CHAPTER 2 *
EXPANSION OF MARATHA POWER
(1707-1720)

DEATH OF AURANGZEB AND AFTER.

The Death of Aurangzeb in February 1707 ushered a new era in the history of the Deccan. The armies of the Great Moghal were everywhere on the retreat and falling back towards Hindustan from where they had been led forward to the conquest of the Deccan twenty-five years ago. The change was writ large for any discerning person to read. A few months before the Emperor's death the shrewd Manucci had noted King Aurangzeb repents of having entangled himself in the war with the Marathas, for it has not succeeded as he had hoped. The Marathas move about with their armies and pillage the empire in all directions. Every day they display their power and audacity to a greater extent in every part of the empire. In this war over a hundred thousand souls have died yearly, and of animals, horses, pack oxen, camels over three hundred thousand. The great nobles are in distress, their families are begging. ¹

Khafi Khan wrote, ¹ for all the struggles and schemes the campaigns and sieges of this prince the power of the Marathas increased day by day. By hard fighting, by the expenditure of vast treasures accumulated by Sah Jahan and by the sacrifice of many thousands of men, he had penetrated into their country, had subdued their lofty forts, and had driven them from house and home; still the daring of the Marathas increased, and they penetrated into the old territories of the imperial throne, plundering and destroying wherever they went. In imitation of the Emperor, who with his enterprising armies was staying in these distant mountains, the Maratha Commanders cast the anchor of permanence wherever they penetrated and having appointed Kamavisdars (Revenue Collectors) they passed the years and months to their satisfaction with their wives and children, tents and elephants. Their daring went beyond all bounds; they divided all districts among themselves, and in the imperial fashion they appointed their Subhedars, Kamavisdars and Rahdars, They attack

and destroy the country as far as the borders of Ahmadabad and the districts of Malwa and spread their devastations through the provinces of the Deccan to the environs of Ujjain. ¹

Aurangzeb himself was not unaware of the drift of events and during the last years of his life had tried to come to an understanding with the Marathas, to obtain peace with honour. He had an idea of making use of the captive Sahu to gain his ends, but his suspicious nature defeated the move. On his death, therefore, his son Azam began his march northward without concluding any formal agreement with the Marathas. The Marathas in his rear were soon active and renewed their attacks on imperial territory. The captive Sahu unwilling to be dragged to far off Delhi, began efforts to regain his liberty. The party in his favour at the Emperor’s court consisting of Zulfiqar Khan and the Rajput nobility, advised Azam to allow Sahu to return to the Deccan, reclaim his patrimony and rule it as a feudatory of the empire. That would, they contended, ensure the safety of Moghal dominions in the south by having a friendly prince as their neighbour or should Sahu fail to obtain general recognition, embroil the Marathas in civil war and remove this source of danger for some time.

SHAHU.

Azam, therefore, gave a willing ear to Sahu’s proposals. Between March and May 1707 there were two or three audiences between the two princes and robes and titles conveying royal favour were conferred on Sahu. The talks, however, appeared to have a tendency to protract over a long period as the Moghal prince, busy planning the campaign for the throne, had little time for delicate negotiations. Uneasy at the prospects of further detention Sahu left his Moghal friends one night at Duraha near Sironj about 8th May with a very slender escort consisting of his immediate attendants. To elude pursuit he plunged in the Vindhya forests and made his way to Bijagad, south of the Narmada. The Rawal of that place Mohan Singh gave him a cordial welcome and helped him to get on to Sultanpur in Khandes. Near Sultanpur Amrt Rav Kadam Bande joined the Prince’s cause and they advanced to Lambkani in Khandes. Word went round that the exile prince was returning and now veteran soldiers, loyal servants, adventurers began to flock round his standard. In his imprisonment Sahu had contacted several Maratha chieftains; to them and to others he wrote tactful and conciliatory letters inviting them to come and help him in the task of rebuilding the shattered Maratha State, or reviving its faded glory. One of the first influential chiefs to respond to the Prince’s call was Parsoji Bhosle of Berar. His example proved infectious; Nemaji Sinde, Cimnaji Damodar Moghe, Haibat Rav Nimbalkar and a host of Maratha captains in Khandes hurried to join his standard and swear allegiance to their new yet rightful master. His army thus swollen,

¹ Khafi Khan p. 374.
Sahu advanced to Ahmadnagar; this old town was the seat of Muhammadan authority for over two centuries and occupied a central position and to it Aurangzeb had repaired in the last year of his life. From here Sahu paid his respects to the remains of that venerable figure buried at Khuldabad and communicated his arrival to his aunt Tarabai who was ruling as regent at Satara on behalf of her infant son Sivaji, eleven years of age.

**Sahu’s struggle with Tarabai.**

Sahu having informed the ruling party at Satara on his return, invited from them proposals for the future government of the Maratha State. The Regent Tarabai was a woman of imperious temperament and the prospect of resigning the reins of administration to her nephew and accept a subordinate position was distasteful to that masterful lady. She refused to believe the reports of Sahu’s release, discredited his letters and declaring the new claimant for the *Gadi* to be an imposter, ordered her generals to destroy wherever they should find him. This ruse could not stand for long; Sahu was personally known to the leading Maratha chieftains and officers who had come in contact with him. As a proof of greater conviction Parsoji Bhosle publicly dined with him. Tarabai then put forth another and a stronger reason why she was not prepared to admit Sahu to government. She argued, ‘that the Maratha kingdom had been reared up with painful toil by the Great Sivaji. This was lost by Sambhaji, Sahu’s father and her husband Rajaram raised the edifice anew out of ashes. He defended it against the Moghals' onslaught and hurled them back. The present Maratha. State, she contended, was her husband’s creation. She also argued that the Maratha State. The Regent Tarabai was a woman of imperious Great Sivaji had expressed a wish on his death-bed that the succession should go to his second son Rajaram, the elder Sambhaji being Unfit to rule. Sahu thus in no way could lay any claim to the *Gadi*. ¹

Tarabai’s specious arguments could make little impression on the Marathas, always jealous of the right of the elder or the senior branch to which Sahu belonged. They had fought all these years to liberate their homeland and obtain the release of their legitimate Prince Sahu, to whose freedom and reinstatement they looked forward as the natural culmination of that struggle. The sacrifices the nation had made, were not to uphold the cause of Rajaram or his son, but to save the honour of the House of Sivaji of which Sahu of the senior branch was the living symbol, and whose return had great significance to them. Even Rajaram at the time of ascending *Gadi* in 1690, had declared that he was holding the office of *Chatrapati* (the king) only in trust for his nephew then absent in the Moghal camp and that he would be only too happy to make way for the rightful owner. The issue had always been presented to the people of Maharastra as the restoration of the senior branch

¹ Letter published in *Vividh Dnyan Vistar*, 1924 February.
to its rightful authority and Tarabais quibbles regarding the superior claims of her son deceived nobody. Herein lay Sanu’s advantage. The common people and soldiers were solidly on his side. It was ultimately this support of the common people that sustained his cause and helped him triumph over odds. Though commanded by the queen to swear fidelity to her son on milk and boiled rice, Tarabai’s officers did so with a reservation that their first loyalty would be to support the cause of legitimacy and uphold the dignity of the house of Sivaji.

Sahu advanced to Khed on the Bhima; his further prospects depended on the attitude of the great Maratha captains and especially on Senapati Dhanaji Jadhav who commanded the largest Maratha army in the field. Dhanaji knew young Sahu personally and was convinced of his superior claims to Maratha leadership by his Diwan Balaji Visvanath and Khando Ballal, the Chatrapati’s hereditary Secretary. The old soldier refused to take arms against his lawful sovereign and carried with him the major part of the army. The remnant was too small to make a stand against the combined forces and fled to Satara (Battle of Khed, 12th October).

Important consequences flowed from the battle of Khed. It opened to Sahu the gates of the Maratha Svaraj, the heart of the hilly country of Poona and Satara, where the great Sivaji had begun his wonderful career and which he took care to fence round with formidable fortresses. The powerful forces led by Senapati Dhanaji had declared in his favour; Sahu decided to press home his advantage. He marched on to the capital occupying on his way Jejuri, Sirval and Candan Vandan. The Saciv of Bhor Sankaraji Narayan held some of the important hill forts in the region; he was summoned by the young Prince and assured of royal favour. Torn between his personal loyalty to the queen and his higher duty to his nation and the cause of legitimacy, the old veteran decided the issue by putting an end to his life (27th October 1707). Sahu sent message of sympathy to the bereaved family and by his conciliatory conduct made an excellent impression on his compatriots and obtained the hill forts of Rajgad, Torna, Rohida, Vicitraagad without striking a blow. His rear thus secured, he was free to commence the siege of the capital. Tarabai had fled to Panhala with her son and her Amatya, Ramcandra, leaving the defence of Satara to Parasuram Pratinidhi. The garrison and the commandant had no heart to fight their own brethren. By seizing the commandant’s family at Wai Sahu forced him to open the gates of the city. It was a Saturday in January 1708 that the victorious entry was made; and the memory of the happy event was greeted by the custom of beating of drums on Saturdays at the fort.

\(^1\)Itihas Sangraha, Volume XI. Pesva Daftarantil Mahiti, PP. 188-189.
After a week’s time Sahu ascended the Gadi in ceremony\(^1\) and appointed his new ministers. Anxious to conciliate old families he made few changes and made them where absolutely necessary.

**His coronation and new appointments and pursuit of Tarabai.**

The post of Pesva went to a son of Moropant Pingle, Dhanaji Jadhav was confirmed as Senapati and the right of making collections in several districts was delegated to him. At this period of confusion (as remarked by Grant Duff) the revenue was realized on no fixed principle but levied as opportunity presented itself in the manner of contribution. The infant son of Sankaraji Narayan was likewise confirmed as Saciv; Gangadhar Pralhad Niraji was elevated to the post of Pratinidhi as Parasuram Pant Pratinidhi refused to abjure his oath to Tarabai. The Citnis family was continued in its office. Dhanaji’s Divan, Balaji Visvanath, who had materially helped the Prince’s cause, was taken in direct service of the King, appointed Mutaliq or Deputy to the Amatya and was honoured with the dignity of ‘Sena-Karta”, probably in appreciation of his skill in raising new contingents and furnishing them properly. The great Maratha Captains, Nemaji Sinde, Parsoji Bhosle, Haibat Rav Nimblekar and a host of others received high sounding titles and dresses as the sovereign had little else to confer on the powerful chieftains.

But Sahu was not yet out of the wood. His aunt had fled before him to Panhala and from there was busy fomenting discord among Maratha ranks and sowing disunity among Maratha chiefs. Many Maratha leaders like Ghorpades, Cavans, Dabhades, Thorats, had risen to greatness in her husband’s service; the great house of Santaji Ghorpade was the rival of Dhanaji Jadhav and competed with the Jadhav family for the honours of the generalship. Ramcandra Amatya and the queen who had directed the defence of Maharashtra for over a long period, from Panhala, claimed personal devotion from not a few commandants of forts in the Ghat region. Sahu therefore had to follow Tarabai to the hills. He offered to cede to his cousin territory south of the Varna to put an end to the internecine strife. Tarabai refused the concession. How could she accept this small consolation when she wanted the sovereignty of the entire Maratha State for her son? The offer was spurned and the struggle went on for quite a while; Sahu’s forces occupied Kolhapur and invested Panhala; Tarabai abandoned it for Rangna, and feeling insecure there moved to Malvan. Panhala was occupied by Sahu’s forces: he attempted to storm Rangna, but failed and returned to the capital to spend the monsoon (1708 June).

\(^1\) The dates given by Sardesai of the capture of Satara by Sahu and of his coronation and followed by later writers lack authority. Sardesai takes these from Sedganvkar Bakhar and in looking up the calendar makes a slight mistake. If Satara was captured on a Saturday, that day cannot be 1st January of 1708 as given by Sardesai, which according to the calendar was a Thursday. Then the Sarvadhari Hindu year given in Sedganvkar Bakhar accords with 1709 and not with 1708.
Failure of Negotiations with Bahadur Sah.

It was not possible for Sahu to resume the offensive against Tarabai after the close of the monsoon. The new Moghal emperor Bahadur Sah had been called to the south by the assumption of authority by his brother Kam Baks. Bahadur arrived in the Deccan in January 1709 and called upon Sahu to aid him, sent a general call to the Deccan chiefs to lend him support in suppressing the revolt. Sahu's relations with the Moghal authorities were of a nebulous kind; vague promises had been held out to him, but no definite agreement concluded, no firman granted. Sahu despatched an envoy to the Emperor’s presence to obtain the firman of Svaraj, Cauth and Sardesmukhi, while a strong force under Candrasen Jadhav hovered in Khandes to back up his request. By Zulfiqar Khan’s representations Bahadur Sah was inclined to favour Sahu's cause; but Tarabai (about this time) sent counter proposals saying that her son was the lawful sovereign of the Maratha State and offered to accept much lower terms. The enemy’s game of throwing an apple of discord amongst the Marathas succeeded. Bahadur Sah refused recognition to either party asking them first to settle between themselves as to whom he should deliver the goods. He retired to Hindustan in the summer of 1709; Moghal goodwill was one of Sahu’s assets, its hollow nature was now exposed publicly. The Maratha prince if he was to rule his kingdom in the plenitude of his grandfather’s powers, must do it on his own. The failure of his mission to the Emperor thus revived the embers of the civil war which before this were flickering out.

The suspense in which things were left by the retiring Emperor stiffened the attitude of some of the local officials. Lodi Khan of Cakan had become quite an eye-sore to Marathas by his depredations in the Poona district as far south as Purandar. He now showed the audacity of blocking up the path of the Maratha force retiring from Khandes through the Junnar pass; he was defeated and killed, his assistant Karim Beg of Junnar was taken prisoner. At the same time Tanaji Jagtap, Yasin Khan, the Siddi of Janjira and several others became restive and started trouble in Maratha territory. However, so long as Daud Khan, a nominee of the friendly Zulfiqar Khan, continued as Deputy Governor, there was for Sahu no fear of general opposition to the establishment of his authority. But it was obvious that the most he could expect from this quarter, was neutrality and not active help in his cause.

The second prop that gave way about this time was the loss of Sahu’s Senapati. About this time died Dhanaji Jadhav¹ (1708 August). His army had materially contributed to the early successes of Sahu. The great Maratha soldier died at Vadganv on the Varna

¹Itihas Sangraha, Pesva Daftarantil Mahiti, p. 12 Rajwade Vol. 21, No. 94.
from the effects of one of his old wounds. His son Candrasen inherited the father’s army, but not the old tradition in which his father had been reared.

Sahu’s third prop disappeared when Parsoji Bhosle died in 1710. Parsoji was one of the few great chiefs to declare themselves early in Sahu’s favour. He was of the same house as the Prince and had been able to carry with him a number of chieftains in Khandes.

The situation demanded of Sahu quick decision, high organizing capacity, and daring and swift action of a skilful general which by rapid successes would overwhelm his opponents, and rally to his standard not only the common peasantry who believed in the righteousness of his cause, but the waverers and trimmers who were but too anxious to throw in their lot with the winning party. Unfortunately young Sahu though full of personal courage, lacked initiative and vision and was altogether bereft of qualities of military leadership. All his youth he had passed as a prisoner in the Moghal seraglio and had no opportunity to cultivate habits of active life, no chance to obtain administrative experience, to learn military tactics and planning, and neither had he that iron discipline so essential for a successful soldier in those rough times when the king was primarily a military leader before anything else. A great landslide began round Sahu.

**Candrasen’s Revolt.**

Tarabai’s partisans who had lain quiescent in the first rush of Sahu’s victory now came out in the open. Hindu Rav Ghorpade joined Hamid Khan and opposed collection by Sahu’s officers near Bijapur (14th November 1709). In March 1710 Hamid Khan surrounded Jadhav near Burhanpur. Before the end of the year (1710) Tarabai’s intrigues began to bear fruit. Rambhaji Nimbalkar walked over to the Moghal camp and accepted service as Faujdar of Ahmadnagar. The air was thick with whisperings of a wide-spread conspiracy. The blow descended in the form of the revolt of the King’s Senapati, Candrasen Jadhav.

Candrasen was in a peculiar position about 1710. At the head of one of the largest forces in Maharashtra he was being courted by Tarabai on the one hand and by the Moghal Subhedar on the other. Young Candrasen’s head was swollen with his importance; he had little regard for the monarch whose resources were of a very meagrekind, who looked to his chieftains to do for him the hard work of fighting and who refused to share his confidence with the youthful commander. Candrasen lent a willing ear to Tarabai’s overtures. A conspiracy was formed under his leadership. Prominent Maratha chieftains, the Thorats, Sahaji Nimbalkar, Dabhade were to join under Candrasen, march against Satara and oust Sahu in favour of Tarabai’s son. These secret negotiations perhaps did not pass quite

\[^1\text{Jaipur Akhbars Mss.}\]
unnoticed. Sahu had invited the chiefs to Satara in October 1710 and when Candrasen moved out in the next campaigning season Balaji Visvanath was sent after him to watch his steps. Already jealous of the great influence Balaji Visvanath had obtained over his father as his Divan, the latter’s elevation in the King’s council had done nothing to abate that jealousy. Early in 1711 Candrasen’s force was foraging round Baramati with Balaji trailing behind him as a revenue official of the king. There was no love lost between the two and a petty dispute between the followers of Candrasen and Balaji was taken up by the principals. Candrasen attacked Balaji, dispersed his force and sent the latter flying to the King. To the King’s protest against the outrage, the Senapati sent a minatory reply that Balaji should surrender to him or he would no longer consider himself bound to the sovereign by his oath of fealty. Such an open defiance of authority Sahu would not tolerate. He ordered his Sarlaskar, Haibat Rav, to hold up the rebel’s advancing columns and sent him reinforcements. Candrasen was defeated in two battles near the Adarki pass and Salpa pass (Phaltan Taluka) and turned back to join Daud Khan near Bahadur Gad. His later movements till he was befriended by Nizam-ul-Mulk in 1713 are uncertain, if he joined Tarabai he seems to have achieved precious little 1.

Candrasen’s revolt was a sign for a general rising all round. Tarabai’s followers Ghatge, Ghorpade, Cavan took up arms, occupied Vadganv, Kumtha, Sirala, Karhad and other places and threatened to advance on Satara. Candrasen with the aid of the Moghal officers began raising fresh troops to renew the contest. Even much nearer Sahu’s authority came to count for nothing. The petty Inamdar of Khatav, Krsnarav, proclaimed his independence. Damaji Thorat another dependent of Tarabai at Patas Hinganganv (Poona) turned out the King’s officers. Parasuram Pant who some time back had made a show of being reconciled to the new regime, had been granted the dignity of Pratinidhi and rewarded with the Visalgad jagir. His son in possession of the jagir, now declared for Tarabai. Sahu suspected the father to have instigated the treachery and losing his usual equanimity of temper ordered the jagir to be confiscated and the old Pratinidhi to be blinded. The execution of the extreme penalty was stayed by the intercession of Khando Ballal Citnis, but; Parasuram was thrown into jail once more 2.

The most serious danger to Sahu’s State, however, came from Konkan. Here the powerful Angre on Tarabai’s orders drove Sahu’s garrisons put of the Konkan forts of Rajmaci, Tung Tikona, Ghangad, occupied Lohgad, seized his Pesva Bahiropant Pingle and threatened to march on Poona.

1 Attihasik Patravyavahar, pp. 5-8, Sahu Bakhar and Selections from pesva Daftar, Volume VII, 13.

2 Sahu Roznisi, p. 55.
The skies were falling round Sahu. Though he had tried hard to conciliate the leading members of the old nobility they had with few exceptions refused to respond to his call and work with him whole-heartedly. On slight pretences they were changing sides and thwarting his plans for the settlements of the country. The Senapati was in arms against him; his Pesva had shown himself altogether devoid of initiative or capacity, the Pratinidhi was wavering in his loyalty and the Sarkhel after capturing the Pesva, threatened to march on the capital; Dabhade, Ghatge and Thorat were all either sitting on the fence or actively taking part in fanning the civil war. The only party that stood to gain by this internecine struggle was the Moghal Subhedar of the Deccan. The Deccan governorship had in the meanwhile changed hands, and in the place of the friendly Zulfiqar and his nominee Daud Khan, brought on the scene Nizam-ul-Mulk a man of different metal, who meant to follow a different line of action towards the Marathas.

Rise of Balaji Visvanath.

His intimate friends and Councillors, foremost among whom were Khando Ballal Citnis and Balaji Visvanath Bhat, advised the King an immediate change of policy. The lesser nobility and the common masses believed in the righteousness of Sahu's cause as being the senior member of Sivaji's house and therefore the lawful and hereditary heir to the Maratha throne, had been greatly impressed by his loving, god-fearing saintly disposition and were therefore solidly behind the new king. What was necessary was to organize this general good-will in the king's behalf and to assure the warring nobility that the new position they had acquired in the changed circumstances would be duly recognised and maintained. For the time being at least, there was no going back to Sivajis days and Sivaji's constitution of centralised monarchy.

Sahu being at his wits' end called upon Balaji Visvanath to shoulder the responsibility and carry out the policy he advocated. Balaji was not an altogether unknown figure in politics. His forefathers were hereditary Desmukhs or revenue collectors of Mahal Danda Rajpuri and Srivardhan in Konkan about fifty miles south of Bombay. The family had left Konkan and migrated to Des country owing to troubles with the Siddi rulers of Janjira. Balajis native cleverness, his experience as revenue officer and pleasant manners brought him employment immediately and secured his advancement in the Maratha country. He worked as Subhedar (administra'or and revenue collector) in Poona and Aurangabad districts in Rajaram's time, and thus became familiar with the currents and cross currents of Moghal Maratha politics and the leading personalities in both the eamps. Since Sahu's return to Deccan he had faithfully followed his fortunes and had shown great organizing capacity and skill as a mediator. It was his advocacy that had brought to Sahu's cause the veteran leader Dhanaji Jadhav in 1707 and secured him his ancestral throne. Again in 1711 by his activity, watchfulness and tact he had foiled Candrasen's conspiracy and defeated Sahu's rivals.
By defeating Krsnarav Khatavkar he had taught a stem lesson to rebels. Sahu felt Balaji was the only man whom he could trust to save his affairs and bring order out of chaos. On 17th November 1713 he appointed him his Pesva or Prime Minister, gave him a fresh jagir of six Mahals and two forts to meet the expenses of his troops and asked him to proceed against Kanhoji Angre. Kanhoji Angre, conciliated.

The threat from the Angres was quite a formidable one. Kanhoji Angre was brave and active and had risen to the admiralty (1698) by personal prowess. He had attracted to his service some of the most daring souls of all nationalities. His ships scoured the western waters and brought him treasure that was reported to be fabulous. His name had become a veritable terror to his neighbours, the Siddi, the English, the Dutch and the Portuguese. To contend with the Sarkhel looked quite a perilous task, but Sahu's new Pesva showed himself quite the master of the situation.

In dealing with Kanhoji Angre he decided to rely more on his powers of persuasion and diplomatic skill than on force. His personal friendship with that great chief in his former days proved a great asset to him. Marching towards Konkan at the head of about 4000 troops he invited the great Angre to a personal meeting, and told him that a great future awaited their country provided they closed their ranks and did not fight among themselves. “Your father Tukoji” he told Angre, “was raised to his high position by the great Sivaji. Is it right that you, his son should so far forget your loyalty to the senior branch of Sivajis house that you should overrun Sahu’s kingdom and seize his minister? This is outright treachery. If you feel you have given your word of honour to the Queen, go and stay with her in peace. Why disturb our provinces? The best course for you, when the junior branch was defeated, was to acknowledge your mistake, reaffirm your allegiance and win Sahu’s favour. There is no third alternative for a subordinate chieflain. I have been asked to fight you and recover the territories you have seized. Remember you are surrounded by enemies who would be too glad to attack you at the first opportunity. Once hostilities start, it may be difficult to obtain royal pardon.”

The great Angre was a shrewd man, knew the strength as well as the weakness of his position. Balaji’s friendship secured his land frontier and promised him support in dealing with his enemies. Perhaps about this time Tarabai’s power at Kolhapur was eclipsed and she herself thrown in prison.

Kanhoji felt he was no longer bound by his oath to the Queen, and Sambhaji (the successor to Tarabai’s son) had nothing alluring about him nor showed promise of repeating the glories of his father or grand-father. Kanhoji entered into Balaji’s proposals and accepted his offer. “On being confirmed in command of the fleet, his territory

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2 Bharat Itihas Samsodhak Mandals Quarterly, Volume XXVIII, p. 78.
in Konkan and his title of Sarkhel, he agreed to renounce Sambhaji, to release the Pesva, to restore all his conquests except Rajmaci and maintain the cause of Sahu¹.

This agreement which was soon ratified at Satara was a great triumph for Balaji Visvanath’s diplomacy. It won over to Sahu’s cause, without bloodshed, the most powerful chieftain from Tarabai’s party and established his power on firm foundations. The new policy enunciated by the Pesva in dealing with the Angre chief, carried assurances of security to other chieftains who willingly came forth with declarations of loyalty.

About this time Tarabai, the source of all this trouble, lost her power in Kolhapur and was thrown in confinement.

Nizam in the Deccan.

It was none too early that Sahu secured peace on the home front. The several revolutions at Delhi had removed from the scene his old friends and brought; in new personalities and developed a new situation. Imperial authority was on the decline and the empire was showing signs of dissolution. The friendly Zulfiqar Khan was no more, his place at Delhi having been taken by the Sayyad brothers Abdullah and Husain Ali. They appointed to the Deccan governorship Nizam-ul-Mulk who had different ideas about the policy to be pursued towards the Marathas.

The Deccan had peculiar fascination for the Nizam. Having spent his early career in the south in the Emperor’s campaigns, the Nizam had obtained an intimate knowledge of the province, its people and its problems. Separated by a long distance from the heart of the empire, the southern province offered great possibilities to an ambitious man in the declining days of the empire and the Nizam was not one to miss them. The only effective opposition to the establishment of his independent authority in the Deccan came from the Marathas; they were his rivals in the field. To check their rising power and keep it in effective bounds became the watch-word of his policy.

This advocate of a strong policy towards the Marathas arrived in the Deccan in June 1713. He found his charge in a strange condition. The local representative of his predecessor, Daud Khan Panni, had conceded to the Marathas the rights of collecting Cauth which Bahadur Sah had refused in 1709; Maratha agents had established a kind of parallel government and were everywhere active collecting their tribute direct from the ryots. No merchandise could pass without paying their toll. A Maratha chief Nemaji Sinde had been taken in Moghal service and held charge of Aurangabad division which enabled him to extend his influence right up to Malva and Central India. The very existence of Moghal authority in the south was at stake.

The Nizam immediately set himself to put the house in order. He repudiated the convention entered into by his predecessors and turned out the Maratha officers from their military posts from his territory. The Bhima Godavari basin became the battle-ground where the two powers impinged on each other. Here the Nizam sent a strong force to drive away the advanced posts of the enemy. At the same time he decided to take advantage of the disensions in the Maratha court, invited to his service the traitor Candrasen Jadhav from Kolhapur and through him opened negotiations with the Kolhapur party.

To counteract the Nizam’s activities the new Pesva took the field immediately on his return from the Konkan. A number of indecisive engagements took place; in one such Haibat Rav Nimbalkar was killed at Canda; in another the Nizam claimed to have defeated the Pesva near Purandar; in yet another the Moghal Bakhsi and Vaqainigar of Baglana Muhammad Ibrahim Tabrizi was lured into an ambush and killed by Khandevra Dabhade while convoying a caravan from Surat to Aurangabad, The Pesva also instigated several risings within the Subhedar’s territory with the help of the Maratha officials who had entrenched themselves in Moghal districts.

While the Nizam was trying to grapple with the Marthas in the Deccan, his enemies at Delhi gave him no rest. They appointed as his Divan Haidar Quli Khan who affected to act independently of the Subhedar. This enraged the Nizam who removed him from service and sent him back to Delhi. While he was contending with enemies outside and within, he was recalled to Delhi, his place being taken by Sayyad Husain Ali (1715 May).

Agreement with Husain Ali.

The Nizam’s transfer from the southern scene did not bring on an immediate improvement in the situation. His successor Sayyad Hussain Ali for a time tried to follow the Nizam’s strong policy towards the Marathas. One of their chiefs Khandevra Dabhade had established himself in Khandes and levied fee on all merchandise passing from Surat to Burhanpur and Aurangabad. The Moghal Viceroy despatched a strong force of ten thousand under his Bakhsi Zulfiqar Beg to bring Dabhade to book and clear up the road. The Beg’s column pursuing the enemy dispersed into the hills, when it was surrounded and cut-up to a man. ‘Not one bullock, camel or horse belonging to that army was saved’.

Husain Ali retaliated by sending yet another and a stronger expedition under his Divan Muhkam Singh accompanied by his brother; Saifud-din Khan and Candrasen Jadhav. Dabhade skilfully retired before the enemy fighting rear-guard actions. A major engagement took place near Ahmadnagar. The Maratha troops succeeded in breaking out and crossing the Bhima. Sweeping aside the enemy’s

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1 Khafi Khan, pp. 450-51.
light cavalry that was harassing his flanks and rear, Muhkam Singh pressed towards Satara in the hope of coming against the main army. Dabhade bided his time and went to Raja Sahu who had moved to Satara fort. The Maratha garrisons which were posted in various places, held their ground. Whenever the Moghal army approached, the Maratha force dispersed, and as soon as it departed they returned and occupied their positions. Against such a wary enemy the Moghal force could make little impression. Muhkam Singh and Jadhav retired the way they had advanced¹. (Dec. 1716 Jan. 1717).

Husain Ali’s discomfiture against Khanderao Dabhade was learnt by Emperor Farrukh Siyar with evident satisfaction. Farrukh Siyar was a strange admixture of bravado and cowardice; he owed his elevation to the two Sayyad brothers yet had not the wisdom to surrender himself completely to their advice. He was jealous of the great powers wielded by them, plotted against them practically from the first day of his accession and wrote to his distant governors and feudatories to make war on them to bring about their ruin. Among others Sahu and several Maratha chieftains received those royal *farmans* with which they complied most readily. Bands of horsemen overran imperial districts in the Deccan reducing everything to utter chaos.

Distracted by Maratha attacks on one side and court intrigues on the other, Husain Ali had recourse to negotiations with Sahu. To this course he was advised by Sankaraji Malhar, a former Minister of Rajaram, now in the confidence of the Sayyad. The *Subhedar* deputed Sankaraji Malhar, to Sahu’s court to find out a basis for peace. The Maratha viewpoint in the discussions was set forth by Pesva Balaji Visvanath.

Some kind of formal agreement between the two powers was long overdue. Aurangzeb had not been able to make up his mind on what terms to purchase peace. Azam held out vague promises which both parties were interpreting differently. Bahadur Sah evaded the issue asking Sahu to settle first the question of succession with his rival of the Kolhapur party. Though the highest authorities were thus balking the issues on some pretext or other, the ground was slipping under the feet of their local representatives. No longer able to hold their own against growing Maratha pressure, they very conveniently sought accommodation with Maratha chieftains as best as they could. This indefinite state of affairs only served to increase the general anarchy and profited none of principals. The Marathas were extending their depredations to Gujarat and Malva. Bold and intrepid spirits raised levies and began to make collections on their own. Partisans of Sambhaji were overrunning the Karnatak Subha of Bijapur. No wonder both parties were keen on a settlement.

Balaji Visvanath in the name of his master asked the right of raising Cauth throughout the six provinces of the Deccan—(Aurangabad, Berar, Khandes, Bidar, Hyderabad and Bijapur, which included the whole of Karnatak including the tributary states of Mysore, Trichinopoly and Tanjore) to be granted. He argued that the Marathas over two decade were levying contributions over the Deccan provinces of the Moghals and this fact should now be formally recognised by an imperial grant. He also demanded Cauth of Malwa and Gujarat which Maratha horse had invaded. He demanded likewise the right of raising an additional impost of ten per cent, for the Raja as Sardesmukhi or head of the landed gentry. The old conquest of Sivaji in Maharastra Svaraj were to be completely restored, the Subhedar to issue orders for the release of such forts and districts as still continued under Moghal occupation. Sivneri (Sivneri fort) Sivaji’s birth place, was required to be given up, as also the fort of Trimbak in Nasik district. Conquests lately made by Parsoji Bhosle in Berar and Gondvan were to be confirmed. The old Bijapur districts in Karnatak were demanded in the name of Fateh Singh Bhosle. The mother and the family of Sahu detained at Delhi were likewise to be set free and restored to the Raja.

On his side for the grant of Cauth the Pesva on behalf of his master, promised to maintain 15,000 troops with the Subhedar to aid the Emperor; for the hereditary right of Sardesmukhi he agreed to pay the usual fee of 6.51 per cent. of the annual income from that source and bound himself to keep law and order in the country and suppress banditry; for the Svaraj or old territory the Raja agreed to pay a tribute of ten lakhs of rupees every year. It was a condition of all these grants that the Raja would be faithful to the imperial throne and serve it loyally.

The choice of the envoy had evinced the Subhedars anxiety to come to an understanding with the Marathas. The proposals worked out by his envoy were immediately accepted with the exception of claims on Gujarat and Malwa. Husain Ali delivered a sanad containing the articles of peace under his seal to the vakil of Raja Sahu and made no delay in writing for a royal firman confirming the agreement. He introduced the agents of Raja Sahu everywhere and orders went round for restoring Svaraj territory to the Raja’s officials.

The importance of the treaty was not lost upon the Emperor. Complete abdication of imperial authority in the Deccan which it involved and at the same time strengthening the hands of his tormentors, he could not tolerate. He refused to ratify the agreement and prepared for war. He called to his aid Sarbuland Khan from Patna, Nizam-ul-mulk from Moradabad and Ajit Singh from Gujarat.

1 Thorle Sahu Maharajance Caritra, pp. 50-55, Treaties, Engagements and Sanads selected by Wad and edited by Parasnis and Mawji.

2 Khafi Khan, p. 468.
They arrived in the capital but found they had neither the Emperor’s confidence nor authority to act and wisely made their peace with the Sayyads. The Sayyad brothers informed of the monarch’s intrigues, prepared to strike. Husain Ali marched to the capital with his Maratha allies and arrived in Delhi in February 1719. The brothers surrounded the palace with their troops, entered the palace, and seized the Emperor’s person after some altercation. The hapless monarch was thrown in confinement and power passing into the hands of the Sayyads. The treaty entered into between Raja Sahu and Husain Ali Khan was ratified and firmans confirming the arrangements for Cauth, Sardesmukhi and Svaraj were issued on 13th and 24th March respectively. Balaji Visvanath who had accompanied the Amir-ul-Umara to the capital returned to the Deccan in May 1719 with the deeds and the Rajas family.

A right royal welcome awaited the minister at Satara. He had at last obtained recognition of the claims round which the Moghal-Maratha struggle had centred over two decades. The treaty marked a triumph for Raja Sahu. His recognition by the Moghal authority gave him a distinct advantage over his rival Sambhaji and made other Maratha chieftains look up to him as the fountain of authority. The Moghal rulers accepted the fait accompli and recognised the supremacy of Maratha interests in the south by granting them the right of collecting revenue from the six provinces of the Deccan.

The treaty had been criticised variously by different writers. While some have hailed it as a great diplomatic triumph, others have questioned its moral basis; yet a third school of historians condemn the Minister for accepting Moghal suzerainty and perpetuating Muslim shackles. They contend that while Sivaji fought for an independent Maratha state his grand-son acting on the advice of his Pesva threw away the jewel of liberty accepting in exchange the badge of Moghal slavery. This is an extreme view and loses sight of the fact that in politics satisfactory solutions of vexed problems are often found in face-saving devices or fictions. To accept the fictions literally, to analyse them in a legalistic way without taking into account how they worked in actual practice is mere casuistry and evinces a frame of mind ill-becoming a dispassionate historian. A tributary state has no independent authority to make war or peace, has no claims on the sovereign. Cauth and Sardesmukhi over the six Subhas of the Deccan were granted to the Marathas who went on exploiting their advantage till they demanded tribute from the whole of the imperial domain. No man of commonsense would look on this relation as one of subordination to the Moghal Crown. The Marathas were realists and were satisfied with the direction of policy leaving ostentatious display to the effete successors of Aurangzeb.

Criticism can rather be levelled against the scheme for realising the claims through a number of agents instead of obtaining the revenues direct for the royal treasury and thereby putting central
authority on firm foundations. For, according to this scheme, the collections in Gujarat were assigned to the Senapati, those in Berar and Gondvan to the Bhosle of Nagpur, of the Satara region to the Pratinidhi, of the Mavals (Poona district) to the Saciv; to the Pesva was granted Khandes and Baglana and Central India for his activities; the Sarlaskar obtained the basin of the Godavari and Fateh Singh Bhosle was expected to make the annual levy from the Karnatak. Konkan was left in the possession of Kanhoji Angre. It was of the essence of the scheme that the chieftains whose authority had been established in a particular area should be recognised as the immediate ruler or law-giver of the region, should administer it and appropriate its revenues towards the maintenance of his troops while he contributed a small share to the Royal Exchequer.

Balaji perceived that the revival of Maratha power in its old monarchical form was no longer possible, that it would be difficult to harness the nation’s military resources to the common cause unless concessions were made to the great warlords who had won an important place for themselves. He made them subordinate allies or confederates of the Sovereign, granting them a free hand in administering their conquests, called from them no greater sacrifice than uniting on matters of common policy. The arrangement, however, left too much authority in the hands of these chiefs without providing for checks to call them to account. This was the beginning of the Jagir system or Confederacy of the Maratha States which was responsible for the speedy expansion of the Maratha power and its rapid dissolution. Historians point out that this granting of authority over territory instead salaries to the officers by Balaji Visvanath was a departure from the wise rule of Sivaji, but throw the blame on the master and not on the minister. They suggest that Balaji substituted for the autocracy of the sovereign the Maratha Confederacy because he saw that Sahu had not the commanding talents and energy which had made possible the great King’s concentrated dominion. But it has been made plain in these pages that it was the support of the common people, of the Maratha peasant and the Maratha Siledar, that enabled Balaji beat down the opposition of the great war-lords and wrest victory for his master. In his desire to conciliate the great barons Balaji Visvanath appears to have gone too far and compromised royal authority. In leaving large powers to them Balaji undoubtedly surrendered the gains of the battle after winning it.

But it would be wrong to hold the Pesva responsible for the defects the system developed later. He accepted the situation and found in the jagir system the best solution possible to bring peace to the distracted country. He had seen the Maratha State wilting under fierce onslaughts of the Moghal and had also witnessed the tide slowly turning against the enemy. He grasped as few men of his generation did, the significance of the changes in the political atmos-
phere and was determined that his country should profit by them. His conciliatory approach enabled the great Maratha soldiers to come under the common flag and unite their skill and resources for common purposes. Playing cleverly on the rivalries and factions of the Moghal Court he wrested from them terms which secured for his state the gains of the bitter fighting of a quarter century and established the supremacy of Maratha interests in the Deccan.

Balaji Visvanath did not live long to work out his scheme in detail. After the monsoon he marched south and dispersed the Kolhapur force at Asta and laid siege to Kolhapur. After some desultory fighting he retired to Sasvad near Poona and died there on 2nd April 1720. He left behind his widow Radhabai, two sons, and three daughters. The eldest son who had been his companion in most of his campaigns in his later years succeeded him to the Pesvaship.

Balaji Visvanath has been truly called ‘the second founder of the empire’. He piloted the ship of the State through dangerous waters and brought it to a safe haven. His greatness has been dimmed by the brilliant victories of his son and immediate successor to the Pesvaship. But it need not blind us to the fact that it was the father’s statesmanship that brought order out of chaos, upheld national interests and preserved the unity of the state when it looked as if the Maratha people would once more sink into a number of petty principalities, making war upon each other and ending in submission to a foreign aggressor. The treaty with Husain Ali was a great diplomatic triumph which secured to the Maratha people the gains of their suffering of a quarter century and created a wide field for their restless ambition.

The term of Balajis Pesvaship marks the transition from the royal period to the age of the Pesvas. It ushers a new era in the history of the Marathas. The feeble successors of the House of Sivaji fade into insignificance and become mere figure-heads with the passage of time. The reins of government pass into the hands of the able Prime Ministers, who direct the course of Maratha policy for the next century.