

Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials

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Unit: II: The Maratha War of Independence

Module Name: Tarabai

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Notes

Tarabai

Tarabai was the daughter of Shivaji's Senapati Hambir Rao Mohite. She was born in 1675 and received training in horse riding and martial art right from childhood. She was married to Rajaram, Shivaji's second son (born in 1670) by Soirabai, who was her father's sister, in the year 1683.

Along with Rajaram, she remained under house arrest from 1683 to 1689. She became the queen of the Marathas when Rajaram was declared Chhatrapati in 1689, after Sambhaji's death. Tarabai faced a life of uncertainties and danger of falling in enemy's hands as she accompanied her husband's tiresome journey from Raigad to Vishalgad, from there to Pratapgad, and thence to Panhalgad. It was during this period that she learnt her lessons in Mughal- Maratha politics. Endowed with sharp intelligence and basically an ambitious person, she observed the political developments of the time with keen interest.

Tarabai came to Jinji in 1694. Her son Shivaji II was born in 1696. On 3rd March 1700 Chhatrapati Rajaram died prematurely at Sinhagad, where he had escaped from Jinji. Tarabai was only 25 years of age at the time of his death but she did not waste time in shedding tears, She placed her four year old son on the throne and became his regent.

As soon as she took the reigns of the Maratha Government in her hands, she tried to make peace with Aurangzeb and placed following conditions before him:

1. That her son be granted a Mansab of 7000 and right of collecting Sardeshmukhi.

2. She agreed to Cede seven forts to the Mughals.
3. She would place a 5000 strong Maratha army in the Mughal service.
4. Shivaji II should not be forced to attend Mughal court in person.

When Aurangzeb demanded all the forts, Tarabai withdrew her peace proposal and decided to continue the Maratha war of independence against the Mughals.

The Mughals had besieged the fort of Satara even before Rajaram's death, the Marathas were forced to surrender it when the siege became severe in April 1700. The same fate was that of Sajjangad in June 1700, thereafter Aurangzeb took the forts of Parali, Bhushangad, Panhalgad, Vardhangad, Nandagiri, Vandan and finally Vishalgad in 1701, on payment of cash. Though Aurangzeb conquered fort after fort from Marathas, he could not achieve a decisive victory against them. This was because the Marathas in the absence of a king, capital or one army, fought individually and took upon themselves the responsibility of protecting every inch of their homeland.

It was Tarabai's plan to plunder territories outside Swarajya to feed the Marathas in Maharashtra and also to reduce pressure of Mughal attacks in the homeland. Besides the Maratha commanders were assured of the possession of the territories they conquered. This assurance provided the Marathas a new field of action and opportunity. Tarabai implemented a new technique of attacking Mughal territories while the Mughal army was busy in besieging Maratha forts. Marathas began attacking northern Indian territories which created a fear in Aurangzeb's mind of losing the north while not being able to retain south.

In 1702 Tarabai decided to attack the Mughals outside the boundary of the swarajya. Under Tarabai's able command Marathas attacked Mughal territories in Malwa, Gujarat, Andhra, Karnatak & Tamil Nadu. Tarabai began to reconquer the forts that Marathas had lost to Aurangzeb earlier. In January 1705, Lohgad was conquered, in April 1705 Sinhagad, Raj Machi, in June 1705 followed by Rohida, Rajgad, Panhalgad, Pavangad, Satara and Vasantgad till 1707.

In 1705 she made another novel attempt to harass the Mughals. She made coalition with the Berad tribe of Krishna Bheema (names of rivers) doab and incited them into rebellion against Aurangzeb. Their leader was one Pind Nayak who raised an army and began plundering the Mughal territories in Gulbarga. Aurangzeb himself took field against him but the Marathas came to his aid and together they totally terrorized him. Ultimately Aurangzeb defeated the Berads and took their stronghold but not before they had all burnt it down. This was the last victory of Aurangzeb before he died in **1707**.

The contribution of Tarabai in the Maratha War of Independence is Significant. It is difficult to imagine what would have happened to the Maratha State, had she not stepped forward to lead them. In this situation Tarabai took the administration in her hands, placed her minor son on the throne and continued successfully the Maratha struggle against Mughals. She was only 25 at the time and a widow but undaunted and without being a puppet in anyone's hands she ruled the nation independently. With her political acumen she was able to promote unity and harmony among the Maratha sardars and prompted them to work within or outside the territories of swarajya. It was at her behest that the Maratha sardars undertook victorious campaigns and brought the Mughals to their knees. Initially Tarabai made overtures of peace

to Aurangzeb but when that failed next thing she did was to adopt an aggressive stance and kept constant pressure on the Mughals right from the beginning. Aurangzeb witnessed deaths of three Chhatrapatis. After the demise of every king he would give a heavy blow to the Marathas. After Rajaram's death Aurangzeb thought that he would now give the Marathas a final deathblow. But Tarabai stood in his way like a strong wall and in fact Aurangzeb died a disappointed and heartbroken old man in 1707.