

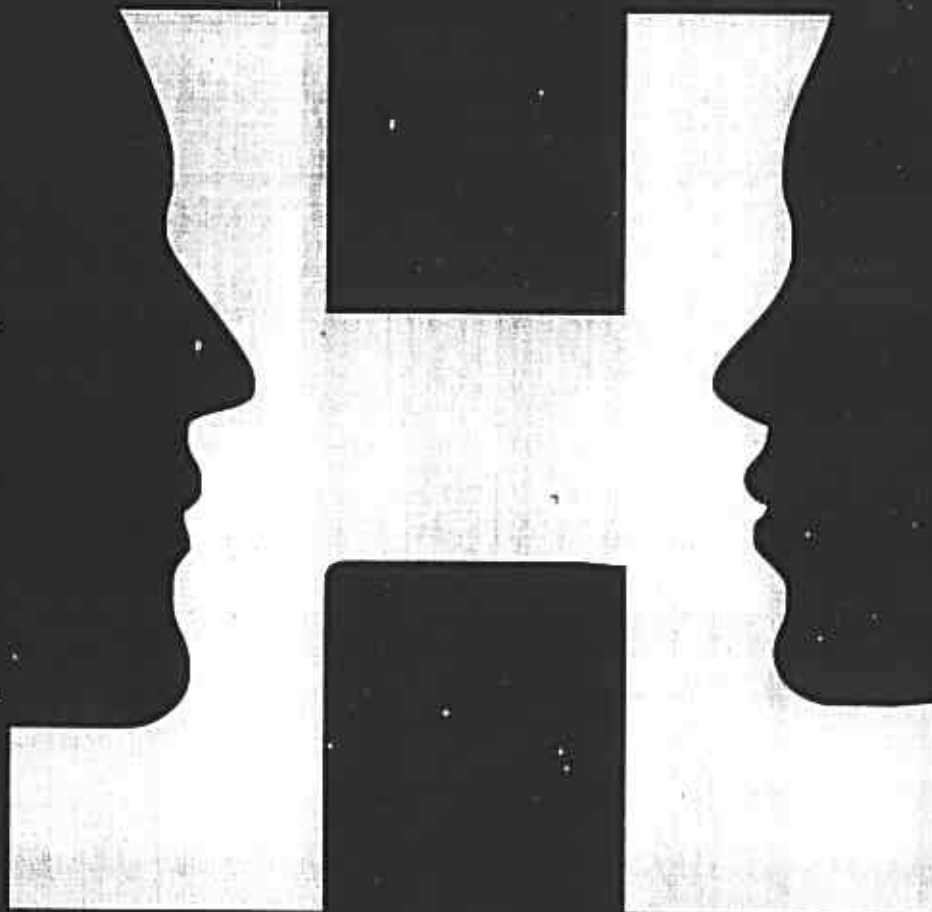
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**BRITISH RULE OVER SATARA AND RAJA SHAHJI :
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BIJAPUR****Dr. Govind Tirmanwar**

Associate Professor

Late Dattatraya Pusadkar Arts College, Nandgaon Peth,
Tq. & Dist Amravati.

Maratha history has been unique in many respects. In 1818, the British victory at Ashti against the Marathas, made British, rulers of Maratha land. Chatrapati Pratapsingh fell in to hands of British. Mount Stuart Elphinston was sole commissioner for the settlement of the Maratha territory, he was basically a liberal man and wanted to make only necessary reforms in territory. Bijapur was a territory of Satara Raj. The unique feature about Satara was that new ideas were introduced in administration without altering much the Maratha framework.¹

Satara state was created by the British in 1818 and annexed by then in 1849. This period exhibits the changing attitude of British towards the people of India. This period was a period of transition. The character of Maratha State was undergoing fast changes when the British took over the Maratha Country from them. A Maratha State (Satara) was created a Maratha Raja (Raja Pratapsingh) was installed on it, no doubt, but the actual regions of administration were in the hands of the British.

Elphinston know very well that for securing the tranquility of the conquered country, he had to conciliate the people, i.e. the Marathas "by setting up the Raja of Satara". Raja Pratapsingh was installed at Satara but at the same time he made it clear that the authority of the British government was, in reality, Supreme.²

Raja Pratapsingh who favoured British in the war of Ashti was formally enthroned on 10th April 1818.

Raja Pratapsingh ruled from 1818 to 1839 and he was succeeded by Appasaheb (Raja Shahji). Raja Shahji ruled Satara from 1839 to 1848. It is said or it is a general assumption that Raja Pratapsingh and Raja Shahji were mere puppet rulers. They were totally representing British rule and following their policies. But with the help of many seces we can explain that both Raja Pratapsingh and Raja Shahji put their Royal ego aside for the well living of their territory and common people. The history of Satara State and Raja Shahji's regime over Bijapur is unique in the history of Marathas in many respects.

Appasaheb, Pratapsingh's Brother, succeeded to the throne of Satara on the 5th September 1839. He took the title of Raja Shahji. A fresh treaty of perpetual friendship and alliance between the East India Company and Raja Shahji was concluded at Satara. Shahji's brief period of seven years on the throne of Satara, though colourless was of peace and tranquility. He just put his self respect and ego aside for the sake of safety of his terrain and well being of his people.⁴

In contemporary circumstances, Raja Shahji, for the well being of common people and continuation of Shivaji's Raj, fully co-operated British government. On many places Raja Shahji is abused for his flexible behavior towards British government. In spite of his negative impression, (he was Considered as obstinate and ill disposed lad with very low vicious habits) Shahji's Seven years on the thrown of Satara, were of piece and quite. He was congratulated for his mild administration and constant activity in the department of public works.⁵ With the help of following points we can easily understand Raja Shahji's Participation in the development of Satara territory with special reference to Bijapur.

Public Works- Raja Shahji was known for his constant activities in public works. Raja constructed a bridge over River Yena and in the Same Way another bridge on River Krishna was constructed. These bridges were very important for the economic development and connectivity of Satara Raj (Including Bijapur).

A plan of embankment at Mahabaleshwar and bring water to the town of Satara (Including Bijapur) from etheshwara mountain was also in process.

Besides this, construction of a large "Cutchurry" (town hall), A new hospital building in Satara town was very important. New Roads from Satara to Mahabaleshwar and Mahabaleshwar to Malcompeth were constructed. A high road from Satara to Poona with travellers bungalow made a positive impact. Various small works as reservoirs, wells etc. were repaired and built by Raja Shahji.⁶

Preservative works in Bijapur

When Raja Shahji came to know about the decaying condition of Historical Monuments and

worship places, he immediately took steps for the betterment, Repair and conservation of the finest specimens of Mohammadan Architecture in the Deccan, Raja Shahji Repaired goolee goo much and Ibrahim Rauza.⁷

Raja Shahji constructed rest houses for travellers so that there was no need to disturb monuments for accommodation.

Raja Shahji appointed Captain R.E. Hart for Repair work of Bijapur monuments and other historical and religious buildings. Raja Shahji restored water supply at Jamimasjid.⁸ It is said that by the order of Raja Shahji Northern and Southern walls of Jamimasjid had been constructed.

Medical works to provide Aid

Raja appointed one medical officer on the salary of Rs. 15 per month for territory. A vaccination programme was also carried for children. Children from country and neighboring areas were vaccinated against many diseases. This was great contribution of the Raja for the public of Bijapur.

Arrangement of English Currency

With the efforts, taken by Raja Shahji, the market value of Chanderi Rupee was replaced by company's rupee and the market value of company Rupee was 41/2% above of Chanderi Rupee. English Government was determined to circulate their currency. So Raja Shahji worked as mediator between common people and government.

Transit Duties

The Raja had placed transit duties on the same footing as they were in other British territories.

Education

Raja Shahji was interested in education for all and was in favour of English language as need of time

and circumstances. But the people showed no inclination to have their children taught English.

Abolishment of Slave System

Buying and selling slaves was abolished by the proclamation of Raj Shahji of Satara under date 20th July 1841. Slaves were called a mild species of domestic bondage and Trafficking of this specie was completely put a stop by Raja Shahji.

Abolishment of "Suttee" Tradition

In the same way another social evil which was practiced on large scale was "Suttee". This social evil was abolished by public proclamation all throughout his country.

In Raja Shahji's administration, the Small Number of Petitions were received against jageerdars, it cleared that the whole affairs were justly and mercifully administered.

Raja Shahji made many administrative reforms also. In spite of all above mentioned reforms and political activities, he became victim of British Conspiracy and finally after the death of Raja Shahji, in lack of heir, Satara Raj (Including Bijapur) was annexed by British Government in 1849 A.D.⁹

The last of the great Shivaji descendants consigned to the flames which closed the story of Satara.

Thus the Maratha power which was established and consolidated by Shaji the great in the 17th Century, preserved by his successors by giving a stubborn resistance to the mighty Mughal army and extended by the Peshwas, directly or indirectly to all the corners of this sub continent in the 18th Century came to an inglorious in 1849 and became an integral part of the British powers.

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