

**Chapter :7**

**Great**

**Personalities**

**Lived And**

**Visited Baroda**

## 7:1 Swami Vivekananda At Baroda



Swami Vivekanand has unending relation with Baroda. Before attending the religious conference at Chicago in 1892, he travelled throughout India. That time, he visited Gujarat, also and during the period he stayed at Baroda, for three days. Regarding his stay at Baroda, he has written in his autobiography about Baroda and Maharaj Sayajirao.

From Nadiad, Swamiji came finally to Baroda before leaving Gujarat for Bombay, with a letter of introduction from Diwanji Saheb addressed to his intimate friend Shri Manibhai J. Diwan of Baroda, who was a man of poety, and noble character. In 1884-85 he had received the title of Diwan Bahadur from Government of India along with a medal and gift of Rs. 75,000 while he was the Diwan of Kutch. In Kutch he introduced great and beneficial reform in all departments – collection of revenue, education, sanitation etc.

At Baroda Diwan Shri Manibhai worked hard and there was spectacular progress in the field of education. Swamiji spent some time with him in discussing about the education system of the State. Swamiji wrote from Baroda on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1892 to Diwanji Saheb of Junagadh "I had not the least difficulty in reaching your house from the station of Nadiad. And your brothers, they are what they should be, your brothers. May the Lord shower his choicest blessings on your family. I have never found such a glorious one in all my travels. Your friend Mr. Manibhai has provided every comfort for me as to his company, I have only seen him twice, once for a minute, the other time for 10 minutes at the most when he talked about the system of education here. Of course, I have seen the library and the pictures by Ravi Varma and that is about all seeable here. So I am going off this evening to Bombay."

Curiously enough, there is no mention in the above Swamiji's meeting with Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad, Swamiji had told Prince Martand Varma at Trivendrum that "of all the ruling princes he had met, he had been most impressed with the capacity, patriotism, energy and foresight of H.H. the Gaekwad of Baroda, " Swamiji was also perhaps impressed with the Maharani Of Gaekwad because he wrote on 17-2-1901 to Miss Macleod from Belur Math "I hope you will go to Baroda and see Maharani". Maharaja was not in Baroda at the time of visit of Swamiji. He had gone to place called Lonavali (Lonavala?) In all probability Swamiji met him while he was in Mahabaleshwar or Pune. After his return from the West, Swamiji wanted to visit Baroda and meet the Maharaja.<sup>[1]</sup>

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[1] Swami Vivekanad At baroda/Swami Nikhileswaranda/published by-Ramkrishna mission/1<sup>st</sup> edition/2008/Page no.37

## 7:2 Shri Aurobindo Ghosh



### Tagore Worshiped This Revolutionary Yogi

Rabindranath Tagore dedicated one of his best poems as homage to Sri Aurobindo in 1907. The poem says “Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee”. If Tagore’s place in Indo-Anglican poetry is that of a poet professing Bhakti Yoga, Sri Aurobindo stands out as a poet of Jnana (knowledge) Yoga. He was one of the greatest philosophers and nationalists of the country.

Sri Aurobindo (Aurobindo Ghosh) was born in Calcutta on 15 August, 1872. His father, Krishadhan Ghosh (1845-1893), came from the well-known Ghosh family of Konnagar of Hooghly, West Bengal. Aurobindo’s maternal grandfather was Rajnarayan Bose, a pioneer of Indian nationalism.

At the age of seven, Aurobindo was sent to London for studies. However, the young Aurobindo had nurtured himself to become a true nationalist. When in London, Aurobindo had formed a secret society, ‘Lotus and Dagger’, that aspired to work towards winning India’s

Independence. He regularly spoke at the Indian Majlis at Cambridge University against the British rule in India. James Cotton introduced Sri Aurobindo to Sayajirao in 1892 when the maharaja was on a visit to London. Sayajirao recruited him in the survey and settlements department, and later Aurobindo even wrote speeches for the king.

Aurobindo started teaching French at the Baroda Collage and was made the vice-principal. Aurobindo lived in several houses during his stay in the city till he resigned from the services of the Baroda state, in 1906. The most prominent of these bungalows in Baroda and the only one surviving now is the Aurobindo Ashram near Lakdi Pul in Dandia Bazaar that was declared a national memorial in 1972.<sup>[1]</sup>

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[1] Baroda-Know your roots/by-times of india/Times of India/2012/page no.55

### 7:3 Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar



#### The Making of the Dalit Icon

Sayajirao Gaekwad III played a significant role in the making of Bharat Ratna Dr B R Ambedkar or Babasaheb. Being the chairman of our country's constitution drafting committee, Ambedkar became one of the first dalits to obtain collage education in India. There was a time when Ambedkar, born in the British – founded town of Mhow in 1891, was prevented from learning Sanskrit as a child.

This very lad eventually earned law degrees and multiple doctorates for his study and research in law, economics and political science from the Columbia University and the London School of Economics. He was jurist, political leader, philosopher, anthropologist, historian, orator, economist and editor.

Sayajirao, a strong campaigner against untouchability, wanted Ambedkar to be a towering example for society. Ambedkar had joined

the Elphinstone Collage in Bombay in 1908. It was in 1910 that one of his mentors, Krishnaji Keluskar, met Sayajirao and the maharaja granted a monthly scholarship of Rs 25 to Ambedkar for his studies.

Ambedkar finished college in 1912 and took up a job in January 1913 in the Baroda state service as a lieutenant. But as fate would have it, his father took seriously ill and he had to leave for Bombay within days of taking up the job. His father passed away in February and in the same year, Sayajirao announced a scholarship for those wanting to study at the Columbia University.

Ambedkar was granted a scholarship of 11.5 pounds per month in June. He obtained an MA with economics as the principal subject from the Columbia University in 1915. In 1916, Ambedkar left for further studies at the LSE. Even before his scholarship expired, he was appointed the military secretary to the maharaja with a view to groom him as the finance minister. Ambedkar returned to the city in September 1917 as his scholarship tenure ended and he joined the maharaja's service. But after a brief stay in the city, till November 1917, he left for Bombay to campaign on a larger platform.<sup>[1]</sup>

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[1] Baroda-Know your roots/by-times of india/Times of India/2012/page no.54

## 7:4 Hansa Mehta



### Mother of Knowledge

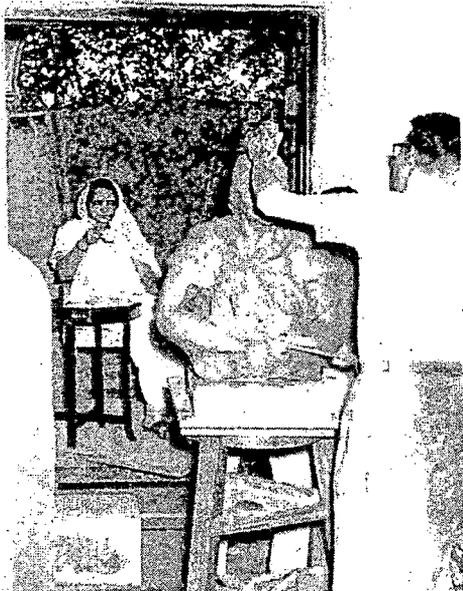
The idea of setting up a world - Class University in Baroda had caught the imagination of Baroda's visionary ruler Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III. His Grandson Pratapsinhrao Gaekwad ensured that his grandfather's dream was realized. But if the royalty of Baroda patronized this idea, it was Hansa Mehta who groomed MS University when it was taking baby steps.

As the founder and vice-chancellor of MSU from 1949 to 1958, Mehta ensured that this newly established university soon became one of the best institutions in the country. In 1958, she became a member of the working committee of UNESCO. Her love for literature helped her author over 20 books. Recognizing her contribution, she was awarded Padma Bhushan in 1958.

Born on July 3, 1897, to a progressive Nagar family of Surat, Hansa Mehta had early contact with Sayajirao as her father Manubhai Mehta was serving as the diwan of the Baroda state. After graduating in philosophy from Baroda Collage in 1918, she came into close contact with Sarojini Naidu and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, with whom she later joined the national movement.

In 1924, she married Dr Jivraj Mehta, who later became Gujarat's first chief minister. Her active association with the Independence struggle started with the agitation against the Simon Commission. She also participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement during which she joined women's pickets against shops selling liquor and foreign goods.

As she successfully managed to spread the message of freedom among women in Gujarat, she was jailed in 1930 and 1932. Her unusual brilliance and valuable experience proved to be a great asset when she served as a member of Bombay Legislative Council in 1931 – she was the first woman to be elected to the council.



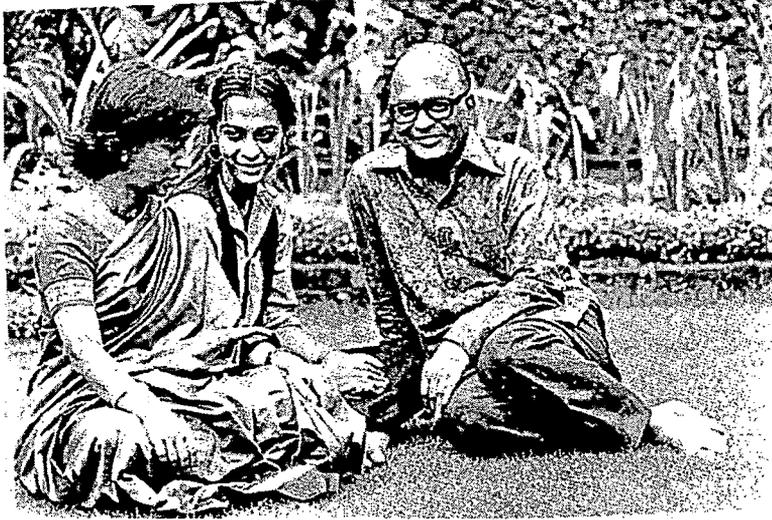
Hansa Mehta's bust being molded by Sankho Chaudhuri, one of the first teachers at fine arts faculty

Hansa Maheta's bust being molded by sankho chudhuri, one of the first Teachers at fine arts faculty in Baroda.<sup>[1]</sup>

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[1] Baroda-Know your roots/by-times of india/Times of India/2012/page no.60

## 7:5 Dr. Indraprasad Gordhanbhai Patel



**Dr.I.G.Patel with his wife and daughter**

### City's Gift to Indian Economy

When Dr Indraprasad Gordhanbhai Patel, popularly as 'IG' among his friends, breathed his last in July 2005, many wondered why this economist had preferred to stay in a small city like Baroda. But such was Dr Patel's affection for the city that although his fame grew as an economics expert, he was strongly rooted in Baroda and MS University, his alma mater

Born on November 11, 1924, in Baroda, Dr Patel was the 14<sup>th</sup> governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) - Between December 1977 and September 1982. He served in ministry of finance and also as deputy administrator at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). After retiring from RBI, Dr Patel became the director of the London School of Economics where he served between 1984 and 1990. In fact, he was the first Asian to hold the post. This Padma Vibhushan

recipient continued to be on the board of several finance and educational institutes till he passed away at the age of 80.

It was during his tenure as the RBI governor that the country witnessed the demonetization of high denomination notes and 'gold auctions'. Always a pragmatist, he drafted the legislation by which former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi nationalized the Indian banking system, even though he did not agree with the policy. His charm and ability stood him in good stead when he argued India's case for foreign aid in 1960s, even though he didn't like the idea.

During his tenure, six private banks were nationalized and targets for priority-sector lending introduced. He played an active role in availing of the IMF's Extended Fund Facility in 1981 due to balance of payment s difficulties. This represented the largest arrangement of assistance in IMF's history at the time.<sup>[1]</sup>

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[1] Baroda-Know your roots/by-times of india/Times of India/2012/page no.58