

Early life and education

Born 8 May 1938 at Ootacamund Baroda, Ranjitsinhrao Gaekwad was the second son of Maharaja Pratap Sinh Gaekwad (1939–1951), and Maharani Shantadevi Gaekwad (d.2002), daughter of Sardar Hauskar Mansinhrao Subbarao of Hasur in Kolhapur. Her daughter, Mrunalini Devi Puar is the present Chancellor of the M.S. University, Baroda.[2] Educated at M.S. University (Baroda), he had a post graduate degree in fine arts. He was the younger brother of Fatehsinhrao Gaekwad. After Fatehsinhrao Gaekwad died in the Breach Candy Hospital in Bombay



on 1 September 1988 at the

age of 58, he was succeeded as Maharaja of Baroda by his younger brother, Ranjitsinhrao Gaekwad. Maharaja Ranjitsinh Gaekwad Passed Away at 12:15 A.M. 10th May 2012 at Baroda.

Career

Ranjitsinhrao Gaekwad was a member of the Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament in India) and served two terms as an MP (member of parliament), from 1980 to 1984 and from 1984 to 1989. He became the Maharaja of Baroda on the death of his elder brother on 1 September 1988. Ranjitsinhrao Gaekwad was also a well known painter.

Shrimant Ranjitsinhji the Artist!

Maharaja of Baroda Shrimant Ranjitsinh Pratapsinh Gaekwad's death will send his works back into the galleries and introduce his style of painting to a generation who knew him only as a maharaja who had the heart of an artist. Though never edgy as an artist - his skills were wasted on a political career where he spent more than a decade-and-a-half. Ranjitsinhji was also lauded by other vocalists for his impeccable mastery over Indian classical music, qualities that elevated him above almost every other royal of his era. Ranjitsinh's first love was art. A fine arts graduate from MS University of Baroda, his passion for the subject didn't stop there. He was credited with introducing various Indian schools of painting under the guidance of eminent artists such as Prof Bendre, Prof Subramanian and Prof Shankho Chowdhary.

Painting came naturally to him as he grew up watching Raja Ravi Varma's paintings hanging on the walls of Rajmahal. The Gaekwad family owns one of the largest collections of works by Raja Ravi Varma. However, Ranjitsinhji's favourites were Rembrandt and Reuben Tam. Already filled with the knowledge of Indian art, Ranjitsinh left for Royal Academy of Arts at Durham University to understand and master European art. Renowned British artists such as late Peter Greenham and Charles Mahoney got

the artist out of him.

As a young artist he won several awards including the David Murray Scholarship for landscape painting. With limited opportunity to exhibit his art, Ranjitsinh travelled across the country to showcase his talent and held several exhibitions in the 1960's.

After a gap of 15 years or so, Ranjitsinhji returned with full vigour to the art scene. In 2005, he was invited to join in a senior artist's camp/tour, in which a group of eminent contemporary artists painted and sketched as they travelled along the famous Silk Route in China. He went on hold a show titled 'Goats, Kings and Other Such Things' at the Inder Pasricha Gallery, London, which consisted mainly of ink drawings and several sculptures.

"Every work of mine is different. I have done sculptures, photo-realism and even painted on printed bed covers! I love to experiment; something many of today's artists don't do," Ranjitsinh had said during an interview in 2005. When Ranjitsinh showcased his works in Mumbai after a gap of 42 years, the interviewer asked him about his journey. "In the 60s, I painted quite frequently, only to give it up for politics. But when I realized that I was not meant for politics; I got back to painting and singing. So here I am with 80 paintings spanning a period of over 40 years," Ranjitsinh had said.



Personal life

Married 15 December 1964 Maharani Subhangini Devi (Arunadevi Jadhav). They have 3 children:

- Maharajkumari Alaukika Raje, married 1988, Darbar Shri SATYAJITKUMAR KHACHAR, 11th Chief of Jasdhan.

- Maharajkumari Anjana Raje, married 1999, Shri APRATIM SENGUPTA.
- Yuvraj Samarjitsingh Gaekwad, born 25 April 1967, married 27 February 2002 in New Delhi, Rajkumari Radhika Kumari of Wankaner.



The Royal Touch

Ranjitsinhji, in fact, was the last living royal in this city who had witnessed the transition of Baroda from a kingdom to a part of the Indian union. This year, Vadodara is celebrating 150th birth anniversary of Sir Sayajirao-III, the visionary king who gave the city its railway, schools, Raja Ravi Varma gallery, Felici sculptures and public buildings, inspired from Islamic, European and traditional Indian architectural styles.

Ranjitsinhji led these celebrations that were launched on March 11, which was also his last public appearance. Barodians who broke down in the funeral procession recalled seeing Ranjitsinh

on a wheel chair that day. Sixty-five-year old Dinkar Pawar, who was Ranjitsinh's personal assistant, stood in the corridor, under Laxmi Vilas Palace's famous church-like tower, in a daze. "I have been here for 40 years, have seen Pratapsinhrao, his father. His (Pratapsinhrao's) grandfather was Sayajirao whose father was Khanderao, you know the Khanderao market?" he asks and adds, "Now, everything is gone".



The Maharaja's political touch

With an overwhelming support of Barodians Ranjitsinhji was elected to Parliament twice - 1980 and 1984. Ranjitsinhji did a decent job as Vadodara's member of Parliament. Meanwhile, in September 1988, ailing maharaja of Baroda Fatehsinhrao Gaekwad died in Breach Candy Hospital in Mumbai at the age of 58. Fatehsinhrao had no children, so Ranjitsinhji succeeded him as maharaja of Baroda. Being the second eldest son of Pratapsinhrao Gaekwad, Ranjitsinhji was made head of the Gaekwad family. But he didn't like to be addressed as

maharaja, as he wanted to live as a commoner and enjoy all the aspects of life. Politics took a back seat for the royal family members as Ranjitsinhji focused on his passions - art and classical music. However, the royal family returned to politics in 2003. Though, Ranjitsinhji remained loyal to Congress, his wife Shubhangini Raje and son Samarjeet Gaekwad joined BJP and fought unsuccessfully against Dinsha Patel in Kheda in the 2004 general elections. However, the royal family withdrew themselves from active politics, thereafter.

