

PART 2
PROBLEMS RELATING TO
THE RULER.

Chapter 23

Deposition of Malharrao and Consequent Adoption of Sayaji Rao as a Ruling Gaekwad.

It has been stated elsewhere how due to serious misrule, mal administration and mis conduct, ^{that} ~~xxxx~~ were adequately proved by the Commission of enquiry instituted for the purpose, that Malharrao was deposed. The British Government took this step in the larger interests of the State and people of Baroda, as was claimed by them

Question of succession serious.

But this created a new problem. The serious question that who should succeed to the vacant Gadi was immediately confronted because Malharrao had no legitimate heir to succeed him. While the inquiries of his complicity into Phayre Poison case was going on he had secretly entered into a marriage with one Luxmibai, who had later on given birth to a son, but the British Government did not recognise the legitimacy of the marriage nor the right of succession of Luxmibai's son. Therefore, ~~when~~ after the deposal of Malharrao and his subsequent deportation to Madras on the 22nd April 1875* under the surveillance of a European Medical Officer Dr. Seward, the problem of succession arose.

Two alternatives.

There were two alternatives left to the administration. Firstly, they could accept one of the claimants at Baroda proper or secondly ask the widow of late Khanderryao Gaekwad - who was given an adoption Sanad, Rani Jamnabai to adopt some baby of her choice with the

*Gazetteer of the Baroda State Vol. 1 P. 603.

approval of the British Government.

Claimants from Baroda.

Now from Baroda proper there were three claimants who had advanced their claims to the Gadi and also claimed the direct descent in the line. They were:

- 1) Sadashivrao Gaekwad, age 30 years.
- 2) Ganpatrao Gaekwad, age 26 years.
- 3) Khanderao Gaekwad, age 22 years.

Sadashivrao Gaekwad was the son of Govindrao. This Govindrao was adopted by the widow of Futtehsing, brother of Sayajirao the second.

Gunpat Rao and Khanderao were real brothers and were sons of Gopal rao, brother of said Govind rao. Now these Govindrao and Gopal rao were descendants of Maloji, brother of Pilaji rao, who was the founder of the Gaekwad House. The reference to geneological tree will make the relationship clearer. Now Maloji, was the brother of Pilajirao. Therefore his descendants were collateral and not in line of succession. But as Govind rao was adopted by the widow of Futtehsing, brother of Sayaji, the claimants had been brought into direct line giving his son claim to be regarded as nearest relative to Malhar rao. Out of these three Sir R.Meade considered Ganpatrao 'undoubtedly best'*

Claim of Khandesh Branch of Gaekwad.

But over and above these local claimants, there were other - claimants, thirteen in all, claiming descent from Partabprao, second son of Pilajirao. They resided in Khandesh. But the legitimacy of Partab rao was questioned in Baroda. From this family of Gaekwads, persons of all ages ~~and~~ could be found i.e. from 50 years to infancy.

With these two alternatives in front of them the British Government in deference of wish of Sir R.Meade the Special Commissioner at Baroda ordered an inquiry into the claim of Purtabrao's family and their pretensions to legitimate descent from Filajirao. The question was so urgent and important, rather emergent, as the Gadi was vacant, that speedy steps had to be taken to solve the issue and this was quite evident from the daily exchange of telegrams between Baroda Residency and the Government of India, and we may now see what steps were taken to ascertain the true fact.

Purtabrao's family's pretensions to the vacant Baroda Gadi.
Meade's enquiry into the pretension of the latter claim.

On a careful consideration of the circumstances under which Govindrao was adopted by Futehsing's widow, Sir Richard Meade was under no doubt that this adoption was never admitted by Sayaji Rao II and his sons to give him any claim to the succession.* On the strength of this opinion Sir R.Meade, saw no reason why the British Government should not take on itself to make such an admission in favour of his son - especially as ^{there} were strong reasons against giving it - even if made - practical effect. He said further, "having come to this conclusion, before I met Sadashiv rao, I have from the first treated his pretensions to be regarded as the next in succession, in virtue of his father's adoption as untenable, and have warned him that his claims would - as far as I was in a position to judge, - be held as merely those of a collateral relative of the Dynasty, filling the same position as his cousins Ganpatrao and Khanderao." *

This opinion of his was responsible for his having conducted a speedy and a detail enquiry into Purtab rao family's claims.

*Residency File No. 560

%Residency letter of 29th May 1875.

He first of all caused an inquiry to be made on 12th April by the Nasik Magistrate and asked him to summon the Memorialists, who had preferred the claim on behalf of this family to the Government of India and ascertain what evidence they had to support the same. * At the same time an enquiry by the Poona Magistrate at Pilajireo's ancestral village in that district was also caused to be made. Sir R. Meade was however, confident that claim of the descendants of Purtab Rao would be established and that a person of fitting age might be found amongst them for selection; only if time could be afforded for temporary inquiry. Sir R. Meade also brought to the notice of the Governor of Bombay the necessity for immediate decision.

Here a new development occurred. The Governor of Bombay thought that the enquiry into the claim of Purtab Rao's family was impossible and that he was in favour of adoption by Jamnabai of infant son of Kamabai, Malhar Rao's daughter, which with establishment of proper administration would be more acceptable than any selection by Government of India. Sir R. Meade on this suggestion of the Governor of Bombay said on 15th April that "such an adoption/^{be}without precedent but the difficulty is great. My own opinion is that, if possible, time should be given for deciding claim of Purtab Rao's family, in view to selection from it, if legitimacy be established. If it were notified on removal of Malhar Rao that an adoption by Jamnabai from family of Gaekwad would be allowed, on completion of enquiry now in progress regarding surviving members, the delay would not cause mischief." x x x

"The delay is disappointing but I see no other prospect of finding a suitable person to succeed Malhar Rao. Kamabai's son is a wretched child" Sir Richard wrote on 16th April.*

Nasik Enquiry.

However, on Sir R.Meade's insistence and request Bombay Government ordered full enquiry and all members of the family and proofs ordered to be brought at Bombay at once. At this stage, he suggested that if legitimacy be established, selection of most promising boy aged from 10 to 14 be made and his adoption by Jamnabai under direction of Government of Bombay be effected. And on 5th May Sir R.Meade cabled triumphantly to the Government of India that

"Nasik enquiry is reported to have fully established legitimacy of Purnabhai and his descendants and they are, now, if Sadashiv Rao's claim on score of adoption of his father by widow of Futehsing be pronounced invalid, the direct heirs to Gadi. Amongst surviving members of elder branch of this line are two boys of ten and twelve years and one or more still infants. I beg to submit following course for adoption if Viceroy approves. If Governor concurs with me as to full establishment of legitimacy, I will proceed to Bombay or Nasik and see all the boys and select one after communication with Governor and then report by telegraph for orders of Viceroy -when if sanctioned, I will at once inform Jamnabai and proceed without delay to carry out adoption and installation. If two or more boys of suitable age and equal promise are forthcoming I would suggest that I bring them to Baroda and let Jamnabai herself select which of them she prefers. This would be regarded by her and all concerned as a great favour. Indeed if all were brought under any circumstances for her selection, I would guarantee her choice falling on the one the Governor and I might deem most desirable. This course would expedite the final settlement of matter. x x x I find Mulhar Rao proposed making adoption himself from this line."*

With regard to the last line of the above communication it may be stated that one Damodar Trimbak, once a Secretary of Malhar rao Gaekwad stated in a diposition given before Mr. Richey of the Baroda Residency on 13 May 1875 * that about February 1874, the late Maharaja made enquiries about his relatives in ~~Kan~~ Khandesh with a view to find out whether there was any boy among them suitable for adoption.

The Queen Mahalsabai had ceased to have a prospect of a child and Luxmibai had not been married and Mulhar rao was thinking of adopting as Scindhia had made an adoption.

One Bulwant rao who use to come to Damodar Pant said he knew of a man Kashirao of the Gaekwad family in Khandesh and went to fetch him. He came and visited the Maharaja and the Maharaja gave him a dress and money for expenses and finding there were boys in his family told him to make an application to the Government to have his ~~title~~ title as a member of the Gaekwad family recognised and further told him that when the Resident referred the subject to him (Mulhar rao) he would answer in Kashirao's favour that he was a member of the family. However, Damodar Pant said, Kashirao did not come back.

On the strength of the above important fact that Malharrao himself proposed to adopt some one from the Khandesh family provided its legitimacy was established combined with the decided opinion of the officers responsible for the Nasik enquiry that the Khandesh family had established its claim to legitimate descent from Pilaji Rao. Sir R.Meade communicated the Government of India on 9th May that now there was no sufficient reason for questioning the conclusions arrived at by the Nasik Report. He at the same time intimated that the three lads would be here today and would visit Jannabai tomorrow, and

commenting on the situation that was available at Baroda he said,

"Sadashivrao has stated to me that he is rightful heir and his claim has support of some of the sardars. It is doubtful if there was not some intention of putting him forward on 28th April and I think it will be prudent to remove him to Bombay for a time as also possibly Ganpat rao and Khandey rao Kamabai is doubtless aware of her son having been proposed for succession by Mr. Gibbs and she is stated to have been busy plotting mischief. Her withdrawal from Baroda seems also advisable x x x. I should add that nothing being known here regarding Khandesh Gaekwad there is no party in their favour and many will be disposed to resent selection from them."*

Learning from Sadashiv rao that some of the sardars were backing him to prevent any unrest of the kind in these ranks Sir R. Meade called all the principal Sirdars to meet him. He explained at the meeting the nature and the result of the Nasik Inquiry and the exact position of the question as regards the Khandesh family and the several claimants at Baroda proper. He also told them that the Viceroy would decide as to what was now to be done and that he relied on their accepting His Excellency Viceroy's decision and honestly ~~making~~ aiding him in carrying it out. All the Sardars present at the meeting solemnly assured Sir R. Meade that, this would be the case but only begged that there might be as little delay as possible in settling the matter.

At this stage we pause to have a peep into the much talked about Nasik Inquiry on whose strength a peasant boy of a distant village was made a Prince of one of the premier states of India.

Nasik Report.*

When the Bombay Government ordered a full inquiry to find out the legitimacy of the Purtab Rao's family as the descendants of Pilaji rao, they deputed a well experienced man Col. A.T. Etheridge The Inam Commissioner to help and conduct inquiry in communion with Nasik Magistrate Mr. G.W. Elliot. They submitted their Report on the 4th May 1875.

The report prefaces first how the House of the Gaekwads gained foot-holdⁱⁿ Gujarat and How Damaji, son of Pilaji - who is generally considered to be the founder of the family and the first reigning Prince - after the recovery of Baroda in 1732, advanced through the country and regularly reduced it and also how during the remaining years of his life he continued to enlarge and consolidate his territories. It was noted that Damaji brought his victorious career to an end in 1768 A.D. and the succession remained in his line, which line was now terminating with the deposition of his great grandson Malhar rao.

Commenting how the family came to reside in Khandesh the Report said, "The claimants assert that their progenitor Purtab rao, brother of Damaji, on one occasion accompanied the latter to Khandesh to quell certain disturbances, that some 46 villages were acquired in Khandesh during the operations and that on the return of Damaji to Baroda, he left his younger brother Purtab rao in charge of the conquered territories.

*The whole discussion over this topic of 'Naski Report' is based on the text and commentary given in the Residency File No. 560, available in the Baroda Record office. Unfortunately first four pages of this document of great importance to Baroda history, with all my endeavour could not be traced. The Report, therefore, begins from page 5.

The claimants added that it was in consequence of this arrangement that Purnab Rao settled in Gurnor in Khandesh and died there leaving two infant sons named Kaloji and Jaoji with their widowed mother. Afterwards the reigning Gaekwad, it is said, transferred these 46 villages to the Peshwa in exchange for the fort of Vajpur which thenceforth became Gaekwad State property, but made no compensation to the widow and her two sons for the loss of them. The family however continued to remain at Gurnor in Khandesh but had no other means of support than the proceeds of a small estate which Purnab Rao had purchased before his death. Recently that is about 50 years ago the family removed to the village of Kavlani in Nasik where they all now reside."

Such was the brief history of this branch of the Gaekwad family as given by the five sons of Bhikajee. It was now for the enquiry officers to test the truth of this story on the basis of the proofs that were produced before them. The first proofs contained the metal title deeds. These consisted of 4 copper plates which could be divided in two sets. The first set of two plates gave the genealogies and the second set of two plates recorded an agreement between Damaji and his brother, dated 5th Ramzan 1148 (1735 A.D.).

The genealogies*ran thus:-

Panji Jinngoji Rao Gaekwad, Father Kesoji ~~Rao~~ Grand father Nandaji, Brother Hurji of Davdi Nimbgaon. Pillaji Rao, Father Jinngoji, Grand father Kesoji, Brothers Maloji Rao and Manaji Rao and Tatya Saheb, sons Damaji and Khanderao and Jaysingrao and Anandrao and Eshwant Rao and Pertab Rao and Kaloji Rao of the Khanji Pagah and Bhawani Rao Gaekwad Patel. Godaji, Father Maloji, Grand Father Jinngoji,

*The spellings of the names have been copied down from the original account in the Residency File.

great grand father Kesoji, mother Saibai of Davdi Nimbgaon. Bhivrao, Father Eshwantrao, grand father Pilaji rao, Anandrao, Father Pilaji, grand father Jingoji, brothers Damaji and Khanderao and Eshwantrao and Dhondibai mother Bhawanibai. Trimbakrao, Father Eshwantrao, grand father Pilaji, great grand father Jingoji, mother Koosabai, wife Radhabai.

This genealogy was attested by 'Damaji Pilaji Gaekwad, Hisedar (sharer) the giver of the Sanad; in presence of Ramaji Mahadeo Farnis.

The Sanad or Mukhtyar Patra ran thus:-

"From Senakhas gut Shumsher Bahadur Ieshwi Sirkar Damaji Pilaji Gaekwad Saheb to Tatyasaheb Gaekwad. You are my brother. You are of my kindred. Whatever Jagir etc. we have acquired or may acquire in Gujarat or elsewhere shall be enjoyed by both of us, therefore, this Mukhtyar Patra, I pass to you, to the effect that my descendants and your descendants shall have full power over the acquisition of either. The curse of his descendants be upon the breaker of this compact. Dated 5th Ramzan Sun 1148 (1735 A.D.)."

This Sanad was attested by Ramaji Mahadeo Farnis in presence of the Sarkar.

The officers made a following note on this metal plate:-

"This metal plate has inscribed on it at top a large seal showing that the Government of the same was that of the Peshwa and at the bottom the small 'Mortub' of the writer Damaji Gaekwad. It is to be remarked, also that both these seals bear the engraving of the 'sword' the crest of the Gaekwads originating from the title of 'Shumsher Bahadur'".

With regard to the alleged exchange of 46 Gaekwadi villages with

Peshwa for the fort of Vajpur , one of the facts stated by the 5 sons of Bhikaji the Report said:

"It is unfortunate that so far as the search has gone neither in the Poona nor Baroda Duftar has any trace been found x x x But several genealogies of the Gaekwad family prepared at different times record that this branch has settled in Khandesh and was generally unknown at Baroda."

Now the question of importance was "who was Purnab rao ?" In the 9th para of the said Report it is stated "That Purnab rao was, however, a person of note would appear from the mention made of him at page 61 of Government selection No. XXVI; new series, where he is stated to have been in command of a large force advancing to Runkoo's assistance. Extract from an able Report drawn up at Baroda in 1813 by Lt. H.D. Robertson, afterwards a wellknown Political Officer, under Mt. Elphinstone said, "At length Rustamsingh had nearly finished Amine (अमीन) where he learnt that Purnab, Damaji's brother had crossed the Mahee with a large force and was advancing to Runkoo's assistance."

The officers were, however, left in no doubt that did time permit other historical mention might be found of the person but simply on that account they did not feel justified in delaying their Report, especially when the veracity of the claimants' statements and the general accuracy of the narrative could be most satisfactorily tested in other ways.

And here, now the officers plunge themselves into the critical examination of the plates, saying:-

"10. We may premise that it is not quite clear to whom Damaji addresses the Sanad of A.D. 1735 under the designation of

"Tatyasaheb" That it was not his uncle is certain as he says "you are my brother". It is confidently asserted by the claimants that "Tatyasaheb" was the familiar name of Purtab rao, and in their versions of the genealogy of the family they invariably set down that designation as the alias Purtab rao. We are unable to speak confidently on this point as the writer Damaji had several brothers, but it does not appear to us to be a matter of much importance. The great fact that the Purtab rao was the son of Pilaji and the brother of Damaji, the first two reigning princes is established from the first set of metal plates and the following most trustworthy evidence will carry down the lineage of the branch of the Gaekwad family to the claimants themselves. We may add however that the simple insertion of the familiar name of the addressee goes far to mark the genuineness of the plate for if the claimants had thought it worth their while to perpetuate a forgery they would have placed the matter beyond doubt, as referring to their ancestor Purtab Rao. But the plates are undoubtedly genuine.

"11. This report has described the early history of the Gaekwad family upto the accession to the musnad of Pillaji followed by his son Damaji. It has shown how the writing on the copper plates executed by Damaji acknowledged by elaborate genealogies engraven on the first set of them, his brother Purtabrao and secured to him (if the claimants' assertion may be accepted that Purtab rao and Tatyasaheb are identical and the presumption is in favour of it) and his descendants equal participation in the acquisition of two brothers, in Gujarat and elsewhere. It now remains to show how the following documents corroborate and establish the authenticity and genuineness of the copper plates and when we

add that these documents were collected by the Magistrate of Nasik from extraneous sources (with the exception of the deed of sale No.VI as stated in Para 12) their value will be appreciated."

The documents, above referred to were:-

1. The record of Pilaji's visit to Nasikin A.D. 1731.
2. The Record of Damaji's visit to Nasik.
3. The Record of the visit to Trimbak of Kaloji, son of Purtab rao.
4. The record of the visit to Trimbak of Bhikaji, son of Gabaji, and grand son of Kaloji (The said Bhikaji being the father of the claimants).
5. The record of the visit to Pundharpur of Bhikaji.
6. The deed of sale dated Shake 1739 (A.D. 1817) by which Bhikaji; the father of the claimants, and son of Gabajee purchased the Patel-ki-Vatan at Kaviani near Mallegaon, where all the claimants are now living.
7. A writing of Sayaji Gaekwad (The reigning Prince) acknowledging the sons of Atmaram Bhat, Dharmadhikari and Chiman Bhat as Oopadias (or priests) of the Gaekwad family at Nasik.
8. Depositions of these Oopadias or Priests of H.H. Scindia and Holkar and of the two Gaekwadi Oopadias at Nasik to the effect that the distinguished Hindus always record their visits and genealogies in the books of their Oopadias or priests when they visit a sacred river, and that they never enter in such genealogies the names of illegitimate children.
9. A set of 33 old genealogies of the Gaekwad family recorded on the same sheet in the ^{files} registers of visits to Nasik kept by the partner of Vinayak Bhat Oopadias of the Gaekwad family and of Sir Jung Bahadur of Nepal.

With regard to document No. 1, it was said that that was the original record of Pilaji's visit to the Sacred river Goda^{va}ri at Nasik dated Jesht Sud 5 Virodh krit Sumvatsar Shake 1653, corresponding with A.D. 1731, which he gave to Atmaram Bhatt, Dharmadhikari, and Chiman Bhatt Dixit in form of Sunud, constituting them Tirth Oopadias of the Gaekwad family. This document contained the names of the Pilaji's ancestors and stated also that Purtab was one of his sons. Besides this original document there was a very old copy of it duly recorded in the Oopadia's books of register of such Sanad.

Concerning document No. 2, the officers remarked that there was the entry in the Wahi or index to the Register of visits to Nasik of Dixit family obtained from Raghunath Bhatt, Manager of the affairs of the Dixit family who were principal oopadias of the Gaekwad family at Nasik as follows:-

Damaji - father Pilaji, grandfather Jingoji, brothers Khanderao, Anandrao Jaisingrao, Purtabrao and Eshwantrao.

Also Purtabrao's name appears in its proper ~~x~~ place throughout its genealogies.

Document 3 merely records and the record is an original one signed by Kaloji, son of Purtabrao, to Trimbakeshwar in the year Shake 1692, corresponding with A.D. 1770.

Document 4, is again an original record of the visit of Bhikaji, son of Gabaji, son of Kaloji to Trimbakeshwar. Kaloji is the great grand father of the present claimants. This document shows in the genealogy Bhikaji's descent from Purtabrao and mentions the names of Bhikaji's sons, Gabaji Baburao and Kashirao. "It should be noted that," say the officers, "Ookha and Sakharam now aged respectively about 25

and 22 were not alive when the record was written and therefore, naturally their names are not in it." This record bears a sign of plough, mark of Bhikaji.

In the document No. 5 Bhikaji's visit to Pandharpur is recorded and resembles document No. 4. This visit was made in Shaka 1756 (A.D. 1834) and the record was obtained from Anna Moro Burve the Pandharpur Oopadias of the Gaekwad family.

Document No. 6 is a deed of sale dated 1739 (A.D. 1817) by which Bhikaji purchased Patel-ki-vatan at Kavlani.

Document No. 7 is a writing of the reigning Prince Sayaji II, father of Gunpat rao, Khanderao and Malharrao, dated 26th Shaba Kartik Samvat 1895 i.e. A.D. 1838; and confirms Nasik Oopadia to whom Pilaji gave the record of his visit in A.D. 1731 document No. 1.

"It must be explained of the depositions of the four Principal Oopadias of Nasik" which is contained in document No. 8 "who record visits of members of the families of Sir Jung Bahadur, of Nepal of Scindia, Holkar and the Gaekwars that all the four oopadias stated solemnly and unhasitatingly that this very old custom of Hindus recording their genealogies when they visit a sacred river does not permit of the entry in the record of the names of illegitimate children. That it is the uniform custom on such occasions to enter only the names of legitimate children and as Purtab Rao's name appears so often in the genealogies, it is on that account a violent presumption that he was a legitimate son of Pilaji and this reasoning applies to all his descendants down to the claimants all the names in that line being found in the genealogies recorded in the registries of visits to Nasik, Pandharpur, Trimbakeshwar cited as evidence in this report. We are

aware that the doubt has been entertained at Baroda about the legitimacy of Purtabrao, we consider what has been written a sufficient answer and it may be added that throughout this enquiry we have not met with a particle of evidence to sustain the doubt." In the above words, quoting the orthodox Hindu tradition, the officers repudiated the doubts regarding the legitimacy of Purtabrao.

Documents No. 9, were obtained from an oopadia of Nasik named Baba Kachesar, partner of Vinayak Bhat oopadias of Gaekwar and Sir Jung Bahadur's family. These contained 33 genealogies of members of the Gaekwad's family, in three of which the name of Purtab rao occurs as brother of Damaji, son of Pilaji in its proper place.

After analysing these documents the officers proceeded to mention that all those documents (except the deed of sale No. VI which was produced by the claimants) were obtained by the Magistrate, some of them by means of information received from the claimants and their agents others while a search was made in the books of the Oopadias for evidence bearing on that case and opined that all the documents came into their hands under circumstances which assured them, they could not form part of a fabrication to support a false claim.

Conclusion.

And with the above conviction of an absence of any mischief they concluded that the evidence they had considered proved that the claimants and their sons were the former sons and latter grand sons of Bhikaji, who was the son of Gabaji, who was the son of Kaloji, who was the son of Purtab rao, who was the son of Pilaji, the consolidator if not the founder of the Gaekwad dynasty.

They also added to the conclusion that the claimants had produced a valuable shawl and turban, which they declared was given to the claimants Kashirao about chaitra Sood 10, Shake 1795, i.e. 8th March 1873 (Damodar Pant gave the time as somewhere in February 1874 but that he was telling from his memory), when they were at Baroda seeking to establish their relationship, to the reigning family. The claimants also asserted that the presentation was made by Malhar rao himself in acknowledgement of relationship and was accompanied by the donation of Rs. 200/-. The enquiry officers also noted that the proof of this had recently been found at Baroda by Sir R. Meade .

Bombay Government's opinion of this enquiry.

On 11th Sir R. Meade was reported addressing Government of India . Bombay Government's opinion thus, " The enquiry at Nasik ~~has~~ has been an exparte enquiry subject to that remark we consider that for the reasons to be given by post, the conclusion arrived at in the Report may be accepted." On this remark Sir R. Meade was seemed to be of the opinion that the Inquiry had to be necessarily exparte , for there was no recognised person possessing rights to the succession, but it was not restricted to mere acceptance of evidence tendered by Khandesh family, and the most important proof was obtained by independent search instituted by the Magistrate and Col. Etheridge.

Sir R. Meade then proceeded to inform that the three boys named Gopal, Sumpat and Dada, who were much alike and were sons of Kashi and Ookaji had arrived in Baroda.

Government of India however proceeded very cautiously on the course they ^{had} set their feet on. They asked for definite opinion of Sir R. Meade over the Nasik Report, which now was a deciding factor. Sir R.

Meade was very frank in his opinion as would seen from the following:

" x x The Report seems incomplete as it furnishes no explanation of causes (1) of family remaining cut off from Baroda after Purtab rao's death (2) of having no provision for its maintenance from Gaekwad and (3) of falling into the obscurity in which it has been for so long. The family appear however, to have no further information on this subject than that given in their original petition of which I presume you have a copy. On the other hand the evidence adduced before the officers ~~encl~~ conducting the enquiry, as well as that obtained by them, wholly independently of the claimants themselves and the sources on which they relied seems to me to furnish reasonably sufficient proof that Pilajirao had a legitimate son named Purtab rao, alias Tatiasaheb, and that the claimants who appeared before the enquiry are the lineal and legitimate descendants of the said Purtab rao and are entitled to the position they claim as his representatives at the present time. I may add that, Col. Etheridge, whose experience in the examination of old sanads and other similar documents is great and who approached this enquiry with very reasonable suspicion of the truth of the claim, wrote to me on its completion as follows:-
'The result is to establish beyond doubt the legitimacy of Purtab rao and the whole line descending from him, including the five claimants sons of Bhikaji and their sons.* such an opinion from him after after personal careful inspection of all the documents that were obtained appears to me to be conclusive-especially as this evidence was

*With these conclusions of the officers Sir R.Meade's hands were much strengthened in his attempt to get one of the boys of Khandesh family for the throne.

of a character that could not be affected by any attempt to discredit it, the absolute genuineness of the books containing it being undoubted. (message dated 12-5-75).

x

x

x

" I have no doubt whatever that the conclusion arrived at by the officer holding the enquiry is sound and just and only wish that some explanation could have been given on the points noticed by me in which such will naturally be looked for here. Sir Madhav Rao views the case much as I do. Jumna Bai is most averse to the idea of adopting any of the Baroda claimants." (Message dated 13-5-75.)

Meanwhile Government of India also received the detailed opinion of the Bombay Government on the subject. At the same time they (Government of India) also referred the question to Holkar for his opinion on the matter in hand.

The opinion of the Bombay Government stated over and above that the inquiry was exparte one that

(1) As officers who made the enquiry are satisfied that the copper plates are genuine, that those plates establish that Purtab rao was son of Pilaji and brother of Damaji, that his legitimacy is further established by Records kept by four principal oopadias of Nasik of visits of family to that place and lastly that the most trustworthy evidence will carry down lineage of this branch to claimants and

(2) As new Gaekwad will really be called into existence by means of adoption by Jumna Bai as widow of Khande rao and by that adoption alone, and that when so adopted and recognised by British Government his title to Gadi will be established

Taking all these circumstances into consideration the conclusion

arrived at in the Report may be accepted.

Thus we see that Bombay Government also agreed with Sir R.Meade and both of them suggested the similar course for the solution of the problem.

Reference to Holkar by the Government of India.

But this was not all. Holkar on the point referred to him raised a doubt as to where is the guarantee to prevent the entries made in Registries of Oopadias by illegitimate persons themselves, when visiting sacred ~~x~~ rivers, in which they would not describe themselves as illegitimate.' When Sir R.Meade came to know of this he at once communicated to the Government of India on 14th May 1875 that he himself "had doubts on that subject and discussed it with Col. Etheridge before he took up the enquiry, and he was fully prepared for the necessity for caution on that head . x x x but deposition of Oopadias, quoted under head 8 of Para 11 of Nassick Report, is not affected by that opinion, as they simply affirm that distinguished Hindoos on such occasion never enter in such records the names of their illegitimate children. Had the evidence in present case been dependent on entries made Purtab rao himself or his descendants, it would be justly open to challenge on grounds stated by Holkar, but the proof of his legitimacy afforded by the copper plates and the documents quoted under heads 1 and 2 of para 11 of the Report appears to me to be as conclusive as can well be expected under circumstances. The question of the legitimate descent of Purtab rao's successors down to claimants is undoubtedly affected by Holkar's opinion and may require further enquiry. But if Purtabrao's legitimacy is considered established there will probably be little difficulty in improving that of his descendants x x x

I have failed to obtain any reliable information ~~have~~ from State Records or officials regarding Purtab Rao. Few have even heard of him. Those who profess to have say he was illegitimate, no proof in support of that allegation seems to be forthcoming. All concerned appear to be committed to one or other of Baroda claimants. Sir Madhav Rao has examined family priest but has got no information from him and expects to get none, but is making further enquiries. x x
The delay and ^{on}certainty really invite mischief and petty plotting in favour of each claimants is of course carried on."

The Holkar's point of view thus pushed the problem into such a position wherein immediate decision became difficult and uncertainty and delay were the natural results of which Sir. R.Meade is seen complaining. It also made clear that some more authentic proof of Purtab Rao's legitimacy was essential. However Sir R.Meade was confident that family priest might produce something. He also referred to some of the statements made by Sadashiv Rao in his Memorial, though he (Sir R.Meade) appears to be of view that Sadashiv's general remarks hardly required any notice, nevertheless, his pretensions may demand expression of opinion from Government. Sir R.Meade thought him to be the least fitted for Gadi of all Baroda claimants.

As the Inquiry was now drawing to a close the Gaekwar family priest at Baroda produced an old document which he had discovered among his papers containing a list of deceased members of the family to whose names offerings are made in the course of certain religious ceremonies and which list included Prutab Rao's name as brother of Damaji and paternal uncle of his (Damaji's) sons. The priest stated that the name of no illegitimate member of the family would appear in such a paper and after hearing the evidence adduced before the

inquiry on the point, declared his conviction that Purtab rao must have been a legitimate son of Pilaji rao.

Certain more information* now also forthcoming at Baroda, was to the effect (1) that when the daughter of Maharaja Gunpat Rao, who was married to the Kolhapur Chief, was proceeding to that place some 25 years ago, this Khandesh Gaekwad family pressed her to visit them, which she did and stopped at their place and acknowledged them as relatives. (2) that when H.H. Gunpat rao visited Poona sometime afterwards, he sent for and entertained them and also acknowledged the relationship and (3) that both Khanderao and Malharrao contemplated making an adoption from the family and sent for some of its members to Baroda where they remained for several months on each occasion.

Picture got clearer.

Now the picture of the whole situation was getting quite clear as,

- (1) though there was no evidence as to the separation of Purtab rao's family from Baroda Gaekwads, it was quite clear that the family for several years back had not been wholly unknown in Baroda, though certain persons - who had an interest in so doing - seemed to have endeavoured to discredit it on this as well as other points.
- (2) Both Sir R. Meade and Sir Madhav Rao considered the claim to have been quite sufficiently made out to warrant Government taking action on it and making a selection from amongst the youthful members of the family for adoption by Jannabai to fill the vacant Gadi.

- (3) The Bombay Government , while observing that the inquiry had been an exparte one, had recorded its opinion that under the circumstances the conclusion arrived at by the Inquiry officers may be accepted.
- (4) The Sirdars, to whom whole of the circumstances were most carefully explained by Sir R.Meade had expressed their readiness to accept and abide by the Viceroy's decision in the case and only urged the speedy expedition of the question.
- (5) Great importance attached by responsible persons to the selection of a minor, who could be trained up for the duties he would have hereafter to fulfil and during whose term of minority the reform of abuses could be carried out and the affairs of the State put in proper order.
- (6) The fact that Her Highness Jamnabai was wholly opposed to adopting one of the local claimants and was earnestly desirous, as was reported, to be permitted to adopt one of the boys of the Khandesh family.
- (7) And lastly unhesitated statement of Sir R.Meade's opinion that the latter course was the most advantageous for the real interests of the State and people and his firm faith that when the present excited state of public feeling subsided, it would meet with general approval and support and would prove a success.

Government of India's decision in favour of Purtab rao.

The Government of India finally decided taking into consideration the above circumstances on 20th May that one of the boys from Khandesh family may be allowed to be adopted by Jamnabai.

This decision of the British Government was formally communicated to Her Highness Jannabai whose choice , with the concurrence of Sir Meade fell on Gopal Rao son of Kasirao, who was the eldest and perhaps most promising of the three. His name was changed to Sayaji Rao, and thus arrangements were on foot to instal~~l~~ him on Gadi after the precedent of installation of Khande rao.

The Baroda Claimants were, however, much upset over the decision of the British Government and one of them, ~~her~~ brother of Sadashiv rao , out of disappointment shot himself to death; it was, however, said that his mind had long been unsound.

Thus a very thorny and delicate problem was settled in most judicious and judicial manner in the interests of Baroda and thus one native boy, as happens in fairy tale, came to Baroda and became a king overnight as if were by the sudden flick of destiny.