Chapter VIII

THE PERIOD OF CONFUSION.

Queer Situation:

From the birth of Savai Madhavrao in 1774 to his death in 1795, Nana Phadnis had administered the Maratha State from Poona. Savai Madhavrao was guided and controlled by him. The mistake committed by Nana towards Peshwa was, that he did not allow Savai Madhavrao to participate in the administration. Theoretically, Peshwa had become now the central figure of Maratha Empire. All orders were issued under his name and Seal. Yet in practice, he could not enjoy freedom. This was a queer situation. Savai Madhavrao, in 1795 had attained twenty one years of age and naturally he was irritated at the restraints placed on him. He secretly entered into correspondence with Baji Rao, his only serving kith and kin, who was kept as a prisoner in Junnar. Savai Madhavrao and Bajirao, both were of the same age - Bajirao being younger by nearly nine months. Savai Madhavrao's letters were intercepted by Nana Phadnis and he was upbraided by Nana for the folly of communicating with 'enemies'. The result was that Savai Madhavrao developed a melancholic temper and in a mood of despondency threw himself down the balcony of his palace on 25th October 1795 and died 27th October 1795. The situation in 1750 and in 1795 is identical and a logical
step in the downward direction - only the individuals are different - The situation in which the Chhatrapati Ram Raja was placed by Nanasaheb Peshwa in 1750 and the situation in which Savai Madhavrao Peshwa was placed by Nana Phadnis are similar. In 1750, Peshwa usurped the authority of Chhatrapati, in 1795 (actually in 1774) Nana Phadnis usurped the authority of Peshwa.

Baji Raghu:

After the death of Savai Madhavrao, an ironical situation developed. Bajirao - the son of Raghunathrao, who was charged as a murderer of Narayanrao Peshwa and who sought refuge with English Company - was the rightful successor of the Peshwaship. Nana Phadnis attempted to prevent Bajirao's succession but his attempts were foiled by popular sentiment and the hostility of Daulatrao Shinde towards him. The best course open to Nana Phadnis was to resign his post and keep himself away from power. But Nana Phadnis, who had enjoyed power for the last twenty years, was not prepared to relinquish it. In this attempt he was involved in a maze of intrigues and counter intrigues, conspiracies of different nature which ultimately created a chaotic and anarchical situation in Maharashtra and the Maratha Empire.

Conflicts:

The first idea which Nana Phadnis mooted was to
adopt a son, and to rule in his name. But this move was not popular and nobody supported it. Meanwhile Bajirao contacted Daulatrao Shinde and the English. Daulatrao and Bajirao entered into agreement. But before it could materialise, Bajirao was released by Nana. Bajirao's release without the help of Daulatrao created a gulf between the two. Shinde now decided to march to Poona. Nana Phadnis left Poona. Shinde demanded the stipulated amount from Bajirao, which he was unable to pay. Shinde, therefore, imprisoned Bajirao and with the help of Parashurambhau Patwardhan declared Chimnaji Appa, younger brother of Bajirao as Peshwa. But Parashurambhau Patwardhan was unable to meet the demands of Shinde. Bajirao, who had lost his Peshwa-ship, wrote to Nana Phadnis, who was at Mahad. From Mahad Nana Phadnis wrote letters to (i) Holkar, (ii) Bhosale, (iii) Raja of Kolhapur, (iv) British at Bombay, (v) Nizam and (vi) Tipoo Sultan. To whom letters were written is also an important fact from the political point of view. Out of these six, only two were sardars of original Quasi-federal Maratha state. The Raja of Kolhapur was a Maratha, but Kolhapur from 1700 onwards had always clashed with Satara. It was an independent state. British was a foreign power, Tipoo Sultan and Nizam were obviously enemies of Maratha state, who could not forget the treachery of the Marathas in 1792 and 1795, respectively. All were eager to help not for the common national cause, but for their own self interest. This clearly showed the changed nature of
the Maratha Empire. Idealism was lost and its place was taken by the lust for power and money. Nana wrote to Daulatrao Shinde. His attempts bore fruit. He returned to Poona and assumed office in November 1795. Bajirao was released from Shinde's confinement and was duly invested with Peshwaship.

Differences between Nana and Bajirao - Chaos:

Differences between Nana Phadnis and Bajirao started immediately. Old hatred and jealousies were revived. Bajirao entered into secret pact with Daulatrao Shinde. Shinde's guards were posted around Shaniwarwada. To protect himself Nana Phadnis engaged Arab soldiers. Bajirao spent his life in parties, low favourites and sensuous gaiety. Taxes were imposed on ryots. Bajirao never attended to the affairs of state but spent his time among dancers, singers and menial servants. In 1797, Tukoji Holkar died and quarrel succession arose. Tukoji Holkar had four sons. Eldest Kashirao invited Daulatrao Shinde for help. A war between Holkar and Shinde started. Nana Phadnis had been to Shinde's camp, where he was treacherously arrested in December 1797. Shinde with the help of Sarjerao Chatge plundered the house of Nana Phadnis and his followers. The Poona Residency of the English had recorded the situation. It states: "The city of Poona was like a town taken by a storm; all night and the ensuing day there was firing, uproar, plunder and bloodshed. Chatge seized merchants, bankers, money-
lenders, in fact whomsoever he suspected of wealth, tortured them and made them disgorge their wealth; several died on the rack and several committed suicide." (P.H.C.) At the same time the quarrel between the widows of Mahadji Shinde and Daulatrao started; by which the spirit of dissatisfaction was spread in the army. Daulatrao Shinde released Nana Phadnis, and Bajirao requested him to assume administration. He had to face difficulties on all sides. Satara Raja was fighting against Peshwa; Kolhapur Raja invaded the territory of Patwardhans and killed Parashurambhau Patwardhan in September 1799. The troops of Shinde, Holkar ravaged the whole Maharashtra. Sons of Maharashtra forgot the advice of Ramdas and Shivaji. Life and property of the Maharashtrians in their very motherland became insecure. In such anarchical situation Nana Phadnis died on 13th March 1800 - "with him departed all wisdom and moderation and of the Maratha Government." Now war between Shinde and Yeshwantrao Holkar started. Bajirao was unable to avert this war. In 1801, Shinde's army was defeated by Holkar at Ujjain but followed by a defeat of Holkar in the very year at Indore. War now crossed the river Narmada and entered into the South. Shinde finally left Poona. Bajirao was now free. Instead of following a rational policy, Bajirao now adopted a policy of revenge. A number of important people like Phadke, Chitnis, Maste, Patankar, Gadre, Waishampayan, Damle, Athavale, etc. were arrested. There were many revolts. Vithoji Holkar was captured and put to
Therefore, Yeshwantrao Holkar "vowed vengeance on those whom he considered his brother's murderers." He defeated the joint army of Shinde and Peshwa in October 1801. Bajirao Peshwa fled to the British for protection. His action culminated into signing a treaty of Bassein.

Treaty of Bassein:

It was settled that the English should six battalions for service under government and that they (English) should be given a territory worth Rs. 26 lakhs in Gujrath and Marathatic as detailed in a separate memo in English language. Orders were issued to the officers of Gujrath and Karnatak to allow the English to occupy the territory specified in the memo "In 1803-04 the fort and amal of Parnera in Gujrath were included in the territory worth Rs. 26 lakh assigned to them (English) in consideration of their placing six battalions at the disposal of the government. Orders were now issued for the surrender of the fort and mahal in question." It was agreed (1803-1804) in the treaty of Bassein concluded in the preceding year with the English, that the Peshwa should hand over a territory worth Rs. 26 lakhs to the English in consideration of the latter placing six battalions at his disposal, Paragana Urpad etc. in Gujrath and Prant Sawnur in Karnatak.

278. Diary of Bajirao II.
worth in all Rs. 26 lakhs were accordingly made over to the English. A portion of this territory worth Rs. 19,16,000 was now with the consent of the English taken back by the government and in lieu thereof a portion of the territory in Bundelkhand surrendered by Ali Bahadur etc. worth Rs. 19,16,000 was given to them in saranjam. Additional territory in Bundelkhand was also given for the following reasons, worth Rs. 50,000 - (1) In consideration of the revenue realised from Paragana Urpad taken back by the government. (2) In consideration of the English keeping 1000 sawars for the service under the Peshwa. (3) In consideration of the English agreeing to pay the expenses of 5000 men entertained by the Peshwa for assisting the English till the close of the war. (4) In consideration of the expenses required for restoring peace and order in Bundelkhand. The total value of the territory surrendered was Rs. 36,16,000.

Independence lost:

With the treaty of Bassein, not only the Peshwa lost his independence but the independence of the Maratha State also. The English had struck at the roots of the Maratha
state. It was now a question of time only when the branches would fall. The Peshwa agreed that he would not employ any European into his service without the permission of the British government. Henceforward the six English battalions were going to maintain the power of the Peshwa to protect him against internal and external enemies. Obviously, English Company was going to exercise a strict control over the affairs of the Peshwa.

The same weapon, which Marathas had used to crush the powers in India from 1720 to 1795, was used by the British. Just as Marathas were collecting Chauth and Sardeshmukhi as agents of the Delhi Emperor, similarly, British now began to subdue other Maratha sardars in the name of Peshwa. Maratha sardars like Holkar, Bhosale and Shinde were not prepared to accept the treaty of Bassein. But in this situation also, they failed to effect a united stand against British. One after another, the armies of Holkar, Bhosale and Shinde were defeated by the English.

_Bajirao and Company_: 

In the beginning, cordial relationship existed between English and Bajirao. Bajirao started enjoying life in vicious pleasures and religious observances. In

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279. Diary of Bajirao II.
1805-06 'Rs. 47005 are debited as private expenses of the Peshwa without details.' 'Lady Ramabai died ... the expenses on account of charities ... came to Rs. 1,27,285.'

The food expenses at the Shukrawar Palace were formed for Rs. 60,000. In 1807-1808, the food expenses were formed for Rs. 29,000 a year. In 1807-1808 'there is a debit of 20 lakhs of rupees for the private expenses of the Peshwa.'

In the same year 'Rs. 1,79,769 are debited in the name of the Peshwa, on account of his private expenses.' When a son was born to Peshwa, Rs. 1,78,641 were spent in charity.

The British Resident at Poona only took care to see that Peshwa did not involve himself in foreign intrigues. The British Resident tactfully avoided unpleasant discussion.

**Different Interpretations**

The difference between the two was bound to arise because the interpretation of the treaty of Bassein. What Bajirao thought was, that he could establish his authority over his subordinate sardars with the help of six English battalions; while the British interpretation was totally different. They were not prepared to do what Peshwa would like them to do. In 1812, Elphinstone extended to Jagirdars of South, British guarantee of protection. This came as a surprise to Peshwa. Thus, the rift between the two started.

Gangadhar Shastri was murdered on 20th July 1815; British Resident demanded punishment to the authors and instigators of the crime. Trimbakji Dengle who was arrested and kept
in prison, escaped from prison on 12th September 1816. Peshwa prepared for war. British delivered ultimatum, insisting on the immediate surrender of Trimbakji Dengle. Elphinstone demanded the three forts - Sinhagad, Purandar and Kayagad - which were surrendered. Peshwa agreed to recall his agents from foreign courts including those of the former Maratha sardars. For maintaining additional troops, Peshwa agreed to pay Rs. 34 lakhs and abandoned all claims over territories beyond Narmada.

End of the Maratha rule:

Peshwa's army under Bapu Gokhale, burnt down the British Residency at Poona and attacked the small British force on 5th November 1817. In February 1818, Bapu Gokhale was killed in the battle of Ashti. The Raja of Satara was freed. Bajirao surrendered on 3rd June 1818. The Peshwa-ship was abolished and the territory was taken under the British administration. Thus ended the glorious tradition created by Balaji Vishwanath and Bajirao. Maharashtra, i.e. Swarajya territory became a part of British dominion in India. The prediction of common man in 1800 came to be true. On 16th April 1800, Vitthalrao Goraksha Walawalkar, agent of Portuguese authority in Goa, wrote from Poona to Goa, vividly describing the situation existing in Poona at that time. In this letter he states: 'In this Darbar there is the dearth of money. Maratha sardars behave towards each other in enimical manner. By their lootings they have
devastated this territory. Though theoretically they have accepted the sovereign power of the Peshwa, Sardars obey the orders of Peshwa if they think that they all are in their interest. Officers of this (Poona) government and Shinde are always complaining because of the non-receipt of their salaries. The British Resident at Poona spends a lot of amount and pays big nazaranas to the Peshwa. The people here are generally saying that very soon the British are going to obtain this territory.' The Peshwa and the sardars of the Maratha state failed to visualise what common man in Poona had visualised. The political prediction of the common man came to be true. A letter written by an unknown author in February 1802 states that the 'State is encircled from all sides by English. English at Surat entered the territory of Gaikwad of Baroda on the ground of rendering help and now everywhere in India they have entered. Let us see what will happen in future.' Future was already sealed. With the treaty of Bassein in 1802 and war in 1818 with English Maratha rule came to an end.