

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined the pattern of state formation at Baroda under the aegis of the Gaekwad rulers. They received help from the British who formulated the Baroda State throughout the nineteenth century. Without the help of the British the process of formation of a truly mature state in Baroda would have been impossible in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The fact that the Baroda State became a mature and progressive princely state and a model for others to emulate owes a great deal to the efforts of the British who made zealous efforts put its finances on a sound footing throughout the nineteenth century.

The origin of the Baroda State can be traced to the Battle of Balapur fought somewhere around 1721 where one of the ancestors of the Gaekwad family Damajirao Gaekwad I showed exemplary valor and was conferred by Shahu with the title of *Shamsher Bahadur* or 'An Illustrious Swordsman' which was retained by his descendants. However, the real founder of the Baroda State was the nephew and successor of Damajirao Gaekwad I, Pilajirao Gaekwad. He is considered as the first ruler of the Gaekwad dynasty.

Pilajirao Gaekwad was an enterprising Maratha adventurer who laid the foundations of the Baroda State in 1720. He distinguished himself in the service of the Senapati Khanderao Dabhade and taking advantage of the secessionist tendencies of the Mughal officers of Gujarat founded Songarh which is known as the cradle of the House of the Gaekwads. He built a strong fortress at Songarh which was situated on a hilly terrain and was difficult to access. Thus it was of immense strategic importance. The town of Songarh remained the capital of the Baroda State till 1766. Pilajirao Gaekwad also managed to capture the city of Baroda from its Mughal governor during the course of his career. Both the Senapati, Khanderao Dabhade, and his lieutenant Damajirao Gaekwad I died shortly after the Battle of Balapur in May 1721. While Khanderao Dabhade was succeeded by his son Trimbakrao Dabhade, Damajirao Gaekwad I was succeeded as already mentioned before by his nephew Pilajirao Gaekwad.

During the reign of Shivaji the post of the Peshwa and the Senapati were of equal stature. However, the grandson of Shivaji, Shahu, who was brought up in the ways of a lazy Muhammadan noble since he was raised in the captivity of the Mughals took the invidious step of ceding all the powers to the Peshwa and making their post hereditary and also making them the real rulers of the Maratha Empire. This caused immense indignation to the Senapati

whose position was diminished as a result of this move and the outcome of which was that a bitter enmity and rivalry started prevailing between the Dabhade family and the family of the Peshwa which was inherited by the lieutenants of the Dabhade family, the Gaekwads. This was the reason why the Gaekwad rulers of Baroda were always on bad terms with the Peshwas of Poona and were always reluctant to join the Maratha Confederacy willingly of which the Peshwa was the head.

The first encounter between the Peshwa and the Gaekwad was at the Battle of Bhilupur in 1731. The Battle of Bhilupur was the result of the interference of Peshwa Baji Rao I in the affairs of Gujarat. Gujarat was considered as their prey by Trimbakrao Dabhade, Pilajirao Gaekwad and several other Maratha freebooters who resented this interference of the Peshwa. Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah, the bitter enemy of the Peshwa, took advantage of this opportunity and created a confederacy of disaffected Maratha *sardars* to fight the army of the Peshwa. The confederates were defeated by the better disciplined army of Baji Rao I and subsequent to his defeat at the Battle of Bhilupur in which Trimbakrao Dabhade was slain, Pilajirao Gaekwad obtained the custody of the youthful son of Trimbakrao Dabhade, Yashwantrao Dabhade and became his *mutalik* and thus all the resources of the Senapati fell at his disposal. Moreover, since Baji Rao I was anxious to fight Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah on equal terms so he decided not to be harsh with the confederates and thus Shahu conferred the title of *Sena Khas Khel*, 'commander of the special band' or 'leader of the sovereign's band' on Pilajirao Gaekwad which was also along with *Shamsher Bahadur* retained by the descendants of the Gaekwad dynasty.

Using the resources of the Senapati, Pilajirao Gaekwad began to harass the Mughal viceroy of Gujarat, Maharaja Abhay Singh of Jodhpur, who unable to defeat him in open battle had him treacherously murdered by his Marwari agents at Dakor in 1732.

Pilajirao Gaekwad was succeeded by his son Damajirao Gaekwad II. Damajirao Gaekwad II not only avenged the death of his father but recaptured Baroda, which had fallen to the Mughals following the death of Pilajirao Gaekwad, in 1734 and also drove Abhay Singh and subsequently his agent Ratan Singh Bhandari from Gujarat.

Damajirao Gaekwad II was responsible for the consolidation and further expansion of the Baroda State. Had he confined his attention to Gujarat and not meddled in the politics of Poona he would not have got into trouble with the Peshwa. As a result of his habit of constantly meddling in the politics at the Court of Poona he was imprisoned by Peshwa Balaji

Baji Rao in 1751. He remained imprisoned at Poona for one year and the Peshwa agreed to release him on the condition that he would cede half of his dominions in Gujarat to him. Thus Damajirao Gaekwad II signed the famous Partition Treaty of 1752 with Balaji Baji Rao by virtue of which he ceded half of his dominions in Gujarat to the latter and in return the Peshwa agreed to help him in expelling the Mughals from Gujarat which was accomplished by the combined armies of the various *sardars* of the Maratha Confederacy and the Peshwa by 1758. Thus the period from 1758 to 1818 is known as the Maratha Period of Gujarati history. Another thing which Damajirao Gaekwad II accomplished by signing the Partition Treaty of 1752 with the Peshwa was that he threw over the pretensions of the Dabhade family and became the *de facto* ruler of Gujarat. In any case, Yashwantrao Dabhade was an imbecile man so it became easy for Damajirao Gaekwad II to throw over the claims of the Dabhade family and assume full control over his territories in Gujarat.

Following the death of Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao soon after the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761, the cardinal sin which Damajirao Gaekwad II committed was in espousing the cause of the uncle and rival of his successor Peshwa Madhava Rao I, Raghunath Rao. Therefore he had to suffer an ignominious defeat at the hands of Madhava Rao I along with Raghunath Rao at the Battle of Dhodap in 1768. His death soon after the battle proved fatal for the House of the Gaekwads.

After the death of Damajirao Gaekwad II there was considerable enfeeblement of the Baroda State. There was no addition of new territories and the State became vulnerable to the diktat of the Peshwa. Moreover following the death of Damajirao Gaekwad II there was an ushering in of internal strife, family dissensions and succession disputes among the Gaekwads of Baroda. For some time the capable son of Damajirao Gaekwad II, Fatesingrao Gaekwad I was able to keep the Baroda State together but following his death his successors Govindrao Gaekwad, Anandrao Gaekwad and Fatesingrao Gaekwad II being weak rulers, the real power was usurped by ministers. Moreover, owing to the demands of the Peshwa there was an impoverishment of the Baroda State. It soon had a mountain of debt to climb, there was a financial meltdown and the incubus of Arab mercenaries triggered a humanitarian crisis of biblical proportions in the Baroda State.

This was when the contours of friendship with the British were drawn because this was the time when the famous Prabhu minister of Anandrao Gaekwad, Raoji Appaji, approached them for help. This led to the signing of the treaty of Subsidiary Alliance with the East India

Company on 6 June, 1802 the gains of which were consolidated in the form of the Definitive Treaty of Baroda signed between the two parties on 21 April, 1805.

The strategic partnership between the Company and the Gaekwad roused the jealousy of the Peshwa and a power struggle ensued between the British and the Peshwa with regard to the sovereignty over Gujarat and the suzerainty over the Gaekwad which ended with the defeat of the Peshwa in the Third Anglo-Maratha War, the annexation of his dominions by the Company and the replacement of the British as the paramount power in Gujarat and Maharashtra in place of the Peshwa.

The British also liberated the Baroda State from its internal enemies. Kanhojirao, the half-brother of Anandrao Gaekwad and Malharrao Gaekwad, the *jagirdar* of Kadi and a relative of the ruling Maharaja were fomenting trouble in the Baroda State. The British defeated both of them and deported Kanhojirao to Madras and Malharrao Gaekwad to Bombay respectively.

Furthermore, the British also steered the Baroda State away from its worst humanitarian catastrophe by expelling the Arab mercenaries from the State in the process of which they suffered heavy casualties.

Thus they took over the Bahandhari System from the Arabs and this system of guarantees led to a bitter conflict between the Baroda State and the Bombay Government during the reign of Sayajirao Gaekwad II. This adamant and resolute monarch began to follow an antagonistic policy towards the British Government under the advice of his wicked minister Veniram Aditram. Four successive Governors of Bombay, Mountstuart Elphinstone, Sir John Malcolm, Lord Clare, and Sir Robert Grant tried to resolve the problem using intimidation and affection towards the Maharaja in accordance with their respective policies. Finally during the tenure of the fifth Governor of Bombay, Sir James Carnac, the Bombay Government by the approbation of the Government of India forfeited the *pargana* of Petlad from the Baroda State in order to bring Sayajirao Gaekwad II down to his knees. He finally agreed to dismiss Veniram Aditram and to acquiesce to the demands of the Company. Sir James Carnac personally met the Maharaja in Baroda and using his diplomatic skills convinced him that if he complied with the demands of the Company the *pargana* of Petlad would be restored to him. The Maharaja acquiesced to the famous 28 demands of the British Government and the *pargana* of Petlad was accordingly restored to the Baroda State.

What is surprising to note that despite the fact that Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad II was following an antagonistic policy towards the British Government from 1827 to 1841 the Baroda State held such a special place in the hearts of the British that unlike Awadh in 1856 they did not annex it and only took the decision that if Sayajirao Gaekwad II did not comply with the demands of the Company they would depose him and place one of his sons on the *gaddi* instead.

During the reign of the successor of Sayajirao Gaekwad II, Ganpatrao Gaekwad, the British finally withdrew the Bahandhari System as they found that it was being misused by the subjects of the Gaekwad to show disrespect to their sovereign and had become a source of corruption.

Khanderao Gaekwad, the successor of Ganpatrao Gaekwad, helped the British during the Revolt of 1857 and secured the right of adoption from them thus further cementing the ties with the paramount power.

When the successor of Khanderao Gaekwad, Malharrao Gaekwad, unleashed a Reign of Terror in Baroda he was successfully deposed by the British Government and the widow of Khanderao Gaekwad, Jamnabai, adopted a son who went on to become the famous Sayajirao Gaekwad III, the greatest ruler of the Gaekwad dynasty. During his minority the Diwan, Raja Sir T. Madhava Rao, appointed by the British, put the finances of the State which had been messed up by the erstwhile regime of Malharrao Gaekwad on a sound footing.

In this way the British helped the Baroda State which was in a state of incipency in the eighteenth century to formulate itself throughout the nineteenth century and reach a state of maturity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century during the reign of Sayajirao Gaekwad III.

Although Manu Bhagavan has cited instances of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III showing his hatred for the British in a nuanced manner and supporting the nationalist cause it was not absolute. Sayajirao Gaekwad III, in fact, displayed an ambivalent attitude towards the British and helped them in many ways and welcomed the British Viceroys and members of the British royal family who visited Baroda quite often. In other words, Sayajirao Gaekwad III was a nationalist in his own way but not in any open way. In fact, none of the Gaekwad rulers were.

During the reign of Sayajirao Gaekwad III the Baroda State attained full maturity. There was massive development of public infrastructure and a rapid modernization of the Baroda State took place. Sayajirao Gaekwad III was awarded the knighthood for his efforts in making Baroda one of the most progressive princely states of British India.

There are a number of reasons why the Baroda State was such an important State in the eyes of the colonial administration. Firstly it was a 'salute state'. A salute state is one whose ruler received gun salutes as an honorific. Secondly, it was among the top five salute states of India,¹ its ruler addressed as His Highness and called Maharaja. Thirdly, it was the second wealthiest princely state after Hyderabad. Fourthly, along with Mysore it was ranked among the most progressive princely states of India. Its ruler, Sayajirao Gaekwad III, had spread education among his people, undertaken social and religious reforms such as abolition of the caste system, emancipation of women, promoted female education and remarriage of widows as well as abolition of customs like child-marriage. Moreover, he had developed public infrastructure on a massive scale in his State and fostered all round progress of his State and his people.

The type of state which ultimately emerged in Baroda after a long drawn out process of state formation from 1720 to 1881 when the reign of Sayajirao Gaekwad III officially begins (that is when he was invested with full ruling powers) was an absolute monarchy marked by despotism; however, the mature Baroda State under Sayajirao Gaekwad III was at the same time a welfare state too.

¹ The top five princely states of India were Hyderabad, Baroda, Mysore, Gwalior, and Jammu & Kashmir.