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## The Gaekwad's Perception of Water Sovereignty; a conceptual understanding of the Excavating and policy initiatives of water governance in Baroda

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**DOI-** 10.5281/zenodo.8042357OI-

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### Introduction:

The governance pattern during the rule of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad-III would be exemplified as one of the crucial welfare-centric Governance in India during the nineteenth century. It shows consistency with the earlier forms of governance in India, such as monarchical. Altogether it nourished a framework to see how a form of monarchy or kingship could ensure the well-being of people. Water and its governance have diversified attention as a policy concern in recent years. The United Nations has determined that water is a human right and that should be protected. The present study is based on "The Gaekwad's Perception of Water Sovereignty" where a conceptual understanding of the Excavating and policy initiatives of water governance in Baroda is been discussed. Coming to the conceptual framework of water governance, one can see the elements of governance cannot be universal, therefore 'context-specific criteria' (Woodhouse and Muller) shall be examined. As exemplified by the OECD secretary-general, there is a need to have a combination of bottom-up and top-down procedures while dealing with key water challenges, that makes the idea of governance good governance. The paper also tries to give a set of new ideas related to the policy and governance of water that would be stuck in the functions of the administration of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad -III. The main objective of the research is to identify the mechanisms (Prospects and Challenges) related to water policy that has been created by the Maharaja for which certain laws and policies have to be looked into. The study also tries to understand the idea of 'Good Governance' in terms of water and the bifurcation of departments in various areas such as irrigation, sanitation, agriculture, and so on. Therefore, to deal with such goals, the study has been taking the help of certain methodologies as a source of knowledge.

### Materials and Methods

There are numerous writings that discuss different aspects of the state of Baroda during Maharaja Sayajirao's rule. Particularly, researchers have focused on its political and historical nature in their writings. Recently, scholars such as Maitree Vaidya, Jigar Inamdar, and, H.R Patel in their respective writings explored certain dimensions. The issues such as how agriculture, law enforcement, and, the police system, are important to be noticed in relation to the administration of the state of Baroda. The reforms and changes to the administration somehow followed the principles of good governance. Here the question arises, to what extent does

Maharaja's governance align with the principles of good governance if the discussion would be around the governance of water? Is that justified to argue that, attempts made by Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad -III fit the ideal water governance? If yes, what are those principles and ideas that support this affirmation?

In the *Baroda Administration Report* of 1902-03 and 1903-04, part X titled Public Work (Sections d, e, and g) talks about the various administrative mechanisms and particularly deals with how 'wells and tanks; waterworks and drainage', contributed in the water management of the state of Baroda. *The Minor Hints*, a lecture delivered by T.

Madhava Rao (p.206-214) to Maharaja, precisely talks about the provisions and ways in which "water monuments" were managed. It mentions in the earlier portion of the lecture about the taxation system and its importance, and in the later part, it emphasizes public works and their importance. Specifically, the essence of the construction of wells and roads, and improving irrigation and drainage system are a few key issues that have been covered under this lecture. It is in this context the role of "accountability" in the governance of any state could not be overlooked, and in a way, Maharaja did follow the principle of accountability. It is appropriate to mention during the 1900 famine, how Maharaja managed to control and lessen the effect of famine. It shows the administration of Baroda at that time was following the path of ideal governance. During that period the construction of various dams, water tanks, and reservoirs was successfully done. In the different locations, one can see those constructions even at the present time. These constructions in the districts Kadi, Wagodhia, Dabhoi, and Okhamandal of Baroda State show how efficient mechanisms were used to manage water challenges during Maharaja's time (Vaidya, 2019) and certainly, it provides a way forward to examine their implications to the current scenario of water management and governance.

Different authors talk about the political, legislative, judicial, revenue, settlements, self-government, finance, education, medical public works, police, jails, and many more in their 'Baroda Administration Report 1902-03 and 1903-04, 1905-1906 and 1906-1907. P-(40, 170) and 1936-37 P- (131,139). Dr. Maitree Vaidya in her "Water Resource Management in the Princely State of Baroda" talks about the various measures to ease the problems related to water handled by the Maharaja. Specifically, it has mentioned how the state focused on drainage, irrigation, wells, tanks, and other reservoirs.

The present study is mainly focusing on the understanding of mixed methodology as it compels real-time data of the contributions of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III. It depends on both Qualitative and Quantitative sources. It also deals with both conceptual and applied frameworks as the requirement arises for a particular purpose of the research. The study also

covers its interpretations which are based on the collected information through the major archives of Baroda City along with a comparative analysis of collected data from both primary as well as secondary sources of data. To attain an empirical understanding, information has been gathered through interviews with the experts, government officials, and functionaries of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad -III. The objective of the study is also understood through the interview of the experts in the field of water management in Baroda. Also, the field survey takes place to understand the condition of the water infrastructure in Baroda City.

### **Observations/Results**

The study is mainly concerned with the analyses of conceptual understanding of the Excavating and policy initiatives of water governance in Baroda City. New ideas related to policy and governance of water would be stuck in the functions of the administration of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad -III. A set of principles such as; participation, accountability, a combination of bottom-up and Top-down procedures; context-specific criteria, and decentralization are to be understood as certain principles of water governance and their application could be seen in the administration of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad-III. The cultural value and modern technology guide the development of the water monuments and also help to understand the functional value of the water monuments.

The study attempts to focus on the mechanisms (Prospects and Challenges) related to water policy which includes the different work done by the scholars and information collected from Baroda's administrative report which provides the work with information on the timeline of water management during the era of the Maharaja Sayajirao III. The present paper analyses the conceptual framework in its appropriate relationship with the Archaeological perspective (eg. Water monuments and water supply system) and Policy perspective (Eg. Laws and policies related to water governance) during the period of Maharaja's Governance. It also helps us to understand the major reform in the field of the education system and the development of different institutes for the water management system to manage the work efficiently.

Therefore, with the help of the present paper one can understand, whether the attempts made by Maharaja were futuristic and visionary. It has provided a set of new and contemporary concepts that provide the pattern of water governance during the administration of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad -III

### Discussion

The idea of water governance seems a recent phenomenon, though it has its relevance in the development of every phase of human civilization. One can see how is it crucial when a conceptual understanding of a particular idea is required. In Indian philosophy, the focus has been given to the ideas of the ideal governance and the ideal State. Unfortunately, modern discourses have missed exploring these ideas, which has created a vacuum in Indian understanding of the idea of governance. To highlight this concern, the researcher has decided to pursue his chosen area of research, which is based on the vision of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad - III in the area of "governance of water". It is in this connection, that the researcher plans to present a conceptual Sayajirao of water governance. It is important to mention that the very notion of water governance is not quite popular in the field of governance and administrative studies. Therefore, it is in this background, the nature and the relevance of the study need to be examined.

In academia, the Western understanding of water governance and management is studied and researched, extensively. One of the scholars, called Greenfield and Schmidt has studied the idea of water governance, extensively and argued that ethics and water governance need to be read together, where 'decentralized water governance' is the core area of governance. In their view, governance does not talk about command and control but rather participation and social learning. It is significant if one is discussing water governance one shall take into consideration of people's participation and social learning. It is not limited to Management, institution, or sustainability, but the value-centric approach is significant. The "right to water" is a kind of objective ethics that needs to follow if the administrator attempts to achieve the goals of water governance.

Examining historical events highlight how issues related to water management are resolved every year a new challenge brings a

new solution to deal with the water management system. The conservation work of the old water monuments which have great importance from the archaeological perspective, understanding the development of the new water monuments highlights the ancient cultural value and modern technology which help to resolve the problems related to water infrastructure example the successful construction of Vav, tanks, and drainage work. Also, the expansion of the different departments and posts for the development water management system was discussed. Talking about water policing, as one of the significant tactics followed during Maharaja's time asserts the positive actions of a government. It means the policy initiatives of the Maharaja were taken together with the legal mechanisms of his governance pattern. For e.g. The issue of irrigation was sorted out by the initiative of Maharaja in the form of establishing an irrigation department, that in turn would ensure the "water to all" objective. Therefore, in an attempt to realize how Maharaja's vision of water governance is relevant to the present context, a small study has been conducted. It shows constant but improvised mechanisms to deal with "un-watered situations" such as famine, irrigation problems, or water shortages.

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