

Nizam and Shambhaji Versus Baji Rao

Subhodh Kumar

Deptt. Of History

Veer Kunwar Singh University, Ara, Bihar, India

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Bajirao was thinking of attacking Shambhaji and his territories, Shambhaji entered into a secret agreement with the Nizam – ul- Mulk. The central idea of the agreement was that with the help of Nizam, Shambhaji would make an attempt to throw Sahu away from the throne and become the Chhatrapati himself. The result of this agreement was that Nizam attacked Poona in 1727. We have already discussed that BajiRao had compelled the Nizam to acknowledge the power the position of Sahu after he had defeated the Nizam at Palkhed. And Sabu was immensely pleased with this arrangement of PeshwaBajiRao. Now, after the developments stated above had taken place, bajiRao made an attempt to neutralise the Nizam's power and further, BajiRao actually attacked Shambhaji. In the battle that ensued between Shambhaji and BajiRao, Shambhaji was defeated and captured. No harm was done to Shambhaji's person but was compelled to acknowledge the overlord-ship of Sahu. This achievement of BajiRao of 1731 was another bright feather to his cap. The result was that Sahu's Position as Chhatrapati was established after . His position became unchallenged. Automatically, the Nizam-ul-Mulk was isolated. Nizam and other powers of the Deccan were all placed in such a position that they could not rise their head against the Chhatrapati. This was a very significant contribution to the glory of the Marathas and dignity of his master Chhatrapati Sahu.¹

In spite of the urging of BajiRao, Sahu was against going to war with Nizam. This position persisted from 1720 to 1728. Not only that Sahu did not ask BajiRao to declare war upon Nizam during the period stated above but he also refrained from doing anything to displease the Nizam throughout that he should be friendly with the Nizam as long as he did not have a settlement with his rival, Shambhaji. He asked his Peshwa to follow this because he was apprehensive of the designs of Shambhaji. But this is not the only basis on which Sahu's policy was laid. In fact, scholars, who have written on Maratha history, are severely divided as to the basis of this policy by BajiRao under king Sahu as some historians have the opinion that Shambhaji was a running sore to Sahu upto 1730. Shambhaji was the person because of whom the rights of Sahu as Chhatrapati were evaded and considerable time elapsed and still Sahu did not get recognition by the Deccan Viceroy of the Mughal Emperor. This was because these viceroys either said they should accept the rights of Shambhaji as Chhatrapati or they said that Shambhaji and Sahu should settle between themselves as to who was the real successor of Shivaji's Kingdom. And then he thought that Nizam-ul-Mulk might openly take sides with Shambhaji and attack Sahu. The qualities of Nizam as a diplomat and his that resourcefulness were very well known to Sahu and his Peshwa, BajiRao. The Nizam actually attacked Poona, the stronghold of Sahu in 1727. Under these circumstances BajiRao also agreed with his master that they should follow a friendly policy with the Nizam. Thus these historians hold the strength of Nizam and the fear of his taking Shambhaji's side coloured the policy a lament one of BajiRao and Sahu.

Opinions of historians – However, there are some other historians who firmly believe that the reasons were somewhat different than those stated above. They believe that Sahu was slightly unsure of BajiRao's against the Nizam. It was very clear that if BajiRao was defeated or captured by Nizam, Sahu would be nowhere , He would be completely ruined. These fears of Sahu were However, unfounded and were not borne out by fact. At the battle of Palkhed the strategy of BajiRao completely checkmated the designs of the Nizam and he was entrapped by BajiRao. This was in spite of Nizam's being powerful, experienced tact ful and resourceful. This policy of BajiRao was followed in subsequent wars against Nizam also. And thus Nizam was completely subducd. He had to acknowledge the position of Sahu and to accept his right to levy Chauth and Sardeshmukhi. This was all due to BajiRao. They also thought that as Sahu's policy was timid and submissive by temperament so he also did not want to endanger his position and rights as far as possible. He thought that the safest course would be to follow a friendly policy with Nizam. After 1731, when shambhaji was defeated and was made to accept the over lordship of Sahu there was nothing to fear from Nizam or from anybody else.²

There are still other historians who give their own arguments regarding why Sahu was followed a friendly policy towards Nizam-ul-Mulk. Sardesai holds that Sahu was responsible for this weak and mild policy of the Marathas towards the Nizam. There are others like Dighe who hold that BajiRao was responsible for this

weak policy. There is no doubt that Sahu was mild and courteous by nature. Moreover, He was religious minded and did not want to act against those who had benefited him in any way. When Balaji Vishwanth had gone Delhi, at that stage Nizam had given him his support to enhance his claims and arguments. Since then Sahu was grateful to Nizam-ul-Mulk. He could not easily forget his debt to the Nizam. In fact. He did not want to act against anyone wanted to be friendly with everyone for one reason or the other. He did not want to act against the Mughals, against Shambhaji and against the Nizam for different reasons, of course. Historians say that the Marathas had a soft corner for Nizam and therefore, also he had to follow an accommodative policy. Ultimately when Nizam was defeated and finally when Shambhaji was also defeated and acknowledged Sahu as the Chhatrapati the whole unpleasant episode came to an end.³

The problems that confronted the young Peshwa were of very difficult nature and the legacy of his father's policy. The feudatory states who were acting independently posed a great problem. The Nizam challenged the Maratha position and their right to collect chauth and sardeshmukhi from the six Mughal subahs of the Deccan, parts of the Swaraj territory were yet in the hands of the Mughal officers. Shambhuji of Kohlapur, a branch of Shivaji's family refused to recognize the superior position of Shahu and was actually in collusion with the Nizam who posed a serious challenge to the very existence of the Maratha State. To add to these problems was the problem of solution of the Maratha claims on Gujarat and Malwa not yet admitted by the Mughal court. With boldness and imagination Baji Rao addressed himself to the task and ultimately succeeded in solving the impending problems. He perceived that the Mughal strike at trunk of the withering tree. The branches will fall of themselves. Thus should be Maratha flag fly from the Krishna to the Indus" Shahu having approved of his plan, Baji Rao launched upon a policy of expansion beyond the Narmada with a view to striking at the centre of imperial power. To evoke the support of the Hindu chiefs and rulers Baji Rao preached the ideal of a Hindu Empire which he called Hindupadpadshahi.

References :-

- [1]. Sardesai : Ibid :p. 203-204
- [2]. Ibidia
- [3]. S.N. Administrative System of the Marthas, p. 161-170

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