

CHAPTER - V

VARIOUS REFORMS

During the reign of Shahu I his Capital Satara was called Shahu Nagar and this city later attained its greatest expansion and prosperity. The old Rang-Mahal or Adalat Wada and other specious houses of the Sardars were built during the days of Shahu I.<sup>1</sup> French Missionary Tieflenthaler who visited Satara in 1750 described Satara as a great city, the capital of the Maratha Chief.<sup>2</sup> After the death of Shahu I the expansion and growth of Satara city was stopped and Poona started growing rapidly. After Shahu I the Peshwas became the supreme rulers of the Maratha Empire and Satara Chhatrapati became a nominal head.

#### Development of Satara :

In 1818 Mountstuart Elphinstone created Satara Raj and installed Raja Pratapsinh on its throne. During the reign of Raja Pratapsinh ( 1818-1839 ) Satara city became a modern urban centre. Raja Pratapsinh himself lived in the city and built various places. Under his administration the city flourished and expanded in its dimensions.<sup>3</sup> Pratapsinh founded five new Peths in Satara city. Bhawani, Sadashiv, Durga, Malhar and Pratapganj were those peths.

#### 1) Bhavani Peth :

It was established in 1822. This Peth was located near the palace. An area of this peth measured thirty four

acres and it was inhabited mostly by the traders and shop-keepers. The water supply for that Peth was made from nineteen wells, two reservoirs and one fountain. This was the busist of all the Peths of Satara city.

2) Sadashiv Peth :

Sadashiv Peth was also established by the Raja in 1822. This Peth had an area of ten acres. It was populated mostly by Brahmins and Muslims. The water supply for this Peth was made from fourteen wells and a reservoir.

3) Durga Peth :

It was founded in 1830. It is located south-north of the road to the east of the royal palace. It had an area of two acres. It was the most thickly populated in the town.

4) Malhar Peth :

It was also founded in 1830. It is situated north-south on the road running through Guruwar Peth towards the east. The Malhar Peth had an area of ten acres and was populated mostly by oil-pressers or Telis. The water supply for this Peth was made from four wells, one tank and two cisterns.

5) Pratapganj Peth :

It was founded in 1833-34. The area of a new Peth was decided in the beginning on the side of the Sadashiv Peth. It was populated mostly by Shetes and Mahajans. In Bhavani

Peth a market would be held on Friday. On Wednesday the market would be held in Durga Peth. On Sunday the market would be held in Malhar Peth. Thus Pratapsinh founded five new Pethas in Satara which helped immensely in its expansion and urbanization.<sup>4</sup>

#### Construction of Roads :

Pratapsinh during his reign constructed many new roads in Satara state and Satara city under the direction of James Grant and John Briggs. In 1822 Grant told the Raja to construct roads from Satara to Pandharpur, Satara to Karad and Satara to Chiplun. In Satara city roads running from east to west and from south to north were constructed by the Raja. The most important road was the palace street. The Raja built this street opposite his palace nearly  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile in length and sixty feet in width. The construction cost of that road was Rs.10760-6 annas and two paise.<sup>5</sup> This broad road runs east to west. A number of poor people from the hills and Khoras (Valleys) in the neighbourhood were employed on the construction work of roads. Besides a number of prisoners were also compelled to work on projects of road construction and repairs.

#### Water Supply Scheme :

Pratapsinh was a civilized Maratha King. He solved the problem of water supply to the Satara city. He built new tanks and also got the old tanks repaired. He built a new tank at the Yavteshwar hill and brought water from there to the town.

The construction of this tank cost about one lakh of rupees.<sup>6</sup> Like Yavteshwar, Raja built another tank at Mahardara, from which water was brought to the city through Khapari Nals (aqueducts). The construction cost of this tank reached upto one lakh of rupees. This tank was built in 1829. Pratapsinh built public Haud in Budhwar Peth. He also constructed Panchapala Haud, Guruwar Haud and Chhatricha Haud. He got the wells dug in the new peth.

Raja Pratapsinh during his reign endeavoured to make Satara a beautiful city by constructing new buildings, roads, gardens etc. He built his New Palace in 1826. The construction cost of this palace was Rs.5,50,000/-. He built the famous Jalmandir also in 1826.

Raja Pratapsinh spent much money on building new temples and also in repairing the old ones. He repaired the Mangalai temple on the top of Satara fort. It cost about Rs.5,000/-. He spent Rs.40,000/- for the construction of a temple at Pratapgad. He spent Rs.20,000/- for building a shrine of Ramdas Swami at Sajjangad.<sup>7</sup>

#### Development of Mahabaleshwar :

Raja Pratapsinh strived to develop Mahabaleshwar into a beautiful hill station. He constructed a road from Satara via Medha and Kelghar Ghaut upto Mahabaleshwar and the same was extended upto Mahad. Sir John Malcom the Governor of Bombay Presidency paid a first visit to Mahabaleshwar in May 1828.

He succeeded Elphinstone on the 1st November 1827. Sir John Malcolm the Governor of Bombay, at the request of Raja Pratapsinh paid a visit to Satara in November 1828. In memory of Malcolm's visit to Satara, Raja established the Malcolm Peth at Mahabaleshwar. The Raja, therefore, immediately issued the following proclamation announcing the foundation of Malcolm Peth and inviting traders and merchants to open their shops there.

"Be it known to all the subjects of His Highness Shrimant Maharaj Rajeshri Chhatrapati. There is near Jaoli a mountain on the east of which is the Tai Ghat, on the west near Pratapgad is the Radtondi Ghat, and Coorlsy Ghat in the south, on the north and in one corner of this mountains is Mahabaleshwar and the sources of the holy Krishna. On the summit near this place is a sport, called Nahar ( or wilderness), the air of which is remarkably branching during the hot weather in consequence of which His Excellency Sir John Malcolm and English gentlemen have built there houses for themselves and barracks for the soldiers. We likewise intend building on that spot. In order that all necessaries may be at hand, traders should settle on this mountain and from a pettah there, which certainly will flourish, as trade will be drawn into this channel in consequences of a road which it is our desire to make over the Paur Ghat.

Herethen there shall be a Pettah, and it shall be called 'Malcolm Peith', and it shall be protected and shall flourish."<sup>8</sup>

On the 15th May 1829 Mahabaleshwar was declared to be a hill station. Governor Sir John Malcolm made his own residence there and enjoyed the hot season on the hills. Raja Pratapsinh spent a lot of money on repairs of other important houses and offices. He spent Rs.8,000/- for the repairs of Rangmahal and Rs.7,000/- for the repairs of an old palace and the garden on Satara fort.<sup>9</sup> He built some large public offices and a fine palace and pleasure gardens.

#### Educational Reforms :

Raja Pratapsinh carried out many socio-cultural reforms. He spent a lot of money on social and cultural reforms. Raja Pratapsinh spent his early life as a prisoner of the Peshwas. Peshwa Bajirao II had made no arrangement for his proper education. But after 1818 the British rulers introduced new system of education in Maharashtra. This British system of education produced powerful impact on Raja's personal life and so he made new arrangements in education field.

James Grant advised Pratapsinh to maintain a 'Rojnishi' (Diary) of the daily events. He told him to write down the events of the day in a note-book at the end of the day and keep it separately. Raja wrote his Rojnishi from 1818 to 1838.<sup>10</sup> Under the supervision of Grant Raja Pratapsinh



the art of writing and acquired general knowledge. Elphinstone the then Governor of Bombay Presidency visited Satara in 1826. He wrote about the Raja,

"....is the most civilized Maratha I ever met with has his country in excellent order and everything to his roads and aqueducts in a style that would do credit to a European. I was more struck with his private sitting room than anything I saw at Satara. It contains a single table covered with green velvet, at which the descendant of Shivaji sits in a chair, and writes letters, as well as a journal of his transactions, with his own hand. I do not know what his ancestors would think of so peaceful a descendant." 11

Pratapsinh took active part in educational activities. About Pratapsinh's educational activities John Briggs wrote,

".... Raja has long established a private school in a palace wherein are fifteen of his own relations..."<sup>12</sup>

A. Robertson who succeeded John Briggs as the British resident at Satara stated that the Raja maintained a well regulated school at Satara. Pratapsinh donated an amount of Rs.17,000/- to the Elphinstone College.<sup>13</sup> Grant Duff in his letter to the Raja in 1828 wrote

" I was very happy, to see your name at the head of so excellent and proper an address as that presented



to M.Elphinstone. The institution of a college for the purposes specified confers an honour on the Native Gentlemen of India, which if rightly followed up will last for ever. Your Highness in consequence of this liberal act, has been appointed a member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, which no doubt has been intimated to you...." 14

Pratapsinh Maharaj noted that education would help the Maratha students in every branch of the state administration and would also enable them enter the British administration of India. At Satara there were about 31 private schools and 22 government schools. Of the 31 private schools there were seven schools of Rigveda, two of Yejurveda, three of Puranas, on the Vaidyk, fifteen of modi writing and three of Aapas-tamba. Twentytwo government schools included two schools of Rigveda, two of Astrology, two of Yadnik, three of Vaidyk, one of modi writing, two of Persian, one of Tirandajee (Military school), one of Talim, two of music and one of horse riding.<sup>15</sup>

During Pratapsinh's times Wai, Pandharpur, Karad, Mahuli were the main centres of learning in Satara state. At Satara there were other private schools conducted by the christian missionaries. The American mission school was started in 1834 by Mr.Graves. From 1834 to 1849 every year the school was held during the fair season at Mahabaleshwar

and during the rainy season at Satara.<sup>16</sup> Pratapsinh personally taught reading, writing to his daughter Gojrabai and to his Wives.<sup>17</sup> In his Rojnishi it is mentioned that nine hundred books of Science and arts were purchased by Pratapsinh from the outside territory for this school. The 'Book Shala Padhdhati' prescribing the use of books to be made in school was introduced by him in this school.<sup>18</sup>

Pratapsinh encouraged scholars to write books on various subjects and thus got numerous books written by the scholars. Raja Pratapsinh thus got several book written with the view of encouraging the spread of liberal education in his state. In 1827, 'Sabha Nitte' was published. A book 'Aay-Vyay Prakaran' was published in the same year. That book is related to diplomacy. 'Sevek Bodhini' was also written under the supervision of the Raja. Aba Parasnis wrote 'Siddhanta Vijay'. In 1826 Ramchandra Daivadnya wrote 'Chhando-Manjiree' relating to astronomy. 'Ras-Tarangeenee' and 'Karma Kalpadrum' were also written during this period. For the purpose of getting those books printed the Raja set up a printing press at Satara.<sup>19</sup> Pratapsinh loved education and recognised its importance.

#### Social Reforms :

In the first half of the nineteenth century society was greatly influenced by religion. All the social activities were connected with and controlled by religion. The custom of Sati was prevalent in Satara state also as elsewhere in

India. At Wai, Pandharpur, Karad and Mahuli in Satara state this practice was quite common. But in 1821, Pratapsinh issued an order that a pregnant woman should not be allowed to follow the practice of Sati. This shows that Pratapsinh was such a ruler who possessed progressive ideas of social change. He courageously acted to do away with the cruel and inhuman practice of Sati in his state even when Governor General William Bentinck had not yet taken any step in that direction. Raja Pratapsinh granted to a widow a small pension with the view of dissuading her from burning herself. However the institution of slavery prevailed in Satara state even under Raja Pratapsinh.<sup>20</sup>

Pratapsinh was a devout man. He used to perform religious rites daily. He used to visit the holy places like Tuljapur, Jejuri, Nasik and Pratapgad etc.

#### Gramanya Disputes :

Pratapsinh's period of office from 1808 to 1839 was of profound importance. One of the main feature of this period was a bitter and long drawn out dispute between the elite Maratha families of Satara led by Pratapsinh and the Chitpavan Brahmans of Western Maharashtra. The Gramanya disputes took place between 1820 to 1838 in Satara state. Gramanya is a crystalization of conflicts between the two castes or individuals belonging to the same caste or caste groups about the observance of certain religious rites and

some social practices. Gramanya was a conflict between two social groups and it was also, sometimes between two Jati-Sabhas or caste-councils.

At about 1826 the issue of Gramanya took place between the Brahmans and the Prabhus. The Prabhus performed their religious rites according to the vedic mantras. According to the vedic tradition, the Kshatriyas had three rights- to perform sacrifice, to give a charity and the study of vedas. The Prabhus claimed themselves to be the Kshatriyas and therefore entitled to perform the religious rites. But the Brahmans took objection stating that the Prabhus were not the true Kshatriyas and hence they did not have the right to perform the religious rites. Between 1820 and 1828 the Brahman party led by Balajipant Natu, Chintamanrao Patwardhan and Nilkantshastri Thatte, campaigned to limit the authority for vedic ritual to the Brahmans alone.<sup>21</sup>

The Secretary to the Raja of Satara, Balwantrao<sup>A</sup> Chitnis requested the Shankaracharya of Sankeshwar Math (monastery), to testify whether the Prabhus belonged to the Kshatriya varna or not. But the Shankaracharya did not express any opinion categorically on that issue.<sup>22</sup> Chintamanrao Patwardhan the chief of Sangli and Balajipant Natu persuaded Shankaracharya to mention the Prabhus and Sonars as — Shudras. This issue was again discussed at the conference held at Belbag in Pune.<sup>23</sup> Raghawacharya Gajendragadkar a well known and learned Pandit expressed the view that the

Prabhus were Kshatriyas. But this opinion was opposed by another expert pandit Nilkantshastri Thatte : Nilkanthshastri Thatte, leader of the Hindu orthodox in Pune, was one of the eminent Brahmin religious scholars who was given a salary by the Bombay government, and later employed to advise on judicial procedures in Satara.<sup>24</sup> This way the Brahmans were divided between two groups. Consequently the Prabhus were threatened that they would be excommunicated by other Brahmans if they performed the religious rites according to the vedic mantra.<sup>25</sup> The dispute took a worse turn. Raja Pratapsinh told both the groups of the Brahmans and the Prabhus that he would not interfere in the caste matter.<sup>26</sup>

Balwantrao Chitnis made a plea to the Government of East India Company. But the British Government also refused to interfere in such matters. Meanwhile the Prabhus called a conference and decided to perform Adhyapan, Yajan and Prati-grah on their own. The copies were sent to all the villages.<sup>27</sup>

Later on new 'Gramanya' between the Brahmans and the Marathas evolved out of the Prabhu 'Gramanya' of 1826. The Brahmans were not ready even to accept the Chhatrapati of Satara and other Maratha families as the Kshatriyas. While discussing the nature of the gramanya between the Brahmans and the Marathas, British scholar Dr. Rosalind O'Hanlon in her book 'Caste, Conflict and Ideology' wrote,

" The Brahman party denied that there were any true Kshatriyas left in this, the Kaliyug, or the most

corrupt age of Hindu Society. They based their case on two arguments first, the Hindu Puranas had told how Parashuram, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu, had completely exterminated the whole of Kshatriya varna; Second most of the elite Maratha families had manifestly lapsed from the religious rituals, social practices, and the strict geneological purity that were proper to true Kshatriyas. Indeed, many of their habits resembled those of Muslims rather than twice-born Hindus. The Brahman party asserted as a consequence that there were no true intermediate varnas left in Hindu society between those of Brahman and Shudra. In the present age, only Brahmans, out of all the Hindus, were entitled to hear and use vedic scriptures."<sup>28</sup>

The orthodox Brahmans held the view that the present Marathas were Kunbis and not the Kshatriyas.

The Jagirdars of Satara also addressed in their letters to Raja Pratapsinh as Chhatrapati and not as Kshatriya. But we do not come across any such reference in the Rojnishi of Pratapsinh. It is just possible that Chintamanrao Patwardhan of Sangli did not address his as Chhatrapati of Kshatriya Kulwantansa.<sup>29</sup> Right from the beginning Brahmans refused to perform religious rites of Pratapsinh and his family according to the vedic mantras.

Pratapsinh sent his men to Tanjaver, Mysore, Udaipur, Nagpur to see whether the Kshatriyas of those territories were observing their religious rites according to the vedic mantras and also to collect authoritative sacred text books to enable Kshatriyas of Satara to perform their religious rites accordingly.<sup>30</sup> The men who were sent to different parts, informed Pratapsinh that the Rajas in those regions performed their religious rites according to the vedic mantras. Thakurdas Baba was among those men, who copied the sacred books and the relevant sections.<sup>31</sup>

On 27th July 1828, Pratapsinh called a conference of learned Pandits in the Sanskrit school at Satara to ascertain whether the Marathas were Kshatriyas or not.<sup>32</sup> The conference accepted the existence of Kshatriyas and conceded in 1830 the twenty-four points regarding the issue involved in the debate. Amongst the main points of the debate described by Dongare in his book 'The Lineage of Bhosale family'. The following are the most striking -

1) Even though Parashuram tried twenty one times to remove all Kshatriyas from the earth, still they have never been wiped out.

2) The Kshatriyas that Parashuram failed to kill have never forsaken their vedic karma.

3) It is a fabrication to say that because all male Kshatriyas were wiped out at the time of Parashuram, their

women resorted to Brahmans to beget children, thus breaking down the caste.

4) There cannot be a shortage of Kshatriyas today because two kings had sprung from the soma and Suraya lines and found refuge in Badrikashram.

5) In the Kaliyug, caste is not decided by usage alone.

6) There is no objection to Kshatriyas who eat meat performing Vedic rituals.

7) Even though, in this Yuga, Kshatriyas have eaten the food of Shudras, there is no difficulty regarding vedic ritual.

8) Even though the proper rites are omitted in some Kshatriya households, still their vedic Karma is unimpaired. —

9) It is not the case that the king alone, on account of the vedic mantras at his coronation, has right to vedic ritual, all Kshatriyas have these rights.

10) The house of Satara, Tanjore, Nagpur and Karvir have the same common origin, and their rites are drawn from the Regveda.

11) Kshatriyas beyond the Narmada river have rites from the Yajurveda. This is the case in Udepur. The Raja of Satara should therefore adopt the same rites for himself.



12) Even though Kshatriyas are accustomed to eating from a single dish amongst their own caste fellows, still does not disqualify them from vedic rituals.

13) Even though the surnames of Kshatriyas and Shudras are identical, & still there are ways of telling them apart.<sup>33</sup> In this conference Vitthal Sakharam Parasnis pleaded the side of the Kshatriyas and Raghavacharya Gajendragadkar pleaded the side of the Brahmans. Vitthal Sakharam Parasnis later published a book 'Siddhant Vijay' and included these 24 points in it and it was sent to Udaipur and Karnatak for approval.<sup>34</sup>

The Brahmans even after the conference of the learned pandits, refused to perform religious rights according to the Vedic mantras in the Royal Palace of Raja Pratapsinh. Pratapsinh was coronated in 1838 with help of the newly prepared book. But there was great difficulty in ascertaining the exact form of the words and ceremonies that had been used for Shivaji, and Pratapsinh had to appoint a team of learned Shastries to prepare a ceremony for him, which was carried out in great state in the same year.<sup>35</sup>

'Dharma Nirnuya' and 'Shodas Sanskar' these two books containing the behavioural pattern of Kshatriyas were prepared. Pratapsinh ordered that these books should be printed and the copies be distributed among the Kshatriyas and also asked them to perform their rituals according to those books, and those who were not ready to follow them were to be

fined.<sup>36</sup> Pratapsinh considered Satara as the centre of the Kshatriya caste just as Varanasi was regarded as the centre of the Brahmans. These developed bitterness and hatred between the Marathas and the Brahmans. Pratapsinh never liked the Chitpavan Brahmans. Perhaps the historical background might have prompted Pratapsinh to adopt the policy for the upliftment of his own caste people.

The third conflict arose between the Brahmans and the Sonars. The Brahmans opposed them and asked them not to perform their rituals according to the vedic mantras. At Wai, Mahuli and Pandharpur the Brahmans were not only ready to accept their claims as the Kshatriyas but also resorted to force occasionally.<sup>37</sup> Jagannath Shankar Sheth (1803-1865) came to Wai in 1826 for performing the tonsuring rite. But the Brahmans of Wai took strong objection to him and did not allow to perform it. On an appeal from Jagannath Shankar Sheth to the Raja Pratapsinh provided as escort to him to go Wai and perform the rites on the place which was assigned to the Sonar community.<sup>38</sup>

Such conflicts took place in the times of Shivaji also. The Brahmans objected that Shivaji was not a Kshatriya. The situation was changed when the British took power from the Peshwas. The Brahmans along with their political power, lost their higher social status as well. This problem of Gramanya may be perhaps the beginning of non-Brahman movement in Maharashtra in last 19th century and the early 20th century.

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