that time onwards he had been heavily loaded with irons; he realized that the Peshwa had made a dangerous move by granting *sanads* for half of Gujarat to Yashwantrao Dabhade, whose pretensions, if given recognition by the Raja of Satara might overturn his own rule; and he also realized that he could not conquer Gujarat from the Mughals on his own. The Peshwa too, was willing to give way after his brother Raghunath Rao partially failed to annex Gujarat, and the two chiefs therefore signed a treaty which molded the entire future history of Gujarat.¹⁷

Before coming to the provisions of the Partition Treaty of 1752, an explanation must be given that although subsequent to the defeat of 1731 Pilajirao Gaekwad had given a promise to pay half the revenues of his territorial acquisitions in Gujarat to the Raja of Satara through the medium of the Peshwa neither he nor Damajirao Gaekwad II had actually paid the revenues,

¹⁵ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, pp. 33-34.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

even though, at irregular interregna, certain amounts had been disbursed. It is noteworthy that before giving way there had been a disbursement of over a lakh of rupees in bribes to various officials by Damajirao Gaekwad II. As arrears he now gave a promise to pay fifteen lakhs (he actually paid 7, 90,000 rupees after a year subsequent to his release from prison); he also gave his consent for the maintenance of a cavalry of 10,000 horsemen and to help the Peshwa when called upon to do so; the Peshwa fixed his annual tribute at 5, 25,000 rupees, besides setting aside an amount for maintaining the Dabhade family, which, in order to be politically correct was abandoned. Over and above, he agreed to cede half of his territories in Gujarat to the Peshwa and promised that all future acquisitions in money or in land would be accounted for at the same rate. The Peshwa in turn promised to help Damajirao Gaekwad II in the conquest of Ahmedabad and in expelling the government of the Mughals from Gujarat.¹⁸

Although they were made subservient to the Peshwa and had become his tributaries, the Gaekwads never entered the Maratha Confederacy of which Poona was the capital with goodwill, nor did they ever adopt a reconciliatory attitude towards the Peshwas. Damajirao Gaekwad II and Fatesingrao Gaekwad I, as will be delineated later, made common cause with Raghunath Rao in resisting the claims of legitimate Peshwas, and the latter even made common cause with the British during the First Anglo-Maratha War. The Baroda State was saved from dismemberment by the British East India Company during the reign of Govindrao Gaekwad and the administration of Baroda under his successor entered into a Subsidiary Alliance with the East India Company “rather than fall under the care of Sindhia, Holkar or the Peshwa”.¹⁹ This digression is important for a comprehension of the bitterness of the struggle of which a description has just been given, and the extent of the greatness of its consequences.²⁰

The partition of Gujarat occurred either during the course of, or at once subsequent to the release of Damajirao Gaekwad II, and in 1753 the combined armies of the Maratha *sardars* led by Damajirao Gaekwad II, Raghunath Rao, Holkar, Jayaji Sindhia, Pawar, and others, such as Vithal Shivadeva and Naru Shankar, besieged Ahmedabad. The old capital of the Muzaffarid sultans and Mughal viceroys put up a brave defense under Jawan Mard Khan Babi and the Marathas were unable to take the Bhadra Citadel by assault. But what could not be achieved by arms was accomplished by scarcity of food and money; after being tediously

¹⁸ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, pp. 34-35.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

besieged by the Marathas for many months Ahmedabad was delivered up by Jawan Mard Khan Babi on the stipulation that tribute should not be levied on the lands held by him and his brothers at that point in time. Mahabat Khan at that point in time held Junagarh in Kathiawar, Khan Dauran Khan Kheda, Sardar Muhammad Khan Balasinor and Jawan Mard Khan Babi himself possessed in *jagir* the Panch Mahals, Patan, Visnagar, Vadnagar, Vijapur, and Sami Radhanpur, with other districts north of Ahmedabad. All the Maratha *sardars* formally guaranteed all these districts to the Babi family and these were the terms by which they broke the last link between the Mughals and Gujarat. The revenues of that part of the country which was given as a share to Damajirao Gaekwad II were valued at Rs. 24,72,500, besides there was an assignment of some lands to his family worth Rs. 3,00,500, and half of the tribute of Kathiawar.²¹

Following the conclusion of the conquest of Ahmedabad and the accomplishment of the settlement of Gujarat, Raghunath Rao turned his attention to a campaign in Hindustan and left Ahmedabad in charge of an agent named Shripat Rao with Damajirao Gaekwad II retaining only one gate of the city. The latter soon conquered Kapadvanj from Sher Khan Babi, and was in vain striving to suppress the Kolis in the adjoining areas when news arrived that Momin Khan II, the Nawab of Cambay, had effected the occupation of Ahmedabad after turning out the agent of the Peshwa. After a second siege in 1758 the Marathas were forced to buy rather than enforce the departure of Momin Khan II. F.A.H. Elliot writes that it must not, however, be assumed from this vigorous act which was unexpected that the Mughals possessed either the desire or the power to disrupt the rule of the Marathas in Gujarat anymore.²²

The Third Battle of Panipat and Further Expansion of the Baroda State

Damajirao Gaekwad II was one of the many Maratha *sardars* who fought in the Third Battle of Panipat on 14 January, 1761 in which the Marathas suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Afghan ruler, Ahmed Shah Abdali, and his allies, the Rohilla *sardar*, Najeeb-ud-Daulah, and the Nawab of Awadh, Shuja-ud-Daulah. He, nevertheless, played an honorable role in the closing stages of that disastrous battle. He left the battlefield only after Malhar Rao Holkar had abandoned it, and in the early stages of the battle his cavalry and that of Ibrahim

²¹ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 36.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Khan Gardi fell on the Rohillas, who made up the right wing of the army of Ahmed Shah Abdali and killed 8,000 of them. He was among the few lucky ones who came back home without suffering any injuries in that bloody battle.²³

Damajirao Gaekwad II came back to Gujarat animated and full of vitality, and for several years was involved in incessant wars at the end of which he succeeded in expelling the Babi family—who along with others had incited an insurrection against the Marathas during the course of and in the aftermath of the Third Battle of Panipat—from all their territories with the exception of their ancestral domain of Sami Radhanpur. First he helped the agent of the Peshwa in the punishment of Momin Khan II; next he established his headquarters at Visnagar and conquered Kheda; his next move was against Patan from where he ejected Jawan Mard Khan Babi, and he shifted his capital to this old seat of the Chalukya rulers of Gujarat from Songarh. Briefly, between 1763 and 1766 he deprived the children of Kamaluddin Babi of Patan, Visnagar, Vadnagar, Kheralu, Vijapur, and all their other possessions. Afterwards, of the nine districts conquered by Damajirao Gaekwad II from the Babi family the Peshwa granted him in *saranjam* Kheralu, Rozanpur, Vijapur, Dhamni and Maujpur while the Peshwa himself retained Patan, Vadnagar, Visnagar and Siddhpur. In this way there was an addition of some of the finest districts to the territory of the Baroda State, but the wars against the Babi family were not the only ones which Damajirao Gaekwad II had waged. He conquered territories in Kathiawar as well. In 1751 Damajirao Gaekwad II had achieved victory over the Rathor Raja of Idar who was a relative of the morally base Abhay Singh who was responsible for the murder of his father; but owing to the envy of the Peshwa the kingdom of Idar could not be annexed to the Baroda State.²⁴

The Battle of Dhodap and the Death of Damajirao Gaekwad II

We are compelled to abandon the narrative of these wars in order to give attention to the external affairs of Damajirao Gaekwad II between the years 1761 and 1768, and to examine how the alliance between Damajirao Gaekwad II and Raghunath Rao grew over the years. This alliance probably came into being during the siege of Ahmedabad, and afterwards led to the third great defeat of the Gaekwad at the hands of the Peshwa, and what was worse was

²³ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 37.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

that this friendship of the Gaekwads with Raghunath Rao and his son Baji Rao II cost the former dearly for several years.²⁵

Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao, is known to many, did not live long after the Third Battle of Panipat and his successor was Peshwa Madhava Rao I (1761-72), a seventeen-year-old youth, but a man with adequate vitality to make up his mind to liberate himself from the servitude of his uncle Raghunath Rao, the Regent. At the beginning he was not successful, and this want of success became the basis of a permanent animosity between Raghunath Rao and the family of his brother.²⁶

The Nizam made an attempt to take advantage of the family discord and the deep distress which had befallen the Marathas, but for the time being the uncle and the nephew joined hands to resist the invasion of the Nizam.²⁷

The Nizam was completely defeated in the campaign of 1763 at Tandulza on the Godavari; and the cavalry of Damajirao Gaekwad II “which had followed Raghunathrao through the vicissitudes of the war”²⁸ and had helped in the loot of the suburbs of Hyderabad, showed exemplary valor on this occasion, and one of his soldiers killed the prime minister of the Nizam, Raja Pratapvant. For this very service rendered that some scholars think that the Raja of Satara conferred the title of *Sena Khas Khel* on Damajirao Gaekwad II.²⁹

Once this peril was over the chasm between the Peshwa and his uncle widened further since the former was insistent that he would himself conduct a great expedition into the Carnatic, and the latter received encouragement and advice from his unprincipled wife Anandibai to accomplish all kinds of ambitious plans. Damajirao Gaekwad II in accordance with his old policy, lent his support to Raghunath Rao, and in the Battle of Ghodnadi his contribution towards achieving a victory over the troops of the Peshwa led by Mirajkar (Patwardhan) and Janoji Bhonsle was immense. With the passage of time, by showing an openly hostile attitude towards Madhava Rao I he incurred the wrath of the most illustrious of all the Peshwas, for which he was soon to be severely punished.³⁰

²⁵ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 38.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 38-39.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 39.

In the meantime, on the basis of the argument that the partition of Gujarat had been too much in the favor of the Gaekwad, six of his *mahals* yielding Rs. 2, 54,000 were forfeited by the Peshwa.³¹ (see *Appendix V*)

In 1768, Raghunath Rao, who was now ready for an open conflict with his nephew, gathered an army of 15,000 men at Dhodap, in the Chandor range, and Damajirao Gaekwad II dispatched a body of horsemen led by his son Govindrao to help him.³²

The Peshwa marched against the allies and drove them into the fort of Dhodap forcing them to deliver themselves up at discretion, and imprisoned both Raghunath Rao and Govindrao at Poona.³³

The Battle of Dhodap was the third and last great defeat inflicted by the Peshwa on the Gaekwad and severe terms were exacted from him. The fine for his insurrection was 23, 25,000 rupees, “and his arrears of tribute for three years, preceding were fixed at 15, 75,000 rupees”.³⁴ There was restitution of the six *mahals* forfeited of late, but the Peshwa raised his tribute for the future from 5, 25,000 to 7, 79,000 rupees—that is, “by the rated value of the mahals”.³⁵ There was a reduction in his military service to three or four thousand cavalry, but a clear understanding was reached that in the future the service was to be really performed, and there was to be a regular payment of tribute.³⁶

However, a worse calamity now befell the Gaekwad family. Before a final settlement of the agreement could be reached the death of Damajirao Gaekwad II occurred owing to an accident while he was conducting some chemical experiments and the Baroda State suffered the loss of a distinguished, illustrious and ambitious ruler and became a victim of succession disputes.³⁷

Damajirao Gaekwad II's naval power

During the commencement of the eighteenth century the British, the Dutch, the Portuguese and the French were making attempts for the establishment of a foothold in Western India. The factories of the British were located at Cambay, Bharuch, Surat and Bombay on the west

³¹ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 39.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 39-40.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 40.

coast. The Sidis were the admirals of the Mughal Navy. They were essentially engaged in piratical activities. But keeping in mind the protection of trade the command of the Surat Castle had been granted by the Mughals to them “with certain revenues attached to it”.³⁸

During that time several powers were in conflict with each other at Surat. The conflicting powers included Sidi Masud Khan, who was the man having command of the Castle and the civil administrator of Surat, Nawab Safdar Khan. Apart from these two one-third of the revenues of the city were collected by the agent of Damajirao Gaekwad II without shouldering the responsibility of maintaining law and order in the district. Mian Achind was aspiring to become the Nawab of Surat and made common cause with the British hoping to displace Safdar Khan. The Peshwa was also demanding that he be allotted his share in the revenues of Surat. The British made a resolution to persuade the Peshwa to join hands with them for the restoration of order in Surat. Though they were unable to accomplish this task in 1751, nevertheless, in 1755 the Peshwa sent proposals to the British for the settlement of the affairs of Surat. During that period the British were devising a scheme for the establishment of their paramountcy in the Castle of Surat without securing the help of the Peshwa. The Peshwa became aware of this and retaliated by devising a scheme to make a show of force before the Government of Bombay. As a result the British were forced to throw over the expedition for some time until in 1759 it was accomplished with success. An alliance was formed between the British and Faris Khan the objective of which was to make the latter the civil administrator of Surat whilst the British were to secure the command of the Castle³⁹ “with its contingent revenue for the protection of the Fleet”.⁴⁰ However, the British did not in any way meddle with the interests of Damajirao Gaekwad II.⁴¹

Before the British secured command of the Surat Castle and were made the admirals of the Mughal Fleet through a *farman* from the Mughal Emperor, the Sidis had proved their incapability for providing adequate protection to the trading vessels, which on their voyage from, or to Surat, often fell prey to pirates. Damajirao Gaekwad II had brought into existence his own fleet, which sailed around Surat and up to Dwarka long before for the purpose of protecting the ships in the area infested by piratical marauders. His fleet frequently furnished trading vessels cruising towards Kathiawar and the ports of Sindh with convoys. The naval headquarter of Damajirao Gaekwad II was located at Billimora. Owing to the scattered nature

³⁸ Saxena, “The Early Gaekwads”, p. 80.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 80-81.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 81.

⁴¹ Ibid.

of the dominions of the Gaekwad in places as far off as Dwarka, Kodinar and other regions which had easy access to sea, the maintenance of a strong navy was essential for protecting their land. It is clearly stated in the English records that the naval officer of Damajirao Gaekwad II gave his consent to help the British and the Dutch in the destruction of piratical vessels on the stipulation that the ports in the possession of Damajirao Gaekwad II should remain completely unharmed. This provides us evidence of the influential and powerful position of Damajirao Gaekwad II with regard to maritime activities and also demonstrates the flamboyance of his mighty naval power.⁴²

Damajirao Gaekwad II, career and contribution in establishment of Gaekwad rule in Gujarat

The contribution of Damajirao Gaekwad II in establishing the rule of the Gaekwad family in Gujarat was immense and hence he is another important ruler of the Gaekwad dynasty. By his firm determination he did not allow the Mughals to gain their desired advantages by assassinating his father.⁴³

A military genius, Damajirao Gaekwad II got back all the territories of his father with the aid of his father's allies.⁴⁴

Damajirao Gaekwad II possessed an attitude of expansionism and wanted to incessantly expand his territories into neighboring states. He thus assigned the responsibility to administer and collect the revenues of Gujarat to his two sons Fatesingrao and Govindrao and busied himself in expanding his sphere of influence in Gujarat.⁴⁵

What Pilajirao Gaekwad was unable to achieve, Damajirao Gaekwad II was able to achieve through his diplomatic maneuvers. He was able to secure a foothold in Kathiawar. Before the beginning of his reign annual *mulukgiri* expeditions were conducted by Damajirao Gaekwad I and Pilajirao Gaekwad for the purpose of collecting revenues. He was able to secure a foothold in Kathiawar by entering into a matrimonial alliance with the State of Lathi in the districts of Amreli. As a result of this marriage he obtained some districts in Kathiawar as dowry. Later on owing to his own merit he was able to augment his territorial possessions,

⁴² Saxena, "The Early Gaekwads", pp. 81-82.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 82-83.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

the most remarkable among them being the *Babi mahals*. Damajirao Gaekwad II was a very powerful Maratha *sardar* because he could subdue the Mughals and force them to rule jointly with the Marathas at Ahmedabad.⁴⁶

Damajirao Gaekwad II was a far-sighted diplomat. By the Partition Treaty of 1752 he achieved a settlement with Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao and threw over the pretensions of the Dabhade family in Gujarat and became sole representative of the Marathas in the region.⁴⁷

Indra Saxena calls Damajirao Gaekwad II a strong ‘nationalist’ though the application of the term in the context of the period is an anachronism. However, she uses the term in the context of his response to the invasion of India by the Afghan ruler, Ahmed Shah Abdali. According to her the invasion of Ahmed Shah Abdali created a ‘national emergency’ and to meet it Damajirao Gaekwad II forgot his differences with the Peshwa and united with other Maratha *sardars* and fought in the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761 ‘to save the country’. His valor and gallantry in the battle (which proved to be a disaster for the Marathas) was exemplary and he did not abandon the battlefield until the end. He was one of the few Maratha *sardars* to return alive and unharmed from that fateful battle.⁴⁸

As a human being, Damajirao Gaekwad II was a benevolent person who was both religious and also engaged in charity. According to old records he was responsible for the development of certain centers of pilgrimage in Gujarat and gave donations in money for repairing temples and other religious places.⁴⁹

Damajirao Gaekwad II was a man with creative abilities also. A *Sadhu* who exercised an immense influence on him induced his interest in alchemy. It was due to an accident during the course of some chemical experiments that his death occurred on 18 August, 1768.⁵⁰

Damajirao Gaekwad II left behind seven sons namely, Sayajirao, Fatesingrao, Govindrao, Manajirao, Murarrao, Ramrao and Jaisingrao. One of his sons, Fatesingrao Gaekwad I, went on to become one of the greatest rulers of the Gaekwad dynasty.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Saxena, “The Early Gaekwads”, p. 83.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 84.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 85.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Succession Disputes at Poona and Baroda

Following the death of Damajirao Gaekwad II for some period the further expansion of the Baroda State and the growth of the power of the Gaekwad came to an end; there was addition of no new provinces to his dominion; the Poona Court though itself afflicted by the illness of succession disputes which almost led to the annihilation of the Baroda State, was, nevertheless, able to push it into a position of abject subordination; and though Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was a prince famous for his shiftiness and circumspection, the opposition he faced rendered his powers ineffective to a very large extent, while the other Gaekwad rulers “fell far short of the founders of the family in resolution and mental abilities”.⁵² The cause of the decline can be traced without a shadow of doubt to the fact that the House of the Gaekwads was in future to become a victim of internal strife and its history an account of family dissensions. But another evil must be considered: the excellent military qualities possessed by the early Marathas like Balaji Vishwanath, Baji Rao I, Pilajirao Gaekwad and Damajirao Gaekwad II resulted in the conquest of Gujarat, but those qualities were not possessed by their successors like Baji Rao II, Govindrao Gaekwad and Anandrao Gaekwad so they could not prosperously retain the territories thus acquired. When the flow of military adventurers from the Deccan stopped, there was a replacement of the Maratha soldier by the most despicable type of mercenaries. The military class was maintained from a large portion of the revenues of the State; but when decadence prevailed among the members of that class, “the revenues were no longer applied to the sole and not very exalted object the Marathas had first in view”.⁵³ While this led to the augmentation of the powers of the Head of the State and from a mere commanding officer the Gaekwad became a Maharaja who attained sovereignty over his State, but he no longer enjoyed the support of Maratha warriors with the willingness and power to enlarge boundaries and augment tributes. While it is true that Govindrao Gaekwad brought with him an inflow of Brahmin skill, but it is nevertheless highly contentious whether this led to even moderate good governance which might promote the welfare of the masses.⁵⁴ “The collection of the taxes within the boundaries of the State”, writes F.A.H. Elliot, “and of the tribute from the petty chiefs beyond, the expenditure of the money so collected, the administration of civil and criminal justice, the furtherance of public works of general utility—did the Gaekwad Government so deal with these and cognate

⁵² Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 41.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

matters as to strengthen their rule?”⁵⁵ This is what requires consideration when we proceed to the period when the power of the British East India Company dispossessed the power of the Peshwa in Gujarat and elsewhere.⁵⁶

The eldest son of Damajirao Gaekwad II, Sayajirao, was his offspring by his second wife, Kashibai, while Govindrao was born to him by his first wife, Manubai, so that both laid claims to the *gaddi*, which might receive recognition at Poona, and Peshwa Madhava Rao I was capable enough to exploit the situation in order to put forward his own terms for nominating a successor. Sayajirao Gaekwad I was a halfwit and therefore could not compete against Govindrao Gaekwad, although the latter had a feeble mind prone to vacillation. But his pretensions enjoyed the support of, from motives of private interest, of a younger brother named Fatesingrao Gaekwad I, a person with remarkable ambition, a quick, shrewd, resolute prince, who was as efficient in carrying out a campaign as he was at maintaining his position in a political contest.⁵⁷

At the time of the death of Damajirao Gaekwad II, Fatesingrao Gaekwad I, who was present in Gujarat, succeeded in securing Baroda, and he never loosened his grip on this town, which owing to the events which were about to occur, became central to the interests of the two competing parties, and therefore ultimately became the capital of the State. Govindrao Gaekwad (1768-71) who was still at a detention facility at Poona where he had been imprisoned following his defeat in the Battle of Dhodap, and because of his opportune presence in Poona, he induced the Peshwa to recognize his succession after giving a promise to pay 50,50,000 rupees—that is, the fine for the insurrection, the tribute of last year, 20,00,000 of rupees as *nazarana*, 1,00,000 of rupees for the Babi *mahals*, and 50,000 rupees for distribution among the officials.⁵⁸

However, in 1771, Fatesingrao Gaekwad I, who had made his position strong at home, reached Poona and induced the Peshwa to reverse his decision. Sayajirao Gaekwad I (1771-78) was proclaimed *Sena Khas Khel*, and Fatesingrao Gaekwad I his *mutalik*, on about the same terms which had been formally conferred on Govindrao Gaekwad.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 42.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Bitter enmity thus arose between the two brothers, and to add to the discordancy, another family member named Khanderao, a son of Pilajirao Gaekwad, who had on many occasions troubled Damajirao Gaekwad II, became a partizan. This man had received as *jagir*, the district of Kadi from his father, and had been bestowed by the Peshwa with the title of *Himmat Bahadur*. By his underhand plots he had wrenched away from the grasp of Damajirao Gaekwad II, the districts of Nadiad and Borsad, and he made a resolution to make common cause with “either of the two brothers as might best suit his interests”.⁶⁰

In 1772, Fatesingrao Gaekwad I came back from Poona to Gujarat, but before returning he signed an agreement with the Peshwa which freed him from the obligation of the imperative need to send a contingent to Poona each and every year without exception. Whenever the Peshwa did not summon his troops for foreign service he gave his consent to pay him Rs. 6.75 lakhs, and subsequently it became customary for the Gaekwad of not providing the Peshwa with any troops, “but to pay (or owe) him a round sum of 14,54,000 rupees for tribute and remission of service”.⁶¹

Though Fatesingrao Gaekwad I professed falsely to be glad with the terms granted to him by the Poona Durbar, he in fact was deeply distrustful of the Brahmin party, as he called it, and possessed the foresight that someday the favor accorded to him might be handed over to his brother and therefore he decided to seek the help of the British. His agent, Bapuji, made an ineffectual yet earnest attempt to induce Mr. Price, the chief of Surat, to reach out to the Bombay Government to provide him with a small army, in exchange for which he gave a promise to cede the Brahmins’ share of the Surat *pargana*. Although he was not successful this time, he did sign a treaty with the British as we shall see in the future during the course of the First Anglo-Maratha War known as the Treaty of Kundhela, the first treaty between a Gaekwad and the British.⁶²

On 18 November, 1772 the British conquered Bharuch from the last Nawab of the city.⁶³

In the meantime, during the years 1772 and 1773, Fatesingrao Gaekwad I and Govindrao Gaekwad were engaged in a fight for the *gaddi*, both of them without receiving any help from the great powers who were soon to get actively and disastrously involved in their affairs, and Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was in dire straits, since his uncle Khanderao Gaekwad, the *jagirdar*

⁶⁰ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 43.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 43-44.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 44.

of Kadi, who had at the beginning supported his cause, had forsaken him to espouse Govindrao Gaekwad.⁶⁴

But major events were unfolding in the Deccan. In November 1772 the death of the wise Peshwa Madhava Rao I occurred and a year later the murder of his younger brother and successor Narayan Rao (1772-73) took place at the Shaniwarwada, which was instigated, or had the tacit permission of his uncle Raghunath Rao. If Raghunath Rao was hopeful that he would now succeed in usurping the post of Peshwa his hopes were bound to be frustrated because in April 1774 the birth of the posthumous son of the late Narayan Rao, Peshwa Madhava Rao II (1774-95) took place and his pretensions enjoyed the support of a strong coalition of ministers. There was an outbreak of civil war at Poona too and, like the Gaekwads, a Peshwa was fighting against a Peshwa. Raghunath Rao was forced to flee because the Regent Gangabai had formed a strong coalition under the leadership of two ministers Sakharam Bapu and Nana Phadnavis (1775-1800). He arrived at Baroda at the head of a small army because the two great *sardars*, Sindhia and Holkar forsook him—and there he joined in beleaguering Fatesingrao Gaekwad I along with Govindrao Gaekwad and Khanderao Gaekwad. Govindrao Gaekwad was his ally at the Battle of Dhodap and Raghunath Rao had given him recognition as *Sena Khas Khel* towards the end of 1773 whilst he was still the undisputed Peshwa and from Gulbarga was making plans for an unwise campaign into the Carnatic.⁶⁵

First Anglo-Maratha War (1775-82)

When Govindrao Gaekwad made common cause with Raghunath Rao, his brother naturally decided to seek the help of the ministers who were now dispatching some cavalry to assist him; and Mahadji Sindhia who at the beginning had given a promise to Govindrao Gaekwad to help him, now decided to desert his cause. It was extremely essential for him to secure Baroda before the commencement of the war, and to succeed in achieving his aim he sent an application to the British for assistance. Raghunath Rao, too, readily applied to the British for assistance since he had now become a mere fugitive with a triflingly small army with him, and all the great Maratha *sardars* were united against him. Finally on 6 March, 1775 the Bombay Government signed the Treaty of Surat with Raghunath Rao by which the British gave their consent to provide assistance to him on the stipulation that he would cede Bassein,

⁶⁴ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 44.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

Salsette, and the districts round Surat to them and would persuade Govindrao Gaekwad to hand over his share of Bharuch to the Company.⁶⁶

As has been mentioned previously both the Peshwa and the Gaekwad considered the seaport towns of Surat, Bharuch and Cambay extremely important and great sacrifices and efforts were made to obtain a share of their revenues. They did this owing to the largeness of these revenues and the impressiveness of these towns; but an assumption should not be made that their policy was the result of their knowledge of the value of trade and commerce and the need to promote and augment it. Europeans, on the other hand, clearly perceived the value of seaports, and the basis of the entire history of the augmentation of their power in India was through acquiring appropriate ports on the coast. The Bombay Government realized that the prize they would acquire by placing Raghunath Rao on the seat of the Peshwa was a valuable one; but what they did not realize was that the person with whom they had signed the treaty did not possess the right or the power to grant it to them, that they were going to participate in a civil war which did not concern them at all, and their policy was dictated by rashness and immorality, and was unwise as well as unjust. Very soon the step taken by the Bombay Government annoyed Warren Hastings and the Council at Calcutta, and the British, the Peshwas, and the Gaekwads soon got involved in an aimless war. The First Anglo-Maratha War was thus one of the most unwise and most unprofitable wars to have ever been waged.⁶⁷

I will now describe the details of the First Anglo-Maratha War.

The Bombay Government dispatched an army under Colonel Keating to aid Raghunath Rao and fight the Ministerial Army of the Poona Regency in Gujarat. After a long and fruitless campaign during which Fatesingrao Gaekwad I maintained armed neutrality, the Bombay Government signed a treaty with him under the terms of which the Baroda State was to aid Raghunath Rao with a cavalry contingent, the arrears of revenue due to the Poona Government were to be paid to him by the Baroda State besides 8 lakhs per annum in future and furthermore the Baroda State was to make a cession of territory amounting to more than 2 lakhs of rupees and Raghunath Rao was to make a provision of a *jagir* for Govindrao Gaekwad in the Deccan.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 45.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

⁶⁸ J.H. Gense and D.R. Banaji, eds. (1936), *The Gaikwads of Baroda: English Documents*, Vol. I, pp. xii-xiii.

The Supreme Government at Calcutta termed the war of the Bombay Government with the Maratha State “as impolitic, dangerous, unauthorized and unjust”⁶⁹ and thus the treaties signed by the Bombay Government with Raghunath Rao and Fatesingrao Gaekwad I were annulled.⁷⁰

After a temporary ceasefire in 1776 with the signing of the Treaty of Purandar between the Bombay Government and the Council of Ministers at Poona by which the British were to withdraw support to Raghunath Rao, hostilities were again resumed by the Company in 1778 when the Board of Directors upheld the Treaty of Surat signed with Raghunath Rao in 1775. The Company advanced with a force under Colonel Egerton, with Mostyn and Carnac as advisers. The army was dispatched up the Bhor Ghat in order to reinstate Raghunath Rao as Peshwa at Poona. But the British force met with a disastrous defeat near Talegaon which led to the disgusting convention at Vadgaon (January, 1779). Owing to the cordial reception given by Nana Phadnavis to the French adventurer St. Lubin at Poona, the Governor General, Warren Hastings, reversed his policy towards the Marathas and sent a large army from Bengal to espouse Raghunath Rao’s cause against the Poona Regency in March, 1778. The army consisted of six battalions with heavy artillery and was dispatched from Kalpi to aid the Bombay authorities. The army was initially placed under the command of Colonel Leslie, but after the death of that officer in October, 1778, the army was placed under Colonel Thomas Goddard. Crossing the Indian subcontinent the force arrived at Surat on 25 February, 1779, with the objective of fighting with the Marathas again. Warren Hastings had delegated Goddard with full powers to deal with the Marathas as he pleased. After an initial round of negotiations failed, Goddard declared war on the Marathas.⁷¹

In 1780, Thomas Goddard was promoted to the post of Brigadier-General and conducted a successful campaign against the Poona Regency in North Gujarat between January and March, 1780 and also concluded the Treaty of Kundhela with Fatesingrao Gaekwad I (1778-89) on 26 January, 1780.⁷²

“The principal articles of the Treaty of Kundhela (Kandila) made in January, 1780 were the following effect:

⁶⁹ Gense and Banaji, *The Gaikwads of Baroda*, Vol. I, p. xiii.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ M.S. Commissariat (1980), *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. III, pp. 789-790.

⁷² Ibid., p. 790.

1. Fatesingrao and the Company entered into an offensive league to exclude the Poona government from all share in the province of Gujarat, thus depriving the Peshwa of the entire territory secured from Damajirao by the partition treaty of 1752.
2. Fatesingrao was to assist the English in possessing themselves of and maintaining the share held by the Poona government.
3. As the existing mode of partition between the Peshwa and the Gaekwad was attended with great loss, inconvenience and disputes it was agreed that a new settlement of the province of Gujarat should be made with the object of securing an absolute and specific partition of the whole territory between the contracting parties according to the proportion of the revenues then held respectively by Fatesingrao and the Poona government.
4. Ahmedabad and its dependencies, i.e. the country north of the river Mahi, which was in the possession of the Poona government, were to be allotted to Fatesingrao, in lieu of which the English were to be put in possession of the Gaekwad's share of the country south of the Tapi, known as the *Atthavisi*, and his share of the revenues of the Surat city.
5. The English were to support Fatesingrao in withholding the annual tribute hitherto paid by him to the Poona government; in return for this promise, and as proof of his regard, the Gaekwad agreed to cede to them the district of Sinor and the villages situated in the Bharuch *pargana* belonging to him".⁷³

In accordance with the Treaty of Kundhela, General Goddard conquered Ahmedabad from the Peshwa's Subahdar on 15 February, 1780 and made over the city and revenues of Ahmedabad to Fatesingrao Gaekwad I on 28 February, 1780, although a small British garrison was stationed in the Bhadra Citadel by Goddard before his departure from the city in March, 1780. This garrison remained in the city for nearly eighteen months and was withdrawn at Fatesingrao Gaekwad I's request in the end of September, 1781.⁷⁴

Meanwhile, General Goddard wrested Bassein from the Peshwa in December, 1780 while British arms prevailed in Central India also where Captain Popham captured the fort of Gwalior belonging to Mahadji Sindhia in 1780 and Colonel Carnac defeated Mahadji

⁷³ Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. III, p. 791.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 791-796.

Sindhia's army near Sirony and thus detached him from his alliance with the Poona Regency and he became a loyal ally of the British as will be seen later.⁷⁵

Following these masterstrokes against the Marathas, Warren Hastings was forced in December, 1780 to abandon his aggressive policy against the Marathas. Nawab Hyder Ali of Mysore had besieged Arcot and posed a grave danger to the Madras Presidency and this made the Governor General anxious to conclude a peace treaty with the Maratha State at any cost in order to release the troops of General Goddard to assist Sir Eyre Coote in fighting the Mysore army.⁷⁶

This anxiety of the British to conclude a peace treaty with the Poona Regency reached such a point of desperation that the British King and Parliament and top officials of the East India Company got involved in it.⁷⁷

These efforts culminated in Warren Hastings' appointment of David Anderson as the ambassador and minister-plenipotentiary in 1781 to the court of Mahadji Sindhia. It was decided that David Anderson would negotiate with Nana Phadnavis and Mahadji Sindhia would act as a mediator between the two parties.⁷⁸

The end result of the protracted efforts of the British was the Treaty of Salbai signed on 17 May, 1782 by David Anderson on behalf of the British and by Mahadji Sindhia on behalf of the Poona Regency. This treaty perpetually ended the First Anglo-Maratha War (1775-82).⁷⁹

The Treaty of Salbai had 17 clauses of which the prominent ones are listed below:

1. "All places, cities and forts, including Bassein, which had been taken from the Peshwa during the war since the Treaty of Purandar, and which were in possession of the English, were to be delivered up. The latter were to retain only Salsette and three small islands (Elephanta, Karanja and Hog) near Bombay harbor.
2. The English were not, after the expiry of four months, to afford any support or protection to Raghunath Rao, nor supply him with money for his expense; and if he voluntarily agreed to repair to Mahadji Sindhia and to reside with him, the Peshwa was to pay him Rs. 25,000 a month for his maintenance.

⁷⁵ Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. III, p. 796.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 796-797.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 797-803.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 803-804.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 804-805.

3. All right and title in the city of Bharuch, without any Maratha claim to *chauth* was granted to the English Company.
4. Maharaja Mahadji Sindhia agreed, at the request of both parties, to the mutual guarantee to the conditions of the treaty.
5. The territories or *jagirs* which Fatesingrao Gaekwad I possessed at the commencement of the war was to remain in his possession, and he was to pay for the future to the Peshwa the tribute as usual previous to the war, and to perform such service and be subject to such obedience as have been long established and customary”.⁸⁰

Thus, the Treaty of Salbai signed between the Company and the Poona Regency in effect annulled the Treaty of Kundhela signed between the Company and the Gaekwad. The Gaekwad was in fact made a scapegoat in the First Anglo-Maratha War because when the Treaty of Salbai was formally ratified by Nana Phadnavis on 24 February, 1783, the city of Ahmedabad which had been granted to the Gaekwad by the Treaty of Kundhela was taken away from him and restored to the Peshwa by the Supreme Government at Calcutta. Moreover, Bharuch was also gifted by the Company to Mahadji Sindhia in 1783 for his commendable role as a mediator between the Company and the Poona Regency during the negotiations that led to the signing of the Treaty of Salbai. The poor Gaekwad was again reduced to the status of a vassal of the Peshwa in spite of rendering all help to the British during the First Anglo-Maratha War.⁸¹

Over the next few years Fatesingrao Gaekwad I enjoyed his dominion undisturbed; and during this interregnum, though nothing noteworthy happened, one may conceive him running his administration with his usual dexterity and circumspection. Parsimoniousness was a notable feature of his administration. But one thing about his administration is lamentable—that he spent money in establishing a body of foreign mercenaries, Arabs and others, who were soon going to disastrously ruin the State. Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was one of the rulers to whom the House of the Gaekwad is indebted for the continuity in its life and prosperousness, for he dexterously steered the ship of the State during perilous times and freed it of its difficulties with frivolous loss.⁸²

⁸⁰ Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. III, pp. 805-806.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 806-809.

⁸² Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 55.

Administrative and political abilities of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I

Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was one of the very shifty and astute rulers of his time. According to Indra Saxena his achievements were remarkable. It is quite obvious that he was discreet enough to obtain the succession in his own name during the course of the dispute. Following the death of his father, since he was younger to Sayajirao Gaekwad I he stood no chance to inherit the *gaddi*. Being a far-sighted person Fatesingrao Gaekwad I thought it advantageous to make common cause with his elder brother, Sayajirao Gaekwad I, who was an imbecile person, and become his Regent, and take care of the administration of the State. With Sayajirao Gaekwad I as the nominal ruler, Fatesingrao Gaekwad I had the virtual control of the entire State in his hand and could gain time to prove his administrative acumen during the period of Regency.⁸³

Fatesingrao Gaekwad I proved to be a good administrator of the Baroda State and at the same time also consolidated his powers. He had apprehensions about Govindrao Gaekwad creating trouble within the State anytime. So he decided to remain within the territory of the Baroda State during the major part of his reign so that Govindrao Gaekwad was not able to subvert his rule. Since Govindrao Gaekwad enjoyed the support of Maratha *sardars* like Mahadji Sindhia, Malhar Rao Holkar and Raghunath Rao, Fatesingrao Gaekwad I had to exercise caution in making his moves. When he was at Poona to plead with the Peshwa to recognize his brother Sayajirao Gaekwad I as the successor, he through his diplomatic maneuvers made sure that he was strong enough to resist “any possible onslaught of other interested parties in Gujarat”.⁸⁴ At this point it is worth noting what a politically astute person Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was. He was able to persuade the Poona Court to permit the withdrawal of his military contingent pleading that there was an urgent requirement of it in Gujarat in order to protect the Baroda State against the designs of Govindrao Gaekwad who wanted to subvert the rule of Sayajirao Gaekwad I. In place of that he gave his consent to pay a yearly subsidy in cash and thus was able to refrain from sending his army to Poona.⁸⁵

As a far-sighted person Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was able to anticipate future events. Owing to the power struggle between Raghunath Rao and Peshwa Madhava Rao II, “there was a

⁸³ Saxena, “The Early Gaekwads”, pp. 166-167.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 167.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

shifting politics at the Poona Court”.⁸⁶ Fatesingrao Gaekwad I could anticipate that Govindrao Gaekwad could subvert the authority of his brother anytime owing to these disturbances at the Poona Court. Therefore at any moment his fortune was likely to change. Thus in order to protect his position he made diplomatic maneuvers and was successful in entering into an alliance with the British.⁸⁷

The subsequent developments in the succession strife of the Gaekwad family prove the fact that Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was an able statesman. When the British were helping Raghunath Rao in becoming the Peshwa at Poona, Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was well aware of the fact that Govindrao Gaekwad was a staunch supporter of Raghunath Rao. With his shifty statesmanship Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was able to keep both the British and Raghunath Rao in a position of ambiguity by not forming an alliance with any of them. Thus Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was able to avoid strife with the Poona Regency which was his support base. Since at that point it was not clear to him whether Raghunath Rao or the Poona Regency would be successful in grabbing power at Poona, Fatesingrao Gaekwad I showed political wisdom by not adopting an antagonistic attitude towards any of the parties.⁸⁸

The political wisdom of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was once again evident when he switched sides and formed an alliance with the British, Govindrao Gaekwad and Raghunath Rao when the Ministerial Army of the Poona Regency suffered defeat at the hands of the former. Previously he had shown reluctance to form an alliance with Raghunath Rao and his clique on easy terms. At this point he gave his consent to form an alliance with the British on terms which were slightly in favor of the British. He formed this alliance keeping in mind the protection of his territories in Gujarat.⁸⁹

In 1778 Fatesingrao Gaekwad I again switched sides and formed an alliance with the Poona Regency when the ministers at Poona conferred on him the title of *Sena Khas Khel* and nominated him as the successor of Sayajirao Gaekwad I. In 1780 Fatesingrao Gaekwad I once again switched sides and signed the Treaty of Kundhela with the East India Company in order to augment his territorial acquisitions and liberate himself from the suzerainty of the Peshwa. Although the Treaty of Kundhela was annulled by the Supreme Government at Calcutta when the Treaty of Salbai was signed in 1782 between the Company and the Poona

⁸⁶ Saxena, “The Early Gaekwads”, pp. 167-168.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 168.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 168-169.

Regency in order to bring the First Anglo-Maratha War to an end and Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was forced to surrender to the Peshwa all the territories he had gained by virtue of the Treaty of Kundhela he nevertheless continued to keep friendly relations with the British as well as the Peshwa.⁹⁰

His duplicitous behavior by very frequently switching sides is evident from the events that unfolded during the course of the First Anglo-Maratha War. It is easy to blame him for being very inconsistent in his decisions in forming alliances. But keeping in view how events changed during the course of the First Anglo-Maratha War it seems logical that he had to do so keeping his territorial interests in mind. Therefore it is not correct to condemn him in an outright manner for frequently switching sides. Had he remained loyal to only one party from the commencement to the end of the First Anglo-Maratha War he would have met with a fate similar to that of Govindrao Gaekwad who remained a staunch ally of Raghunath Rao. If one analyzes the eventual result of the First Anglo-Maratha War Govindrao Gaekwad was able to achieve nothing. On the other hand Fatesingrao Gaekwad I owing to his astute strategy was able to establish himself as an independent ruler. According to Forbes the reign of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was quite oppressive. One cannot accept the views of the British writer if one does a critical examination of what politically the situation was during that period. There were incessant disturbances in the dominion of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I owing to the First Anglo-Maratha War and the pretensions of Govindrao Gaekwad for the *gaddi* of the Baroda State. Skirmishes occurred intermittently in the area adjoining the territories of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I. The people who suffered the most owing to the First Anglo-Maratha War were the local populace of the adjoining areas. The interrogations and statements made by the local populace might have been the basis of the opinion of Forbes regarding the reign of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I⁹¹ “whose verdict can be ignored in the light of the disturbed conditions in the area”.⁹²

Reports of the administration of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I being good are also available. Few years later subsequent to the end of the reign of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I there was deterioration in the financial condition of the Baroda State during the reign of Anandrao Gaekwad. According to a report in 1803 the expenditure of the State under Anandrao Gaekwad was in excess of its income from revenues. After scrutinization of the finances of

⁹⁰ Saxena, “The Early Gaekwads”, p. 169.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 169-170.

⁹² Ibid., p. 170.

the State the British reported that the Baroda State was in a very sound financial condition during the reign of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I. The expenditure of the State during that period was less than the income from revenues which proves that fact that the administration of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was indeed efficient.⁹³

There has been a criticism of the personal behavior of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I in another report by Forbes. He has described his behavior as “sordid, avaricious, ambitious and discourteous”⁹⁴ compared to the Mughal emperors. Indra Saxena writes that these remarks of Forbes are very harsh. According to Indra Saxena there are available reports which point out that Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was a person with peace-loving nature, full of wisdom and one who held moderate views and his behavior was very courteous. Indra Saxena writes that evidence of this comes from the reports provided by Malet who met Fatesingrao Gaekwad I in 1785. He had greatly appreciated Fatesingrao Gaekwad I and according to his report the ruler was extremely courteous towards him during his visit and his behavior was praiseworthy. The argument of Forbes with regard to the behavior of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I may be ascribed to his policy of frequently switching sides in forming alliances. But one must also understand at the same time that the circumstances created by the First Anglo-Maratha War and the claims made by Govindrao Gaekwad for the *gaddi* forced Fatesingrao Gaekwad I to switch sides in order to serve the interests of his State. When he was allied with the Poona Regency his switching of sides might not have been to liking of the British. Forbes might have formed a hostile opinion with regard to Fatesingrao Gaekwad I during that period. Pride is a natural quality of any ruler especially of one who possesses power. Since Fatesingrao Gaekwad I had attained adequate power during his reign his pride was natural.⁹⁵

The death of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I occurred on 21 December, 1789 when he accidentally fell from the upper story of his palace, and one might imagine that it is certain that his successor would be his brother Govindrao Gaekwad. But, although he loudly protested this unfortunate and rather unwise person, who for some time enjoyed the support of Sindhia, with whom he had been associated for a long time, the Poona Durbar was in favor of the pretensions of Manajirao Gaekwad (1789-93), who was in accordance with the order of Nana Phadnavis installed as Regent of Sayajirao Gaekwad I. However, he did not succeed to the post of his brother without giving some promises—the payment of a *nazarana* of 33, 13,000

⁹³ Saxena, “The Early Gaekwads”, pp. 170-171.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172.

rupees and the arrears of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I, which amounted to 36 lakhs—or, in accordance with some Maratha manuscripts, he promised to pay an amount of 60 lakhs in the course of a period of four years, in installments of 15 lakhs every year.⁹⁶

Prevention of the Dismemberment of the Baroda State

Although Sindhia after some time forsook the cause of Govindrao Gaekwad, the latter continued to clamor for his rights till on 1 August, 1793, the death of Manajirao Gaekwad occurred. Even then Govindrao Gaekwad could not ascend the throne without facing opposition because the Poona Durbar kept him in detention till he gave his consent to the following monstrous terms—Manajirao Gaekwad was still owing 20 lakhs and he was to accept the responsibility of clearing the debt; he was to pay the highest *nazarana* paid till date—as Fatesingrao Gaekwad I had paid the lowest—that is 56,38,000 rupees; in the course of the past three years there had been neither payment of tribute nor remission of service, and the two combined were amounting to 14,54,000 rupees annually, so that at this point he owed 43,62,000 rupees. An order was accordingly issued by Nana Phadnavis to him to deliver up all the jewels, money, and clothes found in the Baroda palace; for the restoration of Savli which had been bestowed on Fatesingrao Gaekwad I; to gift the Peshwa three elephants, five horses, and jewels worth one lakh; and last but not the least to cede all his territories south of the river Tapi along with his share of the revenue of Surat.⁹⁷

In short, Nana Phadnavis had made a resolution to bring to ruin the Gaekwad House by dismembering the Baroda State, and he would definitely have accomplished his aim had the British not intervened and acted as a savior of their old ally. They imperiously apprised the Poona Durbar that in accordance with the stipulations of the Treaty of Salbai, the territorial integrity of the Baroda State must be maintained and annexation of any part of his dominion was forbidden. The Peshwa could never again find an opportune moment for harming his hereditary foe as the British rendered faithful service to the Gaekwad, although none was equal to the one just delineated “for which no adequate return ever had been or could be made”.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 55.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

The Reign of Govindrao Gaekwad (1793-1800)

If there had been a prolongation of the rule of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I which was marked by vigor and parsimony it would have led to the preservation of the State from encountering some of the dreadful evils which it faced during the reign of his successors Govindrao Gaekwad, Anandrao Gaekwad and Fatesingrao Gaekwad II who were feeble men and during whose rule there was a usurpation of all real power by the ministers. The competition among these men and their ambitious nature harmed the State far more than even the stubbornness of a resolute ruler like Sayajirao Gaekwad II, who was the successor of the three above mentioned princes. Damajirao Gaekwad II and his brother harmed each other, and as has been described before, Fatesingrao Gaekwad I, Govindrao Gaekwad and Manajirao Gaekwad by their mutually destructive conflict acted in such a manner as to unwittingly give the Peshwa an advantage; but there was an intensification of the evil subsequent to their rule—“son strove against father, brother against brother, cousin against cousin, while wives and mothers pushed the interests of their husbands and sons with an entire disregard of justice or the common good of the family”.⁹⁹ The narrative of this period of the history of the Baroda State presents a rather dismal picture.¹⁰⁰

Before proceeding to some of the major events of the reign of Govindrao Gaekwad one must unambiguously comprehend that the change in succession affected a revolution in the history of the Baroda State. Govindrao Gaekwad and his brothers had been in a state of internecine strife for many years and with the deaths of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I and Manajirao Gaekwad ended the hopes of their clique, the latter could not have any expectation that the new ruler would be merciful towards them. Govindrao Gaekwad in accordance with his policy sacked the old ministers, but, since he was at the beginning the humblest of the servants of the Poona Durbar, he brought along with him from the Deccan, which had long been his place of residence, new servants, the ancestors of several of the Sardars of the reign of Sayajirao Gaekwad III, including the Majumdar and the Fadnavis. He also ushered in the era of eminence of a Prabhu family, who's first and most remarkable members were Raoji Appaji, the Diwan, and his brother, Babaji, who with the passage of time succeeded in becoming the commander of the State army. The Baroda State also showed a greater amenability towards the dictatorship of the Peshwa, than had ever been the case, and the probability of this

⁹⁹ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

inclination towards passive obedience would have become still more clearly noticeable, if circumstances had not compelled the Gaekwad to make common cause with the British in their power struggle with the Peshwa for his durable advancement.¹⁰¹

Owing to lack of space I have not referred to the great wars that were being fought in India in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Yet every event which occurred had a bearing on the destiny of the Gaekwad; during the period when the British followed a policy of non-intervention the Poona Court exerted a tremendous influence on him and when the threat to the British from Mysore ended with the death of Tipu Sultan (1782-99) whom they killed at the Battle of Seringapatam in 1799 it made it possible for the Company to successfully fight the Peshwa and replace him in Gujarat. In Maharashtra a lot was dependent on the outcome of the competition between Mahadji Sindhia and Nana Phadnavis, for the former had a self-aggrandizing attitude which disrupted the Maratha Confederacy, whilst the latter made exertions to maintain the authority of the Brahmin party in Poona over the whole of the Maratha Empire. The death of Mahadji Sindhia occurred in 1794 leaving Nana Phadnavis free to maneuver his policy till the young Peshwa Madhava Rao II died prematurely in 1795 leaving the throne empty for his cousin Baji Rao II, whose deep-seated animosity towards the minister and his clique became the cause of, as will be described later, the lease of the Ahmedabad farm to the Gaekwad.¹⁰² “But of far greater interest to this history”, writes F.A.H. Elliot, “is the conflict for sovereignty in Gujarat, and for suzerainty over the Gaekwad, which sprang up between the British and the young Peshwa”.¹⁰³

At last there was an investiture of Govindrao Gaekwad with the title of *Sena Khas Khel* on 19 December, 1793, but could not enter Baroda without facing resistance. He was opposed by his own illegitimate son named Kanhojirao, born to him from a Rajput princess of Dharampur, who managed to secure some troops from his mother and the agent of the Sindhia in Bharuch, and with cavalry consisting of 2,000 Arabs and 600 Pathans engaged vigorously in Baroda. There is a strangely consistent pattern in the selfish perfidy of these mercenary troops, and in this first illustration of their intervention in the quarrels of the State they surrendered their leader to Govindrao Gaekwad. Kanhojirao was imprisoned but escaped to the hills disguised as a woman. Here the Bhils joined him and assisted him in predatory raids into Sankheda and Bahadurpur. Afterwards Malharrao Gaekwad, the son of late

¹⁰¹ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, pp. 57-58.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

Khanderao Gaekwad (who died in 1785), *jagirdar* of Kadi joined him and this threatening alliance was preordained to harm and vex the Baroda State for many years.¹⁰⁴

Episode of Aba Shelukar (1798-1800)

In order to comprehend the role of Aba Shelukar, the last *Sarsubah* of the Peshwa at Ahmedabad it is obligatory to give an outline of the confusion that prevailed in Poona following the death of Peshwa Madhava Rao II at the young age of twenty from a fall from the terrace of Shaniwarwada on 17 October, 1795 and the question of succession which arose as a result of his death. The sons of Raghunath Rao, namely, Bajji Rao II and Chimnaji Appa and his adopted son Amrit Rao were the only surviving claimants to the Peshwa's *gaddi* but they were in confinement at Junnar because Nana Phadnavis, the supreme minister of the late Peshwa had a deep-seated antipathy for Bajji Rao II which the latter reciprocated later.¹⁰⁵

The other player in this struggle for succession was Daulat Rao Sindhia, the adopted son of Mahadji Sindhia, only sixteen years of age at the time he inherited his father's trained military but not his sagacity and political moderation. Daulat Rao Sindhia was an ambitious rival of Nana Phadnavis.¹⁰⁶

The first move in this dispute of succession was made by Nana Phadnavis who sent Parshuram Bhau to bring the three sons of Raghunath Rao to Poona where they arrived on 25 February, 1796 and resided in Daulat Rao Sindhia's camp.¹⁰⁷

After three months had passed, Nana Phadnavis decided to use the eleven-year-old Chimnaji Appa as a pawn in his contest with Bajji Rao II. He asked the fifteen-year-old widow of Madhava Rao II, Yashodabai to adopt Chimnaji Appa as her son and the boy was crowned Peshwa a week later in a grand Durbar attended by Daulat Rao Sindhia and Tukoji Holkar among other Maratha *sardars* on 2 June, 1796.¹⁰⁸

The eight month long absence of Nana Phadnavis from Poona saw the rise of Daulat Rao Sindhia. In order to keep a watch on his rival the Nana introduced his trusted trooper Sharza Rao Ghatge into the service of Daulat Rao Sindhia as his own spy. However, this infamous servant of Nana Phadnavis soon rose to such an esteemed position in Daulat Rao Sindhia's

¹⁰⁴ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 59.

¹⁰⁵ Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. III, p. 813.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 813-814.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 814.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

service that he married his beautiful daughter Baizabai to Daulat Rao Sindhia at Poona on 26 February, 1798. From this year onwards till his murder in 1809, Sharza Rao Ghatge remained a domineering figure in Daulat Rao Sindhia's affairs and activities and the people of Poona bore bitter resentment against his brutal rule.¹⁰⁹

Meanwhile, through the mediation of Sharza Rao Ghatge an alliance was formed between Daulat Rao Sindhia, Nana Phadnavis and Bajji Rao II (1795-1818) and an understanding was reached to dethrone Chimnaji Appa and his partisans including Parshuram Bhau and place Bajji Rao II on the throne of Poona. This coup occurred on 5 December, 1796 and Bajji Rao II became the new Peshwa.¹¹⁰

An uneasy tension prevailed throughout the year 1797 with the principal parties being suspicious and distrustful of each other. Bajji Rao II had passed twenty years of his life in exile and was short of funds owing to which he had a deep-seated aversion against Nana Phadnavis. Daulat Rao Sindhia was unable to meet the expenses of his army and his troops were protesting and complaining for their salaries and he could not move out of Poona to his State of Gwalior without meeting their demands. In this state of affairs the eyes of the wicked troika consisting of Peshwa Bajji Rao II, Daulat Rao Sindhia and Sharza Rao Ghatge fell on the wealth accumulated by Nana Phadnavis which amounted to several crores of rupees, large part of which he had derived at the expense of the State during the twenty years when he was in supreme command of the affairs of the Maratha State. The Peshwa's brother, Amrit Rao was a man of immense ability and immaculate character. An attempt to put the responsibility of running the administration on his shoulders and to prevail on Nana Phadnavis to take voluntary retirement to private life away from the capital failed because Bajji Rao II was extremely distrustful of his brother. The efforts of Nana Phadnavis to get rid of Daulat Rao Sindhia by paying him a crore of rupees in order to meet the expenses of his troops and to thus persuade him to leave for Gwalior also proved unsuccessful.¹¹¹

On Dussera (30 September, 1797) things reached a boiling point because of Nana Phadnavis' refusal to take part in the day's procession or to pay his respects to Bajji Rao II. Now the troika decided to seize Nana Phadnavis silently, put him in confinement in some fort, and thus lay their hands on his vast hoard of treasures and also exercise a free hand in administration. A Neapolitan officer called Michael Filose in Daulat Rao Sindhia's army was

¹⁰⁹ Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. III, pp. 814-815.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 815.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 815-816.

sent to invite Nana Phadnavis for a dinner in Daulat Rao Sindhia's camp and to lull him into a false sense of security. Nana Phadnavis arrived in Daulat Rao Sindhia's camp for dinner on 31 December, 1797 when after a short meeting with Daulat Rao Sindhia, the area was surrounded by the infantry of Colonel Filose and some twenty men of Daulat Rao Sindhia entered the room and arrested Nana Phadnavis and his companions and forcefully removed the jewels they were wearing. Then Daulat Rao Sindhia's army attacked the 2,000 bodyguards of Nana Phadnavis who had accompanied him and plundered, killed or dispersed them. Nana Phadnavis remained confined in Daulat Rao Sindhia's camp from 31 December, 1797 to 6 April, 1798 before he was transferred to the Ahmednagar fort as a state prisoner. His intimate partisans which included the infamous Aba Shelukar were also perfidiously arrested and were released only after paying Daulat Rao Sindhia several lakhs of rupees.¹¹²

Aba Shelukar was the deputy of Chimnaji Appa whom Baji Rao II had nominated as the *Sarsubah* of Gujarat, shortly after his accession. Aba Shelukar had been appointed as the deputy of Chimnaji Appa because he was a minor and the name of Aba Shelukar to deputize him was suggested by Nana Phadnavis to the Peshwa. Shelukar carried on the administration in a vicarious manner because he was among those arrested along with Nana Phadnavis by Daulat Rao Sindhia at Poona as stated above. Govindrao Gaekwad was at that time favorably disposed towards Aba Shelukar. Through the intervention of Govindrao Gaekwad, Daulat Rao Sindhia released Aba Shelukar and he returned to Ahmedabad after the Maharaja of Baroda had paid Daulat Rao Sindhia ten lakhs of rupees which were raised by Raoji Appaji, the famous Prabhu minister of the Gaekwad. Raoji Appaji began to bargain with Aba Shelukar that Petlad should be transferred to the control of his brother Babaji, who was the commander of Govindrao Gaekwad's army, "as a security for the repayment of the loan".¹¹³ En route to Ahmedabad, although Shelukar was given a thorough entertainment by the two brothers; nevertheless a dispute occurred between him and the two brothers regarding the terms of repayment. He later incurred the wrath of the Gaekwad by his hostile activities which will be narrated below. On his arrival at Ahmedabad, Shelukar began to ruthlessly extort money from the rich as well as the poor in the same manner so that he could repay his loan.¹¹⁴ "According to a contemporary local history", writes M.S. Commissariat, "one Lala

¹¹² Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. III, p. 816.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 817.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Harakhchand, a rich and patriotic banker of the city, paid Aba Shelukar one lakh of rupees in order to relieve the people from one of these impositions".¹¹⁵

Shelukar's tyrannical activities at Ahmedabad had thoroughly antagonized Govindrao Gaekwad. A group of 'armed' Gosains or religious mendicants was going from Marwar to Kathiawar in search of employment and they halted at a place called Umreth, 20 kos from Baroda and lying within the Gaekwad's dominions. Suddenly Shelukar's troops made a surprise attack on them from Mahmudabad and captured their baggage while killing, wounding some and dispersing the rest. Govindrao Gaekwad was enraged when the surviving Gosains complained to him and while he took the Gosains into his service, he sent a letter to Aba Shelukar asking for a written explanation for his conduct and audacity of sending his troops into the territory of the Baroda State and asked him to restore what he had looted.¹¹⁶

Meanwhile news reached Baroda that Shelukar had sent his troops to the house of Shivram, the Gaekwad's Subahdar and they were attempting to sequester his house. Then intelligence arrived that Shelukar had besieged the *haveli* of the Gaekwad at Ahmedabad and a state of warfare had started on both sides. Reports of all these events were sent by Govindrao Gaekwad to Baji Rao II and Nana Phadnavis (who had now been restored to office) and at the same time dispatched his army under the command of Raoji Appaji and his brother against Aba Shelukar. The advance guard under Babaji marched 40 miles in one day and night, from the Fazilpur pass on the Mahi to Vatwa. At Vatwa, Babaji's forces made a surprise attack on the 8,000 strong force of Shelukar which was going on a *mulukgiri* expedition and was defeated and driven back into the city. In the second battle, however, the small detachment of Babaji was in a perilous position of being defeated utterly by Shelukar's troops but the main body of the Baroda army under Sayyid Nasiruddin arrived opportunely and secured a victory for the Baroda State though Sayyid Nasiruddin was slain in the action.¹¹⁷ Once again Govindrao Gaekwad wrote to the Peshwa to say that "Shelukar's excesses had risen to such a pitch that it had become imperative to punish him, and that the town of Ahmedabad would now be taken from him".¹¹⁸ When this letter reached Poona, Nana Phadnavis, the patron of Aba Shelukar was dead (March, 1800) so now Baji Rao II showing an indifferent attitude towards Shelukar (which Nana Phadnavis would not have shown had he been alive) wrote to Govindrao Gaekwad to annihilate Shelukar's army because he was a partisan of his detested

¹¹⁵ Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. III, p. 817.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 817-818.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 818.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

minister, and to bring the fort of Ahmedabad under his possession. The forces of the Baroda State besieged the capital of Gujarat for four months after which owing to the treachery of his Arab mercenaries, Aba Shelukar was arrested by the Gaekwad's officers.¹¹⁹

During the siege of Ahmedabad in May, 1800, Govindrao Gaekwad wrote to the Governor of Bombay, Jonathan Duncan who had arrived at Surat to take over the authority of the city after the death of its last Nawab, requesting British help in defeating Aba Shelukar. However, the Britishers wrote back to Govindrao Gaekwad that the army of the Baroda State was strong enough to defeat Aba Shelukar and their help was not required. Thus they sent back the *wakils* of the Gaekwad.¹²⁰

Lease of the Peshwa's District in Gujarat

The overthrow of Aba Shelukar brought to an abrupt end the effective rule of the Peshwas at Ahmedabad which had begun in 1758 with the Maratha entry on the departure of Momin Khan II. And this mission was carried out "with the approval of and the entire satisfaction of Baji Rao II".¹²¹ In 1800, soon after the expulsion of Shelukar, Baji Rao II, acknowledging the services of Govindrao Gaekwad gave him on a lease of four years the farm of the Peshwa's revenues from the city of Ahmedabad and from the districts north of the river Mahi for an annual payment of five lakhs of rupees. After the expiry of this lease in 1804 it was renewed till 1814 with the active support of the British Government at Bombay though it was met with considerable opposition by the Peshwa. When the Gaekwad requested for further renewal of the lease of the Ahmedabad farm in 1814, Baji Rao II refused and withdrew the farm. Moreover, all the efforts of the British Resident at Poona for renewal of the lease went in vain because Baji Rao II was adamant for resumption of his sovereignty over Gujarat and since the British had guaranteed this resumption in 1804 they could also not do much and the Gaekwad was forced to submit. However, this sovereign authority of Baji Rao II over North Gujarat lasted for only two and a half years because during the Third Anglo-Maratha War (1817-18) by the Treaty of Poona Baji Rao II surrendered his sovereign rights over Ahmedabad and its dependencies to the British.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. III, p. 818.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 819-820.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 821.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 821-822.

Exit of Aba Shelukar from Gujarati History

Although after his arrest in 1800 by the Gaekwad State, the Peshwa Baji Rao II demanded the release of Aba Shelukar and his transfer to Poona in 1805, the Peshwa's attempt failed owing to the opposition from the Gaekwad's ministers and the British Resident at Baroda, Colonel Walker. He was finally released on 22 May, 1807 after seven years imprisonment in Baroda's jail and after repeated assurances from Baji Rao II that he would not be assigned any public office and that he would behave himself. He reached Poona on 25 June, 1807. From this period onwards Aba Shelukar vanishes from the pages of Gujarati history and is never heard of again.¹²³

The Events which led to the Interference of the British

There was an impoverishment of the State once again as a result of paying the Peshwa 60 lakhs of rupees in 1798 which resulted in a situation that propelled it into what may very nearly be termed a civil war. It is impossible to understand clearly from a study of this short thesis the rapid deterioration in the condition of the State since a few important facts alone can be highlighted. There was an empty treasury; the creditors were mortgagees of almost all the districts, and the remainder being farmed out to unprincipled *ijaradars* who hastily extorted money; the tributary States which had become accustomed to paying only when military force was used against them, held back their tributes without having to suffer the normal injurious consequences; there was factionalism among the Gaekwads; a foreigner who was above all anxious about the enrichment of his own family was nominally at the helm of affairs; in maintaining the army alone the State exceeded its income; no attention was paid to administering justice, protecting the public, and other such matters; the State was practically without any government because all real power was usurped by domineering Arab soldiers who were notorious for their rapacity; in public and private matters it may be noticed with amazement that people had no faith in each other and they for the most part were distrustful of the government. Since Sindhia, the Peshwa and Holkar were watching the dissolution of the Baroda State with selfish motives, the only panacea for the perils which surrounded the State was a desperate appeal to seek the arbitration of the British East India Company.¹²⁴

¹²³ Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. III, pp. 822-832.

¹²⁴ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, pp. 63-64.

There was an introduction of mercenary troops into the State by Fatesingrao Gaekwad I but in a restrained manner; however before the death of Govindrao Gaekwad there was a twofold increase in their numbers; and Raoji Appaji in anticipation of troubles to come, increased their numbers as well as their power and privileges. These mercenaries consisted of 13,126 infantry, and 3,731 horsemen, and the monthly expense to the State in maintaining them was Rs. 2, 99,642. Among these mercenary troops the Arab adventurers, or those who had reached India from far-off places in Asia such as Baghdad and Abyssinia were most highly regarded; because the descendants of such adventurers born in India were believed to possess less gallantry or less dexterity; the Pathans and others of the martial tribes to the north of Hindustan were also included in the list of mercenaries considered less gallant or less dexterous. Some Arabs reached India walking and unaccompanied, others came along with horses and retainers, and in accordance with their valor was the scale of their salary. Baroda was not alone in seeking the services of these foreigners, because at this period in Indian history every native court was entertaining mercenary troops, and even in this short thesis, vestiges of the harm or injury they caused will be noticeable not just in Baroda, but at Dhar and Palanpur as well. During this period the Arabs were in possession of the forts of Baroda, Borsad, Sankheda, and other strongholds. They were generally divided into two factions, but in a crisis situation possessed the capability of uniting against an outsider who might pose a threat to their privileges. They possessed a natural tendency of being selfish and independent, responsive only to the persuasiveness of their paymasters, Mangal Parikh and Samal Bechar, each of whom was a head of a clique, and ready to become a supporter of the administration of any ruler who was willing to pay them best for the services rendered. In the Durbar their insolent behavior was disgusting to the *sardar*; abroad their violent conduct was a cause of fear; and yet it is rather peculiar that since public confidence was absent in Baroda, the people had faith in these men to ensure that the government kept its promises. It is indeed difficult to imagine how during that period in Gujarat a *sahukar* refused to lend a Rajput or Koli *grasiya* a loan in the absence of a guarantee of a Bhat or Charan. Moreover, there was an amazing disbelief among the subjects of the Gaekwad that the government would keep its promise or behave peacefully unless the Arabs stood guarantee for it. This guarantee system was termed *Bahandhari*.¹²⁵ As a result of the Bahandhari System the mercenary troops or

¹²⁵ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, pp. 64-65.

their leaders acquired very nearly unlimited power of intervention “between the government and the chief officers of the administration”.¹²⁶

When the death of Govindrao Gaekwad occurred the minister, Raoji Appaji was not in Baroda, but Babaji, Mir Kamaluddin, and the two paymasters with the backing of the Arabs and Jamadars persuaded Rani Gahenabai against becoming a *sati*, by assuring her that she would be supported by them. This lady had been very powerful during the reign of Govindrao Gaekwad and she did not want the relinquishment of her influential position. But she was not fearful that this would happen if Anandrao, the legitimate and eldest son of Govindrao Gaekwad ascended the throne, because he was by nature weak-minded and had become physically weak too owing to him being an opium addict. In accordance with the wish of Rani Gahenabai Anandrao Gaekwad (1800-19) ascended the throne and Raoji Appaji following his return to Baroda continued to administer the State on his behalf.¹²⁷

But Kanhojirao, who was still in exile, now found an opportunity to gain power. He managed to enter Baroda wearing a concealing costume, managed to gain admission to the presence of Anandrao Gaekwad and soon won him over to his side and declared himself *mutalik*, in order to overthrow the authority of Raoji Appaji.¹²⁸

Thus matters passed on for a while; but Kanhojirao, however self-willed and obstinate, was unable to win the mercenary troops to his cause, and after squandering the money gathered by Govindrao Gaekwad he was not able to placate them in any better way than Raoji Appaji had been. It may be possible that the Gaekwad family had an intense dislike for the foreign minister, but soon they could not bear the behavior of Kanhojirao towards them because for the satisfaction of his Arabs he was compelled to use violent means to extract money out of his relatives. He put the Maharaja in confinement, meted out harsh treatment to his ladies, relatives and servants, and subjected the widow and daughter of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I and the widow of Manajirao Gaekwad to ill treatment. At length the Arabs were fed up with him, and Raoji Appaji made fair promises to them: so one night they reached an understanding, covertly besieged the house of Kanhojirao, and after taking him into custody surrendered him

¹²⁶ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 65.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

to Anandrao Gaekwad, who after rebuking him, put him in confinement in the fort of Ranpur.¹²⁹

Thus Raoji Appaji regained his power, but the management of the Arabs had become increasingly difficult and one day when the minister was returning to Baroda after visiting Cambay, where he had been holding negotiations with the Bombay Government for armed assistance, they fired on his *palki*, killing or wounding most of his *palki*-bearers. They could foresee that the day the services of the British were sought they would be expelled from the State. But apart from the Arabs, the responsibility of all the members of the Gaekwad family rested on the shoulders of Raoji Appaji, each one having some expectations from him, while he could give nothing. Firstly, it was the *jagirdar* of Kadi, Malharrao Gaekwad, who made a loud demand for entirely remitting his *peshkash*, and who, when his demand was turned down, became aware of the fact that Kanhojirao, of whose seizure he had at first given his full approval, was being subjected to ill-treatment at the hands of a foreigner. Gajrabai, the daughter of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I, advocated him pressingly to revolt, and Mukundrao, the younger and illegitimate brother of the Maharaja, who left Baroda along with all his moveable property pretending to go on a pilgrimage to Dakor soon joined him.¹³⁰

Then Malharrao Gaekwad began a campaign with the ostensible aim of avenging Kanhojirao and liberating Anandrao Gaekwad under the pretense of obeying the orders of the sovereign. Raoji Appaji made an equally vociferous assertion that whatever he was doing was the command of the Maharaja; and both he and Malharrao Gaekwad sent applications to the Bombay Government for the arbitration of their pretensions and both parties made offers for the cession of the Choryasi *pargana* and the share of the Gaekwad in the *chauth* of Surat. These offers had been previously made by Govindrao Gaekwad albeit ineffectually to the East India Company for receiving their aid when he was making preparations to fight Aba Shelukar.¹³¹

Gajrabai additionally offered to cede the *pargana* of Chikhli. Jonathan Duncan, Governor of Bombay, did not want to hastily intervene, though he was watching the situation in Baroda with deep consternation. This was because there existed a possibility of war with Sindhia or probably with Baji Rao II and in that scenario the Gaekwad would very probably become an ally of the British, and if his power diminished it would be as unfavorable as the

¹²⁹ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, pp. 65-66.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

consequential augmentation of either of the two Maratha *sardars*. Jonathan took the final decision of sending Major Alexander Walker to Baroda for arbitration between Raoji Appaji and Malharrao Gaekwad in accordance with “the apparent justice of their views and the wishes of Anandrao”.¹³² For supporting the decision of Major Walker, a small and as it proved to be the case, an insufficient force of 2,000 troops was dispatched to Cambay.¹³³

Towards the end of 1801 a crisis situation developed at Baroda; the troops of Babaji were moving about from Ahmedabad; the *jagirdar* had dispatched an army from Kadi commanded by his brother Hanumantrao and an old officer of the Gaekwad named Shivaram, who had made common cause with Malharrao Gaekwad against the Diwan; some of the territory of the Gaekwad was subjected to depredations and a minor skirmish had occurred. Raoji Appaji was in the most critical position because both he and his relations were liable to danger or harm from the Arabs who were infuriated by his action in sending applications to the British for assistance. Yet the minister did not put all his eggs in one basket by relying entirely on the aid of the Company. The Baroda State had given a promise to pay the State of Gwalior Rs. 10 lakhs, or the total amount due from the Ahmedabad farm for the first two years, and that Kanhojirao had spent thriftlessly the money which Govindrao Gaekwad had accumulated. Now the minister of Sindhia, Yadav Rao Bhaskar, for whose brother Govindrao Gaekwad had once applied, had an old friendship with Raoji Appaji because of the following strange incidents. Yadav Rao began his early career as a clerk of an *ijaradar* in the Baroda State named Khandopant Nana; he next rose to become the Diwan of Fatesingrao Gaekwad I, but following the death of that ruler Manajirao Gaekwad unleashed persecution of both him and his brothers Ramachandra and Laxman on certain charges of peculation; and eventually when Govindrao Gaekwad became the Maharaja he was released from imprisonment owing to the friendly overtures of Raoji Appaji. At this juncture he and his brothers were favorites of Sindhia, and he was asking Raoji Appaji earnestly to at least make the payment of ten lakhs to his master if he was not seeking his protection for which he had applied to the British and Raoji Appaji was immensely influenced by his advice. Sindhia had assumed a really threatening position because if the Peshwa agreed he might wrench away the Ahmedabad farm from the Gaekwad in the same way as the latter had appropriated it from Aba Shelukar.¹³⁴

¹³² Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 67.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 67-68.

Major Walker arrived at Baroda on 29 January, 1802 and did not waste time in taking an interview of the Maharaja. After patiently inquiring about the nature of Anandrao Gaekwad when he was not under the influence of opium and could clearly express himself he concluded that the Maharaja did not morally support Malharrao Gaekwad, showed reluctance in keeping Kanhojirao under imprisonment, that he was fearful of the Arabs, and that he did not consider Raoji Appaji as his adversary. Major Walker also came to the conclusion that there were purely selfish motives behind the policy followed by the *jagirdar* of Kadi; but at the same time he also realized that it was impossible to arbitrate the matter because there was a blatant refusal on the part of this man with high ambitions to deliver up the towns of Visnagar and Vijapur which he had wrested from the Baroda State.¹³⁵

He was therefore left with no course but to make common cause with Raoji Appaji and wage a war against Malharrao Gaekwad the size of whose army was twelve to fifteen thousand; however, his best and only disciplined troops comprised of 700 Hindustanis under the command of Shivaram.¹³⁶

After a war lasting two months Malharrao Gaekwad finally capitulated before Major Walker on 3 May, 1802 and the British threw open the gates of his capital Kadi. Subsequently the *jagirdar* was allowed to reside at Nadiad on an annual allowance of Rs. 1.25 lakhs, till he fled and started a fresh rebellion; however the annexation of his dominion to the Baroda State was now finally complete. In this way not only was territory worth five lakhs added to the dominion of the Gaekwad, but what was even more significant was the fact that the existential threat of an almost independent chief ended, whose selfish and duplicitous conduct had harmed the Baroda State in an unimaginable manner for two generations.¹³⁷

Subsequently similar service was again rendered by British troops to the Baroda State. A descendant of Pilajirao Gaekwad named Ganpatrao Gaekwad, who was the *jagirdar* or *Mamlatdar* of Sankheda and Bahadurpur revolted in June or July 1802 and on 7 July, 1802 his fort which had until this time offered resistance to every possible attack by the army of the Baroda State, at last surrendered. However, Ganpatrao and Murarrao Gaekwad managed

¹³⁵ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 68.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 69.

to run away to the court of Anand Rao Pawar of Dhar, which now became the focal point of disloyalty for the new administration of the Baroda State.¹³⁸

The services that the British rendered to Anandrao Gaekwad were not given free of charge. Contrarily, they came with strings attached and although the army of the East India Company rendered brilliant services to the Baroda State, it was paid, it must be acknowledged, an equally hefty sum in return. It may be recalled that the Arabs nearly shot Raoji Appaji while he was returning from a conference with the Governor of Bombay, Jonathan Duncan at Cambay. A decision was taken there (15 March, 1802) that in case of the intervention of the Bombay Government, the Choryasi *pargana* and the share of the Gaekwad in the *chauth* of Surat should be ceded to the Company. Similarly the payment of the expenses incurred in any campaign against Malharrao Gaekwad was to be made and the Baroda State was required to mortgage the Surat *Atthavisi* to the Company as security for the amount due. Finally, subsequent to the Kadi war, and when the disbandment of the Arab mercenaries would begin the Baroda State was required to enter into a Subsidiary Alliance with the East India Company and subsidize a force of 2,000 British sepoys with a battery of European artillery. It was estimated that the monthly cost of maintaining these troops would be 65,000 rupees and territory was to be ceded in *jaidad* to meet the expenses of the British subsidiary force.¹³⁹

This arrangement suited the interests of the Bombay Government and was a necessity for the Baroda State, but in accordance with the stipulations of the Treaty of Salbai the territorial integrity of the Baroda State was to be maintained, and the British had precluded Nana Phadnavis from dismembering the Baroda State during the reign of Govindrao Gaekwad, so one can say without a shadow of doubt that Baji Rao II “could have felt otherwise than displeased with what had taken place”.¹⁴⁰

As has been mentioned previously the arrangements made by Raoji Appaji at Cambay and the treaty of Subsidiary Alliance both had stipulations to liberate the Baroda State from the grip of the Arab mercenaries and instead of them the State was to subsidize British troops as a military force. However, the Arabs occupied a strange position in the administrative set-up of the State because they had given guarantee in a thousand matters that the Government would stick to its promises or be dutiful towards certain individuals or classes of its subjects. One has to examine what was the natural consequence when the Bombay Government

¹³⁸ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 69.

¹³⁹ Ibid., pp. 69-70.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 70.

decided to take up the Bahandhari engagement of the Arabs and additionally gave a pledge to ensure the payment of certain large debts. The Bombay Government opined that Bahandhari bestowed on it “the right to a uniform and systematic participation in the internal authority of the Gaekwad’s government, even in cases in which the *bahandari* was not directly concerned”¹⁴¹ and that “the Company had a right to interfere in the most important public affairs”¹⁴²—or, as Colonel Walker put it, a right to chiefly and actively interfere in the most important public affairs, in order to check the rapacious behavior of the Government officers, and to punish them if they neglected their duty or stubbornly refused to obey or comply by acting jointly with the Government of Baroda.¹⁴³

While ratifying the Treaty of 1802, Anandrao Gaekwad wrote the following official statement “that in consequence of there being many evil-disposed persons among the Arabs who have plotted against my liberty and even my life, I desire that my subjects will pay no attention to my orders in this situation, but hear what the Major has to say”.¹⁴⁴ And he further said, “In the event of evil-disposed persons attempting anything unfair or unreasonable against my person, my Dewan xxx or (his) relations, or, even should I myself or my successors commit anything improper or unjust the English Government shall interfere”.¹⁴⁵

Such was the scale of the enormous powers that were not clearly defined but granted to the East India Company and what followed was a concentrated and thorough criticism of every action of the administration of the Baroda State with the British strictly controlling the finances of the State. The Maharaja did not participate in the government, as he was not competent to do so, and a commission was formed with the Resident or his Native Agent as its member, and without whose consent its actions were deemed invalid.¹⁴⁶

Colonel Walker indeed actively interfered in the administration of the Baroda State and the motives behind the interference were without a shadow of doubt honest and judiciously justified. Walker, Carnac, and Williams were officers filled wisdom and righteousness, and for some time they were assisted by a judicious person of the caliber of Gangadhar Shastri. It had always been the intention of the British to stop the Bahandhari and less closely intervene in the affairs of the State once it had extricated itself from the debt trap and could stand on its

¹⁴¹ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 71.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 71-72.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid..

own feet. However, this policy of intervention ultimately did not prove to be perfectly successful. It is correct to say that the State for a time being reached the point of solvency, and even extricated itself from the difficulties which without the assistance of the British were insurmountable. But the native ruler felt that the time when the British would cease to interfere in the affairs of the State was not coming swiftly enough, and in place of an alliance between a thankful and delighted State bitterness and discontent arose, the vestiges of which took long to vanish. At the beginning there was a lot of harmony, and harmonious relations existed between the Resident and Anandrao Gaekwad or Fatesingrao Gaekwad II and also between the Resident and the administrative set up of Raoji Appaji and Babaji. However, on the other hand, there existed a considerable amount of displeasure between the British Resident and his clique at Baroda on the one side and the clique comprising some family members of the Gaekwad on the other. As a result what followed were conspiracies, rebellions and wars, the culmination of which was the murder of Gangadhar Shastri and many other events were intertwined with this deplorable event the effects of which were felt for a long time.¹⁴⁷

Lease by the Peshwa of Ahmedabad and its attached districts to the Gaekwad: 1800-04

As has been stated above Bajji Rao II as a reward for the services rendered by Govindrao Gaekwad in expelling Aba Shelukar, the partisan of Bajji Rao II's hated minister, Nana Phadnavis, had granted the lease of the farm of Ahmedabad and its dependencies to Govindrao Gaekwad, a few months before his death, towards the end of 1800. The lease was granted for a period of four years till 1804. The *sanad* was issued by the Peshwa in favor of Bhagwantrao Gaekwad, the illegitimate but favorite son of Maharaja Govindrao Gaekwad. But Bhagwantrao Gaekwad expired before the farm could be conferred on him on 19 September, 1800. Therefore, the farm came under the control of the minister of the Gaekwad, Raoji Appaji.¹⁴⁸

Subsequently, on 6 June, 1802, the Baroda State entered into a Subsidiary Alliance with the East India Company and ceded some districts from the dependencies of Ahmedabad belonging to the Peshwa to the Company for the payment of the subsidiary troops. The

¹⁴⁷ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, pp. 72-73.

¹⁴⁸ Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. III, pp. 833-834.

Peshwa annoyed at this development argued that in accordance with the Treaty of Salbai the Baroda State was subservient to the Poona government and therefore could not conclude any treaty independently with a foreign power. He also demanded the resumption of the Ahmedabad farm in consequence of the subsidiary treaty and the territory ceded by the Baroda State to the Company.¹⁴⁹

Colonel Barry Close, the Resident at Poona, however, refuted the Peshwa's argument that the Governor General, Lord Wellesley would never approve the annulment of the Subsidiary Alliance between the Baroda State and the Company and also rebutted the Peshwa's argument by proclaiming that the Baroda State had a sovereign right to sign any treaty with the Company for its self-preservation.¹⁵⁰

While the Peshwa Baji Rao II was pressing the British Government for allowing him to resume the farm of Ahmedabad he himself found himself in a desperate position in October, 1802 when Yashwant Rao Holkar attacked Poona and Baji Rao II had to flee to the protection of Bombay Government at Bassein. Here he signed with the East India Company on 31 December, 1802, the Treaty of Bassein under the terms of which he entered into a Subsidiary Alliance with the British.¹⁵¹

Thus, the Peshwa himself became dependent on the British and for some time stopped pressing them for allowing him to resume the farm of Ahmedabad from the Gaekwad.¹⁵²

“The cessions made by Raoji Appaji on behalf of Anandrao Gaekwad (1800-19) included:

1. Ceded in sovereignty: the *pargana* of Chorasi near Surat, the *pargana* of Chikhli to the south of it, and the fort of Kheda with its district, situated at the confluence of the Vatrak and the Shedhi rivers;
2. Ceded in *jaidad* (land assignment): the *parganas* of Dholka and Nadiad, the *parganas* of Matar and Mahudha near Kheda, the *pargana* of Vijapur and a part of Kadi.”¹⁵³

The cession of the Peshwa's *mahals* in the Surat *Atthavisi* and other districts in Gujarat under the terms of the Treaty of Bassein included the following *parganas* between the Tapi and the Mahi: Jambusar, Sinor, Dabhoi, Amod, Dehbara, Olpad, Hansot, and Ankleshwar. To these

¹⁴⁹ Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. III, pp. 834-835.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 834-838.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 838-839.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 839.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 840-841.

we may add the *pargana* of Dhanduka with Ranpur and Ghogha, as also Napad and the *chauth* of Cambay. It may thus be seen that excepting the districts which were still farmed to the Gaekwad, a major part of the Peshwa's territorial possessions on the mainland of Gujarat was almost completely wiped out.¹⁵⁴

The Expulsion of the Arabs

On his return to Baroda from the Kadi campaign on 11 July, 1802 as Resident, Major Walker from the beginning gave attention to projects of a quiet reduction in the number of troops of the Baroda State. The annual expenses incurred by the State for the Arab *sibandi* were thirty-six lakhs of rupees while the new *sibandi* of Babaji, as was the term used for them, cost the State annually about twelve lakhs, "so he contemplated reducing the former to fifteen lakhs per annum, and to save nearly fifteen thousand rupees a month on Babaji's levies".¹⁵⁵ Raoji Appaji gave his consent to the measure as it was advantageous for the Baroda State; however, with the passage of time, the old man, crushed by age and illness became fearful and reluctant to sever ties with the paymasters of the Arabs. The Arabs, as early as October 1802 became rebellious and were on the verge of mutiny, and moreover they held a strong position within the State because they were in command of all the gates of the capital, and held the Maharaja as a kind of prisoner within them. Matters reached a crisis when the Maharaja issued an order for surrendering Kanhojirao, who was guarded by Arabs at Ranpur to a certain body of persons who were supposed to deport him to Bombay. The actual messenger who communicated the order was a nephew of one of the Arab Jamadars named Sultan Jafar and he entreated earnestly to the jailors of Kanhojirao to become insubordinate and two prominent Arabs in Baroda, Zehya and Abud the Lame became party to the abetment of the crime along with him. Zehya and Abud the Lame did not hold consultations with Sultan Jafar who gave his disapproval of the step and in consequence such a noisy fracas occurred between the two bodies of Arabs that on the 16th and 17th of November the residents of the capital were terrorized in anticipation of a free fight within the walls. At last, there was an ascendancy of the violent body, which Sultan Jafar joined on 10 December and before this time Kanhojirao had been permitted to depart hurriedly and furtively in order to avoid arrest, and the Maharaja was kept in confinement in his palace. The paymasters, terrified by the deviltry of the Arabs, ran away from Baroda and on 18 December the British troops besieged the fort. The Leharipura Gate was under the command of Bin Hyder, the Champaner Gate

¹⁵⁴ Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. III, p. 841.

¹⁵⁵ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 74.

under Sultan Jafar, the Water Gate under Zehya and the Burhanpur Gate was commanded by several jamadars inclusive of Abud the Lame. There was a suspension of hostilities for two days as the British were hopeful that the Arabs would capitulate and the capital would not be injured. But then there was a renewal of fighting which lasted till 25 December, and on 26 December, the Arabs withdrew from the fort on easy terms because they were paid all arrears and given a promise of safe conduct out of Gujarat, the country from which they gave a promise to go away forever. Anandrao Gaekwad who had been hastily brought out of the city, re-entered it on 27 December, 1802 amidst immense pomp and splendor through the Leharipura Gate, which was now guarded by British troops, who, in order to capture Baroda, had to sacrifice 150 soldiers, who were either killed in action or wounded among whom there were seven officers. But as we shall explore later many Arabs did not keep their promises, and commanded by Abud the Lame and nominally led by Kanhojirao persisted in their vexatiousness towards the Baroda State. Nonetheless, the British performed an honorable service for the Baroda State—they had extricated the country from the peril of a horribly anarchical situation, not only by sacrificing many lives but by providing monetary assistance in paying off the Arab mercenaries in a timely manner.¹⁵⁶

Assistance Given to the Baroda State by the British

Kanhojirao, subsequent to escaping from imprisonment at Ranpur, ran away to Rajpipla, and without difficulty raised a large party of Kolis, and a party of Arabs and Sindhis soon joined them in investing Baroda. Major Holmes along with the forces of Sitaram worsted the little army of Kanhojirao at Vazira on 11 January, 1803. Following a difficult pursuit of the fugitive, Major Holmes again met Kanhojirao at Prathampur or Savli on 6 February, and there, in the combat which occurred, many British troops were killed in action because the Arabs had succeeded in taking up a strong position and also while trying to recover a captured cannon. Although a severe scuffle occurred, it nevertheless proved to be decisive, with Kanhojirao losing his treasure-chest and his baggage, while Ganpatrao Gaekwad, the *jagirdar* of Sankheda, and Murarrao Gaekwad, who had joined him in the battle previously, being both wounded. Kanhojirao ran away, and although he did not possess the capacity of inflicting severe damage on the State any longer, he, nevertheless, was capable enough of keeping it constantly in a state of vexation by lingering around the frontier, and by issuing threats of joining either Sindhia or Holkar in invading the plains. There was an augmentation in his power by the addition of Shivaram, an old officer of the Gaekwad who had participated

¹⁵⁶ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, pp. 74-75.

in the Kadi war, and by Abud the Lame, the most tumultuous of all the Arabs of Baroda, who made common cause with him in March with an army comprising over 500 men, half of whom were Arabs. On 2 March, Major Holmes, after ejecting Kanhojirao from Koral, inflicted a crushing defeat on his Mewassi army at the Alowass village of Chopra. He had to again go away from Gujarat, and all along the year he tried hard for his maintenance by making attempts to bully and plunder Baria, Dungarpur, Santh, Lunawara and other small States till at length they became hostile towards him as a result of disgust. One must not blame Kanhojirao for the outrageous behavior of his army because he was firmly under the control of Abud the Lame and at last happily managed in escaping from him and taking shelter at Ujjain, where we must leave his narrative for the moment.¹⁵⁷

The death of Raoji Appaji occurred in July 1803. The old minister had served the Baroda State with dedication by seeking the services of the East India Company and his career path shows that he was politically skillful or shifty: he had without a shadow of doubt provided assistance to Govindrao Gaekwad in maintaining his place on the *gaddi* during hard times. But it was this very minister who in an unprincipled manner augmented the Arab *sibandi*; it was this very minister who, when the State was suffering from poverty had strived to augment the wealth of himself and his family; it was this very minister who in the face of the crisis of the mutiny of the Arabs became fearful and hesitant; it was this very minister who by his dilatory nature caused delay in the urgent need of reforming the State. Despite giving all due consideration to his age and infirmities, history will not judge him as a praiseworthy person. But the Bombay Government at that time was deeply indebted to him, and gave a pledge of maintaining him and his heirs in the post of Diwan; so it gave its approval and appointed his nephew Sitaram, whom he had adopted as his son a few days prior to his death as the next Diwan. Sitaram, however, did not prove worthy of the high post, and caused immense harm to the Baroda State and was even involved in the murder of Gangadhar Shastri.¹⁵⁸

During the course of the Second Anglo-Maratha War (1803-05), a curious incident occurred which had a deep impact on the destiny of one member of the Gaekwad family. There was a son of Govindrao Gaekwad named Fatesingrao Gaekwad II, whom the Maharaja had sent to live in the vicinity of Poona in order to serve with dedication the family god Khandoba. Here,

¹⁵⁷ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, pp. 76-77.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

late in 1802, he was abducted by one of the officers of Holkar, and a fear existed in Baroda that he would be dispatched as a nominal head of an army of *Pindaris* in order to create a tumult in Gujarat. Therefore, the Gaekwad Government drafted a proposal, which was approved by Major Walker, and made an offer to pay a ransom for his release. Perhaps there was a real chance of the existence of such a peril, because in June 1803 Aamir Khan along with a large army and with the young prince in his camp, reached close to Songarh, and against this army, the Baroda State made a mere show of force which led to the retirement of the enemy without materially damaging the State.¹⁵⁹

In August 1803, Fatesingrao Gaekwad II managed to escape from the officer of Holkar Aamir Khan, and apprised the Baroda Durbar that he had been freed because he had promised to pay a ransom of 50,000 rupees. He returned in the company of a small party of Pathans, to whom he had also given a promise of some indemnification, and made his entry into the capital on 2 October and resided with Rani Gahenabai.¹⁶⁰

The Signing of the Definitive Treaty of Baroda

On 21 April, 1805 the Definitive Treaty of Baroda was signed between the Baroda State and the East India Company. It led to the consolidation of the treaty of Subsidiary Alliance signed in 1802 and its terms were drafted in harmony with the Treaty of Bassein.¹⁶¹ According to the provisions of the treaty a disciplined force was to be maintained for the security of the Gaekwad State of Baroda and there was a cession of certain districts in addition to Kheda, Choryasi and Chikhli *parganas* for the maintenance of the force. When the Ahmedabad farm was surrendered later on, the map of the Baroda State was being concretized to assume the shape it finally did. In accordance with the stipulations of this treaty the Baroda State surrendered to the Company the management of its foreign affairs, which had till now been one of its sovereign rights. It agreed to settle its disputes with the Peshwa or other powers through the medium of the Resident appointed by the British. An agreement was also reached that neither the British nor the Baroda State would engage or give employment to the subjects of the other party without the consent of each other. The brother of Anandrao Gaekwad Fatesingrao Gaekwad II (1806-18) was appointed Regent in 1806 with these impediments to

¹⁵⁹ Elliot, *Rulers of Baroda*, p. 79.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

his independence and when his death occurred in 1818 they rose exponentially as the unavoidable price for security from both internal threats and external invasion.¹⁶²

¹⁶² V.K. Chavda (1972), *Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III*, pp. 9-10.