

Shivaji In Stories



Vivekananda Kendra Patrika

EDITORIAL



The Tercentenary of Chhatrapati Shivaji's Coronation is being celebrated all over the country during the year that commenced on June 2, 1974, and the present volume conceived as part of the celebrations is now brought out as signifying their concluding phase. It may be recalled that the idea of the coronation day celebration was first mooted by Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1886 as a symbolic expression of the aspiration of the people for sustained freedom and in order to mark the beginning of New India's struggle for independence from what has been described as the rule of "the Mughals of the modern era." The celebration, as then suggested, came off in April 1896 at Rajgarh, and sought to stress the truly nationalist, revolutionary and anti-imperialist direction regarded as necessary for the struggle and to provide the new movement for Swaraj with the dynamic inspiration of a popular, national hero. Lokmanya Tilak, who used to visit Sinhagad every year and stay there for sometime to imbibe the spirit of Shivaji, firmly believed and declared that "The only consciousness which we as a nation can proudly retain and foster ought to have its springs in Hindutva." Hence he rightly saw and shared with his compatriots, the appropriateness of projecting the image of Shivaji as a

symbol of the sublimest sense of patriotism and nationalism, and representative of the ideal of political emancipation. Directing the people, to adopt like Shivaji, every means including the use of arms, methods of warfare and military strategy in the fight against alien oppression. Tilak pointed out to them, on the occasion of Shivaji's coronation day celebration : "If thieves enter our house and we have no strength to drive them out, we should, without hesitation, shut them and burn them alive. God has not conferred upon the foreigners the grant of the kingdom of Hindusthan."

It was an image revealed in the archives of history and re-shaped out of legend and tradition, and it served to bring Shivaji back to the modern peasant and worker as well as to convince the intelligentsia of the need for an organised fight for freedom. There is nothing incongruous in an image of Shivaji, himself a ruler, the "Chhatrapati", serving as a source of revolutionary and anti-imperialist inspiration for a fight against alien oppression. Shivaji had, in his own days, risen above narrow affiliations of caste and community, broken the shackles of class-consciousness and defended masses against all forms of exploitation. We have it on record that he had even to fight his own kith and kin and the Jagirdars,

Patels and Deshmukhs who were thriving on the inams granted by Badshahs. It would not, therefore, be surprising to know that a revolutionary like Vasudeo Balwant Phadke, acclaimed as among the first to raise the banner of armed struggle in 1878 against British Imperialism in India, issued a manifesto in his name signing it as "Shivaji the Second."



The Tercentenary is thus a tribute of a nation to one of its most outstanding heroes for having roused it from a state of semi-slumber and infused into it the courage and dynamism needed to stand up and arrest the advancing tide of Moghul

conquest and domination. It was Shivaji who made the people, the sons of the soil, re-awaken to a sense of unity forged spontaneously by bonds of a time-honoured concept of nationalism. The call for unity was in the name of "Hindvi Swaraj", which implied free and unhampered self-determination of a people with a heritage dating back to the ancient seers of the land and a culture moulded in the light of their vision and by the power of their penance.

Moghul conquest was the chief political feature about the time of the birth of Shivaji. The trail of destruction, through fire and plunder, that the Moghul armies left behind, as they advanced in conquest, the religious discrimination by the Muslim rulers and the harassment to which the natives of the land, the Hindus, were subjected, all resulted in great discontent, social and religious. Contemporary conditions grew so desperate and everyone was in such a state of helpless expectancy that all thoughts turned towards the advent of a deliverer. The man of destiny was Shivaji, born in February 1630 in the hill-fort of Shivneri, where his mother Jija Bai had to be left for safety. That is the setting into which we see Shivaji the Great ushered as an infant.

The tree of Hinduism is not really dead, that it can rise from beneath the seemingly crushing load of centuries of political bondage; that it can put forth new leaves and branches. It can lift up its head to the skies," writes Jadunath Sarkar, in Shivaji and His Times. He further points out that,

"Intensely religious from his very boyhood by instinct and training alike, he remained all through his life abstemious, free from vice, respectful to holy men, passionately fond of hearing scripture readings and sacred stories and songs." According to Vincent Smith, "Indeed, it is safe to affirm that his religious zeal was the most potent factor in arousing the sentiment of nationality which inspired his lowly countrymen to defy the Moghul Legions." However, as Sarkar has rightly stressed, "Religion remained with him an ever-fresh fountain of right conduct and generosity, it did not obsess his mind nor harden him into a bigot." By all accounts, Shivaji's personal life was marked by a superior standard of morality and deep spiritual fervour. Here indeed was not only a warrior and administrator, but one who was devoted as a son, attentive as a husband, and a unique exemplar of duty as a father. Historians, poets, novelists, bards and play-writes have painted the picture of this medieval India's outstanding hero in resplendent hues. And the image of Shivaji is regarded today as a blend of history

and legends. The legend as it appeals to the modern mind is happily not divorced from history.

"Study the life of Shivaji and you will find him a nation-maker, instead of a marauder, as the Europeans represent him," says Swami Vivekananda, the patriot-monk of India. We have here endeavoured to present in the form of a narrative, marked by a certain sequence of incidents (as it moves from chapter to chapter), the whole course of Shivaji's illustrious career in a brief compass. The trend would be seen to be almost unbroken, even if some of the chapters are selected, culled out and strung together, as for instance those that appear under the titles, "Refrain", "Crescendo", and "Closing strains", included in the opening, middle and concluding sections of the volume with a view to providing a comprehensive picture of the entire ground. What we have offered here is neither just history nor just legend. It is a blend of both, so that the legends that are narrated are rooted in facts of history.



SHIVAJI - SYMBOL OF NATIONAL RENAISSANCE IN STORY

Prof. K.N.VASWANI

Whatever the faults of the Indian people, they have one great quality, they know how to honour their heroes, heroes of their History, who have brought honour to their Nation, glory to the Motherland, lived and died honourably and heroically, exemplifying the ideals and values of which the Motherland is the sacred symbol, the cultural values which are the heritage and the legacy of the Motherland, which it is the mission of the Motherland to contribute to the cultural whole of humanity. Yes, the simple, gentle, mild and sincere people of our great Motherland, Bharat Varsh, it has been conceded by all, including many foreign writers, thinkers and historians, have an extraordinary, exceptional, unique capacity, nay a genius for myth-making, for creation of stories and legends, round their national heroes, which have the beneficial effect of sustaining the people in the period of their national adversity and peril, when they are down-cast and depressed due to tyranny or oppression or apathy or inertia, and also the effect of exhilarating, enthusing and even inspiring them to action through a re-awakening of pride in their past and faith in their future, which incline them, then, to break the bones of depression and apathy, and plunge into heroic and harmonious action, once again to add a new glorious chapter to the heroic history of their Motherland.

Shivaji Stories

True of this great, glorious tradition of our people, the great, impressive, dynamic and heroic figure of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj too has attracted and inspired our people, our poets and our writers, in the interest of our people, to fire them with idealism, energy and fervour, with zeal for national service and the spirit of nation-building, to weave many stories around some or the other of the many exploits and adventures of Shivaji Maharaj, a hero among men, an ideal son of an ideal mother, Jija Bai, an exemplary pupil, a devoted disciple of his Guru Samarth Ramdas, a fit friend and true, a soldier and a commander of ability, skill, and judgement, quick in his judgements, quick in his movements, a master of guerilla warfare, which is now being made so much of, even by that successful master of warfare, Mao of China, and which had won for Shivaji the strange appellation and description of 'the mountain rat', which epithet can be interpreted as it has already been interpreted by different historians, differently, both as a compliment as also as a slight or a caricature.

Yes, Shivaji has fired the imagination of our people, as of our poets and writers, as a national hero, held high in esteem, as a nation builder, a dreamer of the dream of the Hindu Nation, a daring and fearless and far-sighted freedom-fighter, who also was successful in many ways even as an able

administrator and a founder of the great Maratha State which challenged the mighty Moghul Empire and re-asserted and revived the spirit of Hindu Independence and re-invigorated the spirit of India, preparing it for its re-efflorescence and renaissance by regaining for it a consciousness of its inner, inherent power, its past glory and its future destiny.

Stories of Dedication and Humility : Tukaram and Ramdas

From among the many moving stories of Shivaji, of heroism, adventure, dedication, humility, daring, fearlessness, defiance, shrewdness, skilled statesmanship, devotion, chivalry and so many other qualities of Shivaji, and so many different aspects of his character and achievements and exploits, we shall briefly glance at just a few, a very small but significant sample from this invaluable and ever-growing and ever-inspiring treasure. Here are some.

It is best to begin with Tukaram (1608-1649) and Ramdas (1608-1681) stories – stories of Shivaji's spirit of dedication and humility. Truly touching is the story that tells of Shaista Khan having captured Poona and forbidden entry into it without a permit and yet how Shivaji risked his life by passing the sentries and entering the town to attend a Kirtan of songs of his beloved poet Tukaram. Meanwhile Shaista Khan had challenged him to come down to the plains and fight like a man. 'You hide away in the hills,' he taunted him, 'like a monkey.' 'Yes,' replied Shivaji, 'but remember, it was the monkeys, which destroyed Ravana and all his host!' And

Shivaji was as good as his word and later attacked Shaista Khan in the Rang Mahal, whence he had to flee for his dear life.

On another occasion, the story is told that the Ashta Pradhan went with gifts to Tukaram to implore him to come to the court, but it told Tukaram had no use for gifts or the court, and wrote :

"Touches, umbrellas, steeds, - what be these to me?

Lord of Pandari, why seek to ensnare me thus?

Pomps and vanities are to me as dust and ashes

Hasten, O Lord, to my help, saint Tukaram, the bard."

Tukaram is also reported to have written : "Why come to thy court? Why weary myself with a fruitless pilgrimage? Alms are my support, cast-off rags my garment, stone my bed, the sky my covering. Why then ask thy help? It is but wasted time. The King is the fountain of honour, but honours give no peace to the soul. This then is my last message to thee. The mendicant's life is best for me. Do now one thing : Grow not weary of well-doing : invite me not. Do this and my heart finds peace. I need not visit thee, for life is short." And again : "There is one Truth in the World : there is one Soul in all Being. Pin thy Faith to this Soul, see thyself mirrored in Ramdas. Do this, O Prince, and thou and the whole world shalt be blessed therein, thy fame will pervade the Universe, saint Tuka." The story is told that finding that he could not get Tukaram to come to the court, Shivaji went to visit him : the

following lines are said to have been uttered by Tukaram on this occasion : "King Shivaji, listen to me. Fix thy mind on Ramdas : Ramdas is thy teacher, thy sage, go prostrate before him."

History as Story

Shivaji, so the story goes, adopted Ramdas as his spiritual preceptor, about 1650. This year may not be certain, as even the year of Shivaji's birth, 1627, is given by some as 1630, which makes one recall that all history is really a story, as re-constructed by historians from whatever dates, facts, episodes, they can collect and of how they piece them together or interpret them. "Others abide our question, but thou art free" has been said about Shakespeare due to uncertainty also about him, not only the year of his birth, but his very existence and identity --Was Bacon Shakespeare ? - has been one of the questions in English Literary History. In our own Indian History, in the recent past, we know that despite a number of Government and other Committees and Commissions, the date and year and even the fact of Netaji's death are still undetermined, thus indicating again how history and story mingle even in the modern period – the same would be even more true of the past, including Shivaji and his times. Some historians have described "history as a mixture of poetry and philosophy," to use the words of Macaulay.

Ramdas Story

To resume the story of Ramdas, the story goes that in 1655 (according to some of the year is 1676), when Ramdas, according to the practice of mendicants, came to

ask alms, Shivaji, in utter humility and surrender, fell at his feet and made over his Empire to him. Ramdas accepted the gift but returned it to Shivaji, saying that henceforth he must regard his kingdom as held in trust for God, and himself not a king but a trustee. In token whereof, Shivaji adopted the "Bhagva Jhenda" 'Saffron Banner', as his standard in view of the saffron robe of the mendicant.

The story is also told that after meeting Ramdas, Shivaji wished to renounce the world and become his disciple, but Ramdas wrote for him the following : "Gods and cows, Brahmins and Faith, these are to be protected, therefore God has raised you up." "Kings should fulfil their kingly office ; warriors the duties of a soldier ; Brahmins should perform their religious functions, each according to his station." "When the Faith is dead, death is better than life : Why live, when religion has perished?" "Gather the Marathas together, make religion live again : Our fathers laugh at us from Heaven !" "Discrimination, Prudence, Action, these be thy virtues; Rama killed Ravana by the aid of the Lord of Tulja. Tulja Bhavani conferred her blessing on Rama. To her Ramdas prays."

Other stories

Countless are these stories connected with Shivaji – there are stories also connected with his coronation at Raigad, the Gibraltar of the East, as it is called, where he was also cremated (5th April, 1680), as he had been crowned (6th June, 1674) in the presence of Gaga Bhatt, a renowned Shastri from Benares, how 50 thousand

Brahmins were then fed for a week, The episode of Afzal Khan, with its different versions by historians, itself has become a story, even as the famous story of his escape from Aurangzeb's court in a basket of sweets for distribution in charity to the poor and his presence back at the feet of his mother Jija Bai in the disguise of Bairagi. There is the story of the heroic defence of the Rangana Ghat (1660) by a thousand strong Mavalas under Baji Prabhu, Shivaji's former foe, turned into his devoted officer and brave supporter who himself was deeply wounded and died in this defence, which, not without justice, has been compared to battle of Thermopylae.

There are stories of the sack of Surat (1664 and 1670), Ahmednagar, Aurangabad, Golconda, and the foreign settlements and Karwar and Hubli, and after Shivaji's coronation ceremony (June 6, 1674) the narrative of Dr. Fryer, who had met and recorded the impressions of his Embassy representatives who had attended the coronation ceremony and were seeking permission to trade in safety and peace at Surat, Karwar, Hubli, etc., and the story of how Shivaji granted an interview to the English Embassy.

Story of Defiance

It seems worthwhile to recount here the following significant story of Shivaji's early days – his boyhood – as it proves how childhood shows the man. This story is given in the book, *The Grand Rebel : Shivaji, Founder of the Maratha Empire*, by Dennis Kincaid, and underlines how Shivaji was a born rebel. Here goes the story : "Shahaji

took his son to pay his respects to the Sultan. Within the Durbar hall the Sultan of Bijapur sat on a throne. As the courtiers in turn approached the throne, they prostrated themselves bowing their turbans to carpet. Shahaji followed their example. But his young son, without bowing saluted the Sultan with Maratha Salaam, such as he had seen his own people greet their superiors in villages of the hill country – simple, manly gesture of raising both hands with palms together to the level of chin. As Shivaji could not be persuaded to approach the Sultan's throne in the prescribed manner, his act was a 'piece of obstinate defiance', and it was only the high favour, which Shahaji enjoyed at court, which saved Shivaji from punishment." History has however shown that this was a symbolic and even a historic action, for Shivaji was destined to be the Grand Rebel, the symbol and embodiment of the spirit of an ancient and proud people re-awakening and re-asserting themselves.

Shivaji : The Fact, Significant as Mohen-Jo-Daro or Gandhi

Shivaji is a fact to be reckoned with, a phenomenon to be explained. He cannot just be explained away, as many Muslim, English and Marxist historians would have liked. He has happened ; it needs explaining, how and why, and cannot just be explained away. He is an inescapable, significant, vital part of human, heroic, national history, even like Mohen-Jo-Daro, even like Gandhi. His emergence and impact like those of Mohen-Jo-Daro and Gandhi have to be accepted in their full meaning, their real significance as giving a

new meaning to the history of Hindustan, nay the history of not only the Hindu people, but also the stories of national revival and growth everywhere.



Russian History, without Peter the Great, Tolstoy, Lenin and even Stalin? What will be History of Italy, without Mazzini, Garibaldi, Cavour and even Mussolini? What the German History without Frederick the Great, Bismarck and even Hitler? Yes, what will be Chinese History, without Confucius, Latoze and Buddhism and without Sanyat Sen and Mao and Communism and even Chiang Kai Shek?, Or the History of Vietnam without Ho-Chi-Minh? Or Pakistan without Jinnah?, Or Egypt without Zaghlol Pasha and Nasser? Or Turkey without Khalifa and Kamal Pasha?

Shivaji: The Force , Liberating Inspiring Nation-Making

Historians and writers, whether Moslem, English or even Marxists have had to concede the greatness of Shivaji, as a force, a liberating force, as a national force, as a nation-making, nation-building force, of exceptional strength and power, an inspiring power, a sustaining power, a power of renaissance and renewal, that recreates a people, infuses a new life in them, and enables them to march on once again, on their journey of never-ending pilgrimage to fulfil their Divinely destined goal to play their proper role in the history of the World.

The Mystery of History

For, what really is History, but the Story of Nations, story of their great men, their heroes? What will be American History, without Washington, Lincoln and even Roosevelt and Kennedy? What will be

It is one of the mysteries of History how a Shivaji, a Lokmanya Tilak, a Swami Dayananda, a Ramakrishna Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, Gandhi and even Nehru emerge at a Particular moment, in the history of a people and a country,

and re-vitalise a people, give a direction, and infuse new life into the flagging current of the force of their life, so that the current becomes more active and alive, and resumes its onward journey instead of becoming and ending as a stagnant pool. Shivaji has been hailed as a hero of Hindu History, nay the history of Hindustan, in this high, special sense, and not only by Hindu historians or Indian writers, but by others, even Muslim, English, and even Marxist historians and writers, who have had to concede his undoubted and proven greatness, as something exceptional and extraordinary, even unique. Whenever a copy of the Holy Koran came into his hands, he treated it with respect, and gave it to some of his Musalman followers. When the women of any Hindu or Mohammedan were taken prisoners by his men, and they had no friends to protect them, he watched over them till their relations came. Rawlinson writes : "Shivaji's respect for women was so well-known that on more than one occasion Muhammedans escaped from the sack of a town by dressing in women's clothes."

Rawlinson, Englishman that he is, further writes : "Shivaji must not be judged by twentieth century western standards. He was, according to the ethics of his age and nation, a brave and chivalrous man. His was a dark and violent age but his hands were not stained, like those of Aurangzeb, with the blood of his kindred. He was never deliberately or wantonly cruel. To respect women, Mosques, and non-combatants, to stop promiscuous slaughter after a battle to release and dismiss with honour captured

officers and men – these are, surely, no light virtues."

To some of us Indians, there may appear in this writing something of a grudging tribute, a touch of condescension, a hit as if twentieth century standards were higher – twentieth century practices, we all know, are not higher – what Germans did to the Jews, the Russians and Chinese have been doing to their own people, the Americans to the Negroes in America and to the Vietnamese in Vietnam, and what even we have done to each other, are all happenings in history, too recent to be forgotten.

Rawlinson adds : "Shivaji was a sincerely religious man. He believed himself to be constantly guided and inspired by Goddess Bhavani. He was the disciple of Ramdas and an admirer of the saintly Tukaram. His devotion to his parents, especially to his mother Jija Bai, was proverbial. He organised the army that shattered the Mughal Empire in the height of its power." Rawlinson concludes : "We still see the fruits of the organising genius of Shivaji." He has further said that the British Land Administration System was based on Shivaji's. He has also praised the Civil System introduced by Shivaji as in essentials the same as that of the Mauryas, and said the British too adopted Shivaji's though it is so-called 'bureaucracy', which it is a fashion to criticise but it 'is really indigenous' to the soil and probably more suited to the needs of the Eastern people that any form of representative Government, - the Districts were managed by village and district officials and the

Central Government consisted of the Heads of Departments, who formed a cabinet – it was called the Ashta Pradhan or Council of eight and directed the Policy of the State in general.

Shivaji's Personal Appearance

Rawlinson describes Shivaji in the following words : In appearance, Shivaji was a typical Maratha. He was short and slight, with long arms, small hands, an aquiline nose, a pointed beard, and a fair complexion. He had piercing eyes, and a resolute face, handsome and intelligent, but hard and feline. He was an excellent swordsman and horseman, of wonderful endurance, and pleasing and frank manner. Of his personal character, many estimates of a most diverse nature, have been formed. Grant Duff speaks of him 'as an assassin and freebooter', and so also many other English writers. But even Grant Duff has had to concede that 'his claim to high rank in the pages of history must be admitted.' Dennis Kincaid has compared Shivaji's role to that of Frederick the Great, in Germany, and to Garibaldi's in the history of Italy.

Marxists find Shivaji
"A Riddle in History"

K.L.Mahaley of the Department of History, Amravati, in his book Shivaji, The Pragmatist, following the fashion of the Marxist interpretation of History, and seeking to examine the fact and phenomenon of Shivaji, to find in it any traces of class war, or rise of the exploited against the exploiting classes, dedicating

his book, in the interest of 'a socio-economic revolutions', to Shivaji's Mavals, who were his main and most loyal and devoted supporters in his campaigns, is driven to concede : "How to apply the maxims of materialistic development of society to the static Indian society, is the problem. The non-applicability of laws of economic determinism makes rise of Shivaji to power a puzzle in history. How could he exhibit a secular conduct in his relations with the religious communities in that medieval age? How could he inspire that masses against the privileged sections of society, whom they suffered in meek subjection, just at the time of his birth?"

"These and the like are the questions that cannot be answered either through speculation of spiritualism or through the cognates of dialectical materialism. The principles of equality and fraternity came in action after a full century of his death, and socialism to come in active operation took more than two centuries. These questions are difficult to answer. Mysticism cannot have any place in the formulation of scientific history. Scientific thinking must govern the historic thought. But the means of scientific thinking in construction of Shivaji's history do not appear within sight to lay hands on. Will Shivaji continue to be a riddle in History?"

Error of 'Marxists' and 'Moderns'

'Marxists' and the so-called 'Moderns', are bound to get confused and find many a fact and phenomenon of History, ancient and even modern, "a puzzle and a riddle", for they have read but forgotten : "There

are more things in heaven and hell than are known to their philosophy”, materialist and modern. There are spiritual forces more powerful than material ; men live not by bread alone, and are motivated not merely by economic forces, but are willing to fight and die for ‘the ashes of our fathers and the temples of our Gods’.

Deeper Currents of History Shivaji and Gandhi

The soul of a people, the spirit of Renaissance of a people, is something more than or subtler than what seems on the surface, something gross or material, simply historical or factual, - it is something spiritual, something finer, and therefore more powerful and seemingly inexplicable, in terms of the usual, conventional explanations. To this category belong the emergence of Shivaji and Gandhi and their impact on history and on the millions and masses that are moved by these nation-souls, in whom the millions discover and greet their national soul, their spiritual identity. These persons – despite historians, their formulas and criteria, Marxist or other interpretations – inspire the people, as they inspire writers and poets, to weave stories around them : and these people, then inspired by these embodiments of the national heritage, epitomes of the national culture and incarnations of the National Soul, give the nation a new age of the renaissance of the best in its values, its culture. Shivaji in the 17th century, as Gandhiji in the 20th century, can only be adequately appreciated in this light, historically, or poetically, in fact scientifically and even

more truthfully. For Truth is more than Science, and embraces more than mere facts : And History is whatever really moves the people, and not mere events but also ideas and dreams, and even certainly stories of great men and national heroes, like Shivaji and Gandhi.

Story of Shivaji’s Chivalry

It seems appropriate to conclude this bunch of thoughts on Shivaji, with a story of his chivalry, typical of his respect for women, derived from his reverence for his mother Jija Bai, - the most formative influence of his life, which made him what he was, the embodiment of the best in his Hindu cultural heritage.

Here is the story, as given in Rawlinson’s Shivaji : The Maratha – His Life and Times. Soon after Shivaji had way-laid the convoy carrying treasure from Kalyan from the Muhammedan Governor Maulana Ahmed, to Bijapur and captured the treasure, one of Shivaji’s officers, Abaji Sondev, emboldened by Shivaji’s success, attacked Kalyan itself, captured the Governor and his family and took the town. “Abaji sent to Shivaji the daughter-in-law of Maulana Ahmed, a young women of striking grace and beauty. Shivaji behaved like a gallant soldier to his captives. The great Maratha, on seeing her, merely remarked with a laugh that had his mother been half so beautiful, he himself might have been a little less ugly, and dispatched her, with every respect, to her relations. This chivalrous attitude towards women (who according to the ethics of the day were the property of their captor) immensely increased

Shivaji's prestige." As mentioned earlier, this trait of Shivaji, has been testified to even by Khafi Khan, Aurangzeb's historian, though he has said of Shivaji : "He was distinguished in his tribe for courage and intelligence ; and for craft and trickery he was reckoned, a sharp son of the devil, the father of fraud."

Beauty and Significance of Shivaji in Story and History

It is clear thus that Shivaji has not only been celebrated in story and song by writers and poets – Hindus and Indians, - who hailed him as a national hero, symbol of a Nation's renaissance, a people's resurgence, but he really had noble traits of character, and heroic qualities of courage and valour and devotion to Goddess Bhavani and to the common people, which not only endeared him to the people, inspiring the devoted loyalty of the Mavalas to him, who fought under the command, with fire, faith and power, but which compelled admiration even from his

enemies and encomiums even from such historians as Muhammad Hashim, better known as Khafi Khan, and Grant Duff, both of whom have been quoted earlier.

Ranade's Shivaji

Rawlinson has complained that "the late justice Ranade's brilliant little essay on The Rise of the Maratha Power (Bombay) 1912) is spoilt by the author's exaggerated views on his hero's merits and achievements." For this very reason, the Indian reader may find Ranade's Rise of the Maratha Power really rewarding reading, and so the writer commends it to every reader, specially on the significant occasion of the nation-wide celebration of Chhatrapati Shivaji's coronation, so that our hearts may fill with a sense of elation and pride at Shivaji's abilities and achievements, and also induce in us a sense of devotion for the service of the Motherland, which animated his noble heart and makes of him a truly worthy and memorable figure, of which the Nation is justly proud.



A MONK'S REMINISCENCES

KESHAV KRIPA

THUS incident dates back seventy years. It was a beautiful moonlit night. Sitting on the verandah of a bungalow on the South Beach of Madras, a youthful Sannyasi was singing a song in tune with the roar of the waves.

"As a forest-fire is to the forest, a leopard to the deer herds, a lion to the stately elephant, the Sun to the darkness of the night, and what Krishna was to Kamsa, so is King Shivaji, a King among Kings, to the hordes of Mlechhas." The song poured forth in all its sublimity.

What is this? Swamiji uninhibitedly praising this "highway robber !" The disciple of the Swamiji could contain himself no longer. He interrupted the Swamiji excitedly and asked : "Swamiji ! What is this? How can a holy person like you praise such a thief, a cheat and a murderer. With a handful of rabble-rousers did he not indulge in loot and all kinds of mischief?" The Swamiji immediately stopped singing, his face red with indignation. He thundered "Shame on you! How can you say such unbecoming words about a great hero and a Dharmatma? At a time when our Dharma and Samskriti (culture) were on the brink of ruin, when our entire society was on the verge of extinction, when the noblest in the land had to undergo untold indignities, he descended as the much-awaited deliverer and established Dharma and saved our Society. How dare any one

utter such falsehood against him? This is the outcome of your reading Indian History written by foreigners who had no sympathy for your society, no respect for your hoary culture and traditions, but had the sole aim of building an Empire in this country. You imitate and repeat like a parrot these distortions of history !

"In fact, a universal prayer had gone up before the advent of this great man. Our seers and saints eagerly awaited his arrival to deliver them from the cruel clutches of the foreigners. He came to this world at such a critical hour, put an end to Adharma and established Dharma. He was an incarnation of Lord Shiva! He was endowed with all the great and noble qualities exemplified in our great epics. Is there a greater hero, a nobler soul, a greater devotee and a greater King than him ? He personified in himself this country's soul force. He was the torch bearer of the resurgent future of Bharath !" On and on went the Swamiji's voice. The disciple was stunned ! He felt very small, so foolish and so ignorant ! He said in a low tone : "Swamiji ! Please enlighten us about this great man and rid us of our misconceptions."

The Sannyasin began to depict the life of this great man in his melodious voice and inimitable style. He took his listeners back to the living memories of the events of history that happened 250 years ago.

Hours rolled by. Nobody stirred. That youthful Sannyasin was none other than Swami Vivekananda, who was the torch-bearer of the resurgent modern Bharat. Dr.M.C.Nanjunda Rao was the disciple who

has recorded for posterity these reminiscences in the Vedanta Kesari. It was at the house of Bhattarcharji that this illuminating incident took place.



He has a name

THE room was dark with drawn shutters, gleaming oil lamps purifying fires rising from the sacrificial offering filled the room with an ethereal air. At times the watching faces of the priests was startlingly clear and sometimes veiled in the translucent curtain of the ascending smoke that rose like a prayer. Jija Bai lay silent and at rest. She felt the absence of her husband. The ceremonies at the birth of a Hindu boy are numerous, as at all other occasions in the drama of Hindu life, where the chief actor is the father.

As was the custom among the Maharashtrians, some loving hands laid the babe in a winnowing fan, kissed his head in benediction and let a drop of honey fall through the circlet of a gold ring into its mouth, thus symbolically invoking the sweetness of life on the new born. Days rolled on in quick succession. For Jija Bai it had been a mixture of bitter-sweetness. Bitterness at the absence of her husband, tempered by the sweetness of all that a new mother experiences at the sight of her little new arrival. Each day would have brought out its own calendar of events, as the young one's quick senses responded to the environment and beauty around. The gurgles and helpless flaying of tiny hands and legs were a sheer rhythm of movement under the loving gaze of the mother.

Soon after the birth ceremony come others. The most important one is the christening at which the newcomer is to be assigned a name. The mother's heart beat in excitement as the moment arrived. Dressed in all her finery she held her trembling little mass on her lap. Through the fading mists of the past and the dim horizons of the future the mother recognized the Goddess Bhavani, as she stood before her chosen instrument. A gleam of recognition lit up the young mother's countenance ; she who had sought Her blessings bent and whispered the name 'Shiva' into the tiny ears. That was Her name and that was what Jija Bai chose to call her baby. He is now known to all as Shivaji – the name that came as a gift from Divine.

TRICENTENARY COMMEMORATES HIS CORONATION

A huge procession was winding long the cause-way. The day was the 5th of June. A mass of heads bobbed up and down while deafening roars broke the stillness of the morning.

"What are these people exulting about?" asked Jim McGraw who was in India for a holiday.

"Oh, that !" said Apte. "Their exultation dates back to the days of Shivaji. Today they are hearkening to the time when Shivaji ruled over Maharashtra three centuries ago. They call it the Tri-Centenary Celebrations of Shivaji !"

Jim : "From what you say I guess he must have ruled over Maharashtra three hundred years ago. Right ? Many such rulers must have come and gone. Why this fuss over him?"

Apte : "Volumes of history lie behind this question of yours. Yes, Shivaji was an uncommon man and a very special King. His rule was one that Indians will remember with gratitude."

Jim : "Why ?"

Apte : "Many are the reasons that could be given for this. At the time when he came to the throne, India was broken into fragments, ruled by unscrupulous deputies of the Moghul Emperor at Delhi. Even

among the Hindus unscrupulous and greedy behaviour only prevailed. The canker of casteism was eating into the vitals of society. Father and son, brother and brother rose against each other. This man who lived in mountain hideouts unified these warring brothers and parents, gathered them under a banner that recognised no other distinction than the brotherhood of man, fought no evil but injustice and reigned supreme for sometime."

Jim : "But that was three hundred years ago? Why all this fuss now? Many men have come and gone, more so in India. Who is responsible for the revival of his name and what was its purpose ?"

Apte : "You are asking a question that that will bring out a response which may not be palatable for various reasons."

Jim : "I insist. The bare truth is what I want. The twentieth century with all its barriers down and all truths bared to a point makes our senses ready to absorb anything. I am sure you have nothing to fear. I know why you are hesitating. It is, perhaps, a reference to the British rule in India that you are trying to withhold. Have no fear of hurting my feelings. I am eager to hear."

Apte : "Precisely, friend, that is what I wanted to avoid. After all, the past is dead. Resurrections of this crucifixion of

a nation and the ghastly torments it had undergone, - these were what I wanted to avoid, but now that you insist, here I give. As you know, the English came to this land as traders but later taking advantage of the prevailing dissensions among the local chiefs, they took on the role of peace makers and ultimately established themselves as rulers. In this they broke many promises, resorted to questionable means and ground down a nation that was already prostrate. Centuries of attack and foreign rule had made the Indians lose courage and confidence. Complete submission to all indignities was the order of the day. Revolts were put down ruthlessly by a power that had come asking for permission to trade. Out of this bruised, broken nation there arose a few, who questioned the right of an alien people to rule over the natives with such brutality. The nation as a whole had lost all. The past was as much dead as the future seemed to be unreal. It was at such a time that a son of Maharashtra rose up and gave to Indians a national ideal in Shivaji. He fostered the cult of Nationalism, among the masses by organising Ganapathi Pooja and Shivaji festival. He redeemed this great King from the dust of two centuries, repainted him in vivid colours and set him up to let Indians know that from ancient times Indians had

never bent their knees before insolent might, and it was time they took up arms." Jim : "Oh ! Is this not the same Lokamanya Tilak, famous for his Gita Rahasya?"

Apte : "Jim, you surprise me with your knowledge of the literary accomplishments of Tilak. It may interest you to know that the very Gita Rahasya you speak of was written while he was confined as a political prisoner in Mandalay."

Jim : "I would like to know something more about this Shivaji. From what I gather, it seems that India was, in a similar state of chaos as when the British landed on Indian soil. Though born in this small state of Maharashtra, he was first an Indian and then only a Maharashtrian. Rare, these days, when each state is fighting for its autonomy ! The welfare of the name was his greatest duty, and caste and don't-touchism were even then prevalent, and Shivaji had done his bit in establishing equality and brotherhood of man !"

Apte : Wait Jim, turn over the pages of this journal, and there you will find all that you want to know of Shivaji, set out for you in colourful medieval splendour. The Maratha legions will thunder across the pages once more reconstructing and re-enacting the heroism of bygone years.



THE VISION AND THE PROPHECY

JADHAV RAO gave a house party which was akin to holding a miniature Darbar. As head of the house and host of noble rank, he sat on a high chair with his guests around him, among whom was Maloji, favourite cavalry officer. The boy Shahaji, then aged five, stood next to his father.

The boy was a handsome lad and caught Jadhav Rao's eye. Jadhav Rao beckoned to the young boy to come over and sit on his right knee. A moment later his little daughter came running towards her father and sat upon his other knee. The father looked fondly upon the pair. Jadhav Rao asked the young girl in jest whether she would have the boy for her husband, and when she nodded her head, he turned to the company assembled around and made the lordly gesture of saying they would make a fine couple.

Interpreting this to be the wish of their lord and benefactor and regarding it as the highest compliment to themselves, Maloji and Vithoji stood up and ceremoniously accepted the betrothal proposal for Shahaji, as suggested by Jadhav Rao. There was no levity or jest in their acceptance. The spectators assented in equal seriousness, to the embarrassment and astonishment of Jadhav Rao, who now saw he had gone too far. The embarrassment grew to near rebellion in Jadhav Rao's household, where the women,

led by his own wife would not hear of the marriage of their daughter to someone of such unequal rank. Matters took a serious turn when Jadhav Rao tried to explain it all away, for Maloji claimed the alliance with Jadhav Rao's house stating that the pronouncement was made in a full house of noblemen. Thus it could never be withdrawn.

Even though it was Lakhuji Jadhav himself who first put Maloji on the ladder of success, on which he rose in rank and in the Nizam Shah's favour, the members of Jadhav Rao's household, more particularly the women, and chiefly his wife, were in no mood to subscribe to an inter-marriage between their respective houses. Equality of rank, in so far as marriage was concerned, had to be supported by equality at the time of birth, the women said. They saw no harm in the boy Shahaji, Maloji's son, playing with their three-year-old daughter, Jija Bai. Yet it was clearly understood by the women of Jadhav Rao's house that such familiarity should never be construed as evidence of social equality between the two families.

Having to choose between an irate wife and a dependent with wounded pride, Jadhav Rao had no option but to try and get out of the commitment by rebuking Maloji for his insolence. Therefore, it is said, he forthwith ordered his clerk to draw up the account of the monies due to Maloji

and Vithoji and to pay them off with notice of immediate discharge of their services. Jadhav Rao ordered the two young men to quit his territory with the semi-royal fiat he pronounced.

The exile order came as a shattering blow to the prestige of the two brothers, who returned to their village of Verul near Daulatabad. Back to the land they went to till, working with half-naked bodies in the scorching sun. The uniform they once wore with its glistening gold braid and decorations became a thing of the past. To one who has been a soldier, the loss of a uniform brings sorrow which grows within the heart.

The days moved heavily for the two brothers, who realised that it was only the power and wealth of Jadhav Rao which had crushed them down. Lack of wealth and lack of equality of status humbled them. But for the position he held in the court of Nizam Shah, Jadhav Rao would never have dared to insult them in the manner he had. But poverty often leaves no other choice to man but to swallow an insult hurled at him, and while Maloji vowed that he would avenge the wrong done to him, there was very little he could do to wipe out the injustice he and his brother had suffered. The long evenings in the fields grew longer as the days passed. During the day their minds turned to the seeds they had sown, the rains that would fall thereon, the fields that had to be ploughed, the bullocks that had to be fed and tended, and the crops that would grow at harvest time which were their only reward.

As the days of harvest grew nearer, the brothers worked harder in the fields for, in that region, wild animals prowled at night and during the day the birds damaged the crops. The days at the glittering court at Ahmednagar were no more and their living was down on earth, close to the mud and slush. A return to the days of glory seemed impossible now, unless some miracle happened. Late one night, in the Hindu month of Magha, they left their village home and walked towards their fields. The harvest was nearing and the moon shone bright and full. Accounts differ about the details of how it happened, but the legend still holds that Goddess Bhavani appeared to Maloji that night in a vision. Bhavani was worshipped as patron Goddess by a large number of Rajput tribes and when the Rajputs came down to Maharashtra, they brought their mode of worship with them. The main centre of Bhavani cult is at Tuljapur, some 20 miles from modern Sholapur. The temple at Tuljapur is said to have been built by Shahaji and is reported to have been twice sacked by the Muslims. On account of its subsequent association with Shivaji and the fact that Shivaji's grandfather, Maloji in a vision and forecast for him in hour of desperation the glory that was yet to come to that family the Bhavani temple at Tuljapur remains even to this day a great place of worship for the people of Maharashtra.

That memorable night in the fields of Verul, Bhavani appeared to Maloji draped in silver white, heavily bejewelled with shimmering armlets of gold and with the customary tikka on her forehead. As the moon shone on Bhavani, it was a wondrous sight for

Maloji to see. At first he appeared frightened by the vision, but soon the Goddess spoke to him in soft comforting words. And then She uttered the great prophecy, which has since become a legend in every Maratha home. She told Maloji that in his house would be born a son who would be a great man. This was the blessing, which She of Her own accord had come to lavish upon him. This son, She went on to explain, would found a Kingdom and twenty-seven of his descendants in the direct line would rule the land.

By now the vision had turned into a dream, for one fails to remain fully conscious when receiving such a blessing and as Maloji was wondering how from the poverty to which he had now been degraded the tide would turn for him, She told him more. There was an ant hill nearby, She said, and around it there lurked a snake which protected it. "Dig it up", She bade him, "for a great treasure lies buried there. Do not be afraid to possess it, and when you do take it to Sheshaji Naik at Shringonde who will keep it safely for you." The man She named as the safe keeper of that treasure was the local banker. Maloji awoke, startled by the vision. He spoke of it to Vithoji who, at first, did not believe what his brother told him. It was too late to test the truth of the prophecy that same night, and so they walked back home with Maloji still trying to convince his younger brother that the vision he saw was a true one and that Bhavani did actually appear before him. The morrow came and back to the fields the brothers went. Vithoji found the ant

hill near which a snake moved about that Bhavani had indicated. At their approach the snake slid away into the grass and the two brothers bent down with their picks and shovels to unearth the treasure they were told was buried there. The earth was hard and seemed to want to hold on. As they dug layer by layer, and nothing was seen, Vithoji gave his brother a disbelieving look. Maloji also became frustrated but still maintained that this was what the Goddess had bade him do. The vision was real, he persisted, whether the treasure was there or not. The early sun was rising. It was getting warm now. They paused to mop the sweat off their brows with Vithoji now beginning to wonder whether it was worthwhile digging anymore. But Maloji kept saying, "I saw Her, I tell you. I saw Her as clearly as I see you now. She told me there was a treasure hidden here." The younger brother picked up his crude shovel and as if to humour Maloji, agreed to dig on a little more. Not long thereafter the iron struck a huge metal jar. In it was the treasure Bhavani had spoken of. Vithoji now dug with twice the speed. He did not doubt Maloji any more. For Maloji the dream had proved a reality and he knew he had found the hidden treasure. As they loosened the jar from the surrounding earth, brought it up to the surface of the ground, they paused to wonder what it held in store for them. As they opened it, the gold glistened. A new day had dawned for the two Bhonsle brothers, whom Jadhav Rao had cast out from his court and out of his sight. A newer future awaited them – the second part of the blessing was yet to come true.

NIPPED IN THE BUD

REPEATED campaigns kept Shahaji busy, but he managed to slip out and spend a little time with his young wife. She needed him now more than ever. Her delicate condition demanded his presence and attention but Shahaji was a warrior. The call of duty beckoned to him and before a thought did flash he had to be up and away. Jija Bai was after all a Hindu wife. Complete identification with her husband's needs was her rule. What worried her most was that her people were vassals. Slavishness was eating into their entrails and they had constantly to bow before insolent might.

Shahaji looked at Jija Bai with concern and half muttered to himself : "As a matter of fact I should stay by her side now." But then the powers that he addressed were obviously deaf. Suddenly, a bright flash lit up the eyes of this dreaming mother-to-be and she prayed in hushed whispers, "I want a redeemer to be born." It was in the month of Shrawan, a period of laughter and joy, lights and festivities that the bolt fell. Jija Bai's father Lakhuji Jadhav, who lived at Daulatabad, had gone to the Durbar with his three sons. There they were murdered in cold blood. Murder, foul and treacherous, had felled two innocent victims.

Jija Bai's anguish knew no bounds. Shahaji's mind was in a turmoil. Today it was the Jadhavs, tomorrow it could be the

Bhonsles. Where could he go? To the Moghuls? To Adil Shah or Khutub Shah? It would be the same old story. No ! he wanted to be free. At what cost? Revolt! The idea possessed him. With this resolve Shahaji hastened to Poona, the Jagir of the Bhonsles since Maloji's time. Here he raised the banner of freedom.... Or was it revolt ? Tension mounted. Nobody knew what lurked in the corners. Shahaji was worried about Jija Bai and said to her : "There is no knowing what calamity may befall us. In this condition we cannot take you with us. At the same time it would be risky to leave you here."

"I could stay at Shivneri," suggested Jija. So leaving her to the care of Vishwas Rao and a few trusted followers, Shahaji set out. The news of Shahaji's audacity reached the Bijapur Durbar, and the Adil Shah to whom the territory belonged fumed. A mere Maratha ! Dare he question the authority of the Shah ? The Sultan issued orders. A large force under Vazir Khawas Khan set out for Poona to teach Shahaji, the rebel a lesson. Adil Shah reached Poona, ransacked it, ruined its temples and set fire to the whole city.

Death and destruction stalked in ugly parade the fair streets of Poona. Ruin, Desecration, Destruction, Insult. All these were there. Yet the marauders were not satisfied. To crown their acts of brutality they ploughed the city with an ass-drawn

plough. An iron crow-bar was driven into the ground on which a chappal and a broken cowry were suspended. What a demonstration of ugly tyranny !



THE REDEEMER

IN the hill fort of Shivneri, about 50 miles from Poona a young mother crooned her baby son to sleep. The mother's eyes held a far away look. Visions of wars, where the young one would feature, seemed to unfold before her. She had prayed to the Mother Goddess that a Redeemer be born to avenge the humiliations that her people had been

subjected to. Her yearning heart had longed for a son, whom she could nurse and nourish with leonine courage to stand the onslaughts of formidable foes.

Now, her days of fasting and fervent prayers were over. The little Redeemer lay in her arms, a helpless babe. The day that the Eternal Mother ushered this little Warrior on to the arena on life was Monday, February 29, 1630. In the fastness of the hill fort, away from the maddening crowd of storm and strife, the same hand rocked the baby to sleep – it was the hand of the mother who was to rule through her son in years to come.

Strife and bitterness had marked the years of her childhood and maidenhood. Even now her husband was a hunted man who fled, leaving her to the care of a few trusted followers. Jija Bai's husband belonged to the family of Bhonsles. For about 300 years before the birth of Jija Bai the land of Maharashtra was overrun by invaders. The cries of the people who were looted and butchered, whose temples were desecrated that a Redeemer be born, who would stop this oppression. Some Maratha Sardars had become he servants of the Moghuls and were helping in the oppression of their own countrymen. It was in this kind of environment that Jija Bai spent her childhood years. As a young girl, she met Shahaji, the son of Maloji Raje Bhonsle. As children they had played together and later were tied in holy bonds of matrimony.

It is precisely at this time that Nature seemed to have planned to shape the destiny of this great woman, so that she

might in turn mould the destiny of Maharashtra. Jija Bai's adolescence and youth witnessed the events that brought Maharashtra to its knees. She would flare up at the oppression of her people. She loathed the very fact that here husband, brother, and father had to bow in servitude to the Moghul oppressors.



To fight a common enemy internal unity is absolutely essential. Even this was uncertain, as internal quarrels, misunderstandings, feuds and petty bickerings had rent the fabric of society into shreds. The family of Jija Bai's husband, the Bhonsles and of her father, the Jadhavs fought bitterly, and her brother Dattaji was killed by her brother-in-law. The two sides of her family became bitter enemies. A few days later the Adil

Shah of Bijapur had her father and her brother killed.

It was in the midst of these tragic events that Jija Bai felt that she was soon to be a mother. It was possible that she had visions as a young woman that a liberator would be born, who would set her people free from the strangle-hold of servitude and slavery. History records that, during the months of her confinement, Jija Bai would often speak of the dream of seeing a sovereign king who would bring back the rule of justice and loyalty among her people.

Within the forest and hill-girded Shivneri fort she fasted and fervently prayed to Bhavani, the Mother Goddess. A few faithful retainers manned the bastions. Beyond the walls stretched panther-haunted woods and jungle wastes. Wild and lonely was the place where Jija Bai spent her lonely hours and filled them with the dreams of the future liberator, for the fulfillment of which she invoked the blessings of Bhavani, the universal mother. Now this little babe lay before her, his life like the uncharted ocean. Yes, this frail vessel had to be equipped and fortified to battle with the tumultuous waves of life. The task that lay before Jija Bai was tremendous but she was prepared for it.



THE ELUSIVE LITTLE ONE

SHAHAJI was on his heels with the Moghul hordes after him. He fled to safety and it was Bijapur once again. If not on Shahaji, they let loose their fury in pursuit of Jija Bai and Shivaji. In the midst of all the turmoil the only feeling that the child Shivaji might have been aware of was the fear and uncertainty that played on his mother's mind. The fort where his mother had taken refuge could never stand a regular siege. A vague hope persisted that the Moghul patrols might not know where Jija Bai was.

When Shivaji was six the blow fell. It is not known how the secret of Jija Bai's hiding place was betrayed, but all we know is that Jija Bai was taken captive, but the Moghuls never found Shivaji. Perhaps, the alarm was given in time for a servant to snatch up the child and dart through the back gates of the fort to be lost in the jungles around.

Jija Bai was borne in a palanquin surrounded by Moghul troops. The motley procession with its captive wound its way to Triambak, a hallowed spot for the Hindus, but then also the headquarters of the Moghuls. In the vast cliff that overhangs, is the spring where the sacred Godavari rises. Today it is an enchanting place, with its black stone temples of simple grandeur dedicated to the great Lord Siva, trees blooming in the courtyard of the town. When Jija Bai came in through the gates of the town her heart

sank in despair, for the houses were in ruins and the streets were empty. She had the fear that now that they had caught her they must inevitably find her son.

The hand of providence turned the cruelty of the Moghul commander into indifference. Jija Bai's only value to him was as a hostage. She was sent under heavy guard to a fortress, while measures were taken to speed up the capture of the son. He ordered the patrols in the hills to redouble their efforts. Coming events cast their shadows long before the event itself. Even as a child he was to be as slippery as he later grew to be.

For three years his devoted servants carried Shivaji with them into the recesses of the hills with Moghuls hounding them. These hills are wild labyrinth of narrow passes between huge cliffs where the air is stifling and damp ; of rolling uplands where the yellow spear grass stabs one's ankles and the leafless shrubs seem to crouch, tightly gripping the shallow pebble-strewn soil; of endless avenue through the luxuriant forest, under one's feet a carpet of rotting leaves squelching at every step, and all around the suspense of breathless noon. Bitter is the winter in those hills, a thick mist clinging about the trees almost till noon, so that even the hill-men come out into the day-light chilled and numbed, slowly stretching their aching limbs in the sun. In May come the long rains. At first

a few showers, pleasant after parching drought. A thick mist veils the ravines, while in the darkening woods the coppersmith bird hoots menacingly warning of the approaching storm. Red clouds climbing the sky; a hush and sense of tension ; and then with the first outburst of thunder, trees bend and scream under sea-bitter wind, and the rain falls in hard white rods, that beat the grass flat and send rocks hurtling down precipices and sound upon cottage roofs like the clamour of kettle-drums.

While most well-to-do Hindus had come to accept Muslim domination as inevitable and had been seduced by the luxury and comfort of Muhammadan courts, Shivaji spent his earlier childhood among men not yet subdued, among wild tribesmen and in lonely forest villages. Other young Hindus of his rank lived as neighbours with Muhammadan gentry and if they were despised and sometimes persecuted, they accepted such inconveniences without too much complaint ; but to Shivaji the Muhammadans were the people who had taken his mother away and who followed him relentlessly.



Through winter, the monsoon, and short breathless summer, the fugitives wandered in the hills, never daring to rest long under any roof, always in constant anxiety. It would be difficult to exaggerate the effect on the child's mind of these three years.

When he was ten, his mother escaped from her fortress, but we do not know any details of the manner of her escape. She joined her son in the hills. She can hardly have hoped to see him again. In the loneliness of her imprisonment she had turned increasingly to religion for comfort ; and the re-union with her son must have seemed almost a miraculous answer to her prayers. The war between the Empire and Bijapur was drawing wearily to its end, and the Moghuls abandoned their search for Shivaji. Glad of the respite, mother and son lived together in some cottage in the hills. Shivaji never forgot listening to his mother, while she told him of the old glories of Hinduism and how her family and his father's had been free and noble even before the coming of the Greeks, in days when Hindustan was the land of the Hindus, indeed !



THE LAND AND THE HERO

OUR knowledge of the past is always partial, partly inaccurate, clouded by ambivalent evidence and biased historians, and perhaps distorted by our own patriotic or religious partisanship. "Most history is guessing and rest is prejudice." So we must operate with partial knowledge and be content with possibilities. In History, as in Science and Politics, relativity rules and all formulas should be suspect. Perhaps, within these limits we may ask what history has to say about the nature, conduct and prospects of man.

History is conditioned by geology and geography. Everyday the sea encroaches some where upon the land or land upon the sea. Mountains rise and fall to the rhythm of emergence and erosion. Rivers swell and flood or dry up and change their course. Geography is the matrix of history, its nourishing mother and disciplining home. Its rivers, lakes and oceans draw settlers to their shores, for water is the life of organisms and towns. Mountains rise in a confusion of creases defying domestication, hiding in its dark caves secrets that kindle the spirit of adventure in man.

Man is as much a product of natural environment as he is the heir to the history of the community or group to which he belongs. In the following narratives we shall try to trace the history of such a

group or body of men against the background of the stresses and strains that they were subjected to. Maharashtra, as the place is known, is synonymous with Shivaji, one of the sons of the soil, whose mastery and craftsmanship in war earned for him a name that stands indelibly etched on the tablets of Indian History. The natural hide-outs that this piece of land afforded and the name that he earned amply bring out the full advantage that he took of the geographical situation of this piece of land.

This girdle of land lies east of the Ghats. The rocky nature of the country and the abundance of forests made travelling difficult and unprofitable. The country was cut up by Nature in to small compartments in which the natives lived isolated, self-contained lives. The Maratha people's love of isolation was greatly helped by Nature, which provided them with many ready-made and easily defensible fortresses close at hand, to which they could flee for refuge and whence they could offer tenacious resistance. Unlike the Indo-Gangetic plain this country could not be conquered and annexed by one cavalry dash or even one whole year's campaigning. Here the natives had the chance of putting up a long struggle against the superior numbers, and, as it often happened, of recovering their own when the invaders were worn out.

A hero's glories are sung by the bards of his home-country. His greatness is lost to

others and, with the passage of time, runs the risk of sinking into the oblivion of dead and forgotten past, from which the credit for its revival goes to history or other illustrious sons who featured in the country's struggle for freedom. Tilak realised the necessity to rouse the sleeping leviathan in his countrymen by hearkening back to the musty forgotten pages of history and by using his artistry in painting the faded colours with vivid hues, that stand out in stark contrast to the pale and misty mass to which India had been reduced then. He retrieved this forgotten warrior, Shivaji, and set him up as a national hero. How well he deserves this description is for us to judge.

At a time when India was ravaged by the Moghul hordes, her temples desecrated, land appropriated and the natives reduced to slavery, there rose a man in a corner of India who challenged this unjust might. The past is a powerful force that silently acts on the living present. It is, by no means, dead. The historical process is a continuous whole, perennial and dynamic. The sap and savour of the fruits would be meaningless without the roots.

Maharashtra today has a distinctive personality evolved in the course of centuries. The wealth of Maharashtra is not to be assessed in terms of its material riches alone. The character of its people is an invaluable asset to the country as a whole. This has not emerged suddenly into life, like Minerva fully equipped from the head of Zeus. There was a time, not very long ago, when Indian nationalism was

supposed to have been inspired by Mazzini and Garibaldi. A closer study of our own history reminds us of Chandra Gupta Maurya as the first Indian patriot to organise successful national resistance to foreign aggression. In its wake was found the glorious Empire of Asoka. Later, Shivaji demonstrated (as Jadunath Sarkar puts it) that the Hindu race could build a nation, found a state, defeat enemies, conduct their own defence, prefect and promote art and literature, commerce and industry, and maintain navies and ocean-trading fleets of their own or conduct naval battles on equal terms with foreigners. Shivaji, as Sarkar says, taught the modern Hindus to rise to the full stature of their growth.

Jawaharlal Nehru writes in his *Discover of India* : "Shivaji was the symbol of resurgent Hindu Nationalism, drawing inspiration from the old classics, courageous and possessing high qualities of leadership. He built up the Marathas as a strong unified fighting group and gave them a national background and made them a formidable power which broke up the Moghul Empire. There are glimpses to show that it was not all adventurism, though many adventurers held the field. The Marathas had a wider conception and as they grew in power this conception also grew." Warren Hastings wrote in 1784 : The Marathas possess, alone of all the people of Hindustan and Deccan, a principle of national attachment which is strongly impressed on the minds of all individuals of the nation and would probably unite their chiefs as in one common cause, if any great danger were to threaten the general State.

THE PRECEPTOR AND THE PRINCE

SHAHAJI was a rolling stone gathering little moss, for the Sultan of Bijapur moved him around like a pawn in his Kingdom. The Adil Shah transferred Shahaji to the Karnatic, not in charge of any military campaign but as a second-in-command to his Muslim general. At the time of this movement, Shahaji thought it advisable to give his wife and son a guardian, and the man he entrusted with this responsible work was his faithful Brahmin assistant, Dadaji Kondadev. Kondadev thus became the guardian and tutor to the young Shivaji and as the need for living in a fortress was now not so acute on grounds of safety, Shivaji came down to the plains of Poona with his mother.

Shivaji was now thirteen. Of the Brahmin aristocracy Shivaji's tutor Dadaji Kondadev was a fine example. His devotion had become proverbial. His one passion was the service of his young master. He was punctilious almost to the point of eccentricity in his honesty. As an illustration of this the following story is told. He had caused an orchard to be planted on Shivaji's estate, and he warned the servants that anyone who stole fruits from the trees would be punished. One day he himself was standing at the orchard at noon ; he was thirsty and without thinking he stretched out his hand and picked a ripe mango which was swinging tantalisingly before him. A moment later, he remembered the warning that he had himself given to

the servants, and he was overpowered by remorse. He called for a sword and got ready to hack off his offending hand, the very hand of one who had earlier laid the rule which it broke. The servants crowded round him and, weeping strove hard to dissuade him from so extravagant a self-punishment. Though he laid aside his sword, he wore thereafter a coat without a sleeve for his right arm. This incident is often quoted in India, and it may sound theatrical to English or other alien readers, but the emotional atmosphere was so highly-charged in Moghul India that any gesture of remorse and penitence would have been neither strange nor unusual.

Dadaji was not only a saint and a scholar but he was also a capable administrator. He devoted himself to restoring the estate to something of its former level of prosperity. He started with the wolf plague, offering a reward from his own savings for each of the wolves killed. The hill-men found wolf-killing more paying than raids on an occasional caravan, and soon cleared the country of wolves. Then Dadaji tried to tempt the peasants back to their fields from banditry in the woods. He offered land to them at graduated rates of a nominal rent of one rupee for the first year, three rupees for the second, and so on up to twenty rupees in the sixth year. Many of the tribesmen of the hills were attracted by this offer, left their forests and mountain villages and settled down on

Shivaji's estate and became in course of time his enthusiastic adherents. Dadaji recruited other hill-men as armed guards to protect the countryside from brigands.

For the first time in many years, the villagers knew relief from constant peril. Confidence returned. Houses began to be re-built and temples were whispered grateful prayers.



POONA AND THE GOLDEN PLOUGH

THE chief village in Shivaji's lands was Poona. Poona was a small village, known only for its temples and the orthodoxy of their priests. At the time of Shivaji's return from Bijapur even these temples were in ruins. The village had several times been looted and was now entirely deserted, save a few fisher folk who lived along the river Muta. When the last Muhammadan force had passed that way, the commander caused all the houses and walls to be pulled down, and with a final gesture of resentful contempt, ordered a team of asses to be harnessed to a plough and driven over the foundations. Then, solemnly cursing the site of the Hindu town, he planted an iron rod in the earth as a symbol of his malediction.

Dadaji now dug up this iron rod and threw it away. But he realised that the memory of the curse would remain with the superstitious villagers, so he retorted to the gesture of the Muhammadan commander by one that was even more dramatic; he had the site ploughed over once again, but this time with white oxen drawing a plough of pure gold and the royal prince himself wielding it.

From a site deserted and shunned, Poona rapidly became a prosperous town thereafter. One day it would be the Antioch of Hindu India. To measure the change one may look forward to the days of its splendour and quote the impression of an English visitor, Roberson : "Vast wealth poured into Poona from many sources. The city was bright with armed men, handsome horses, rich palanquins and gorgeous houses ; messengers ran from place to place ; all was gay with sport, dances and merry-making." But in spite of its Wealth and frequent holidays and festivals, Poona was known for its peaceful, orderly life. Foreigners have remarked favourably on the sensible and sober character of the people.

Dadaji could not foresee that the little village for whose prosperity he did so much would one day be one of the important cities of India, but it was his patient administration that laid the foundations of Poona's civic greatness.

THE SCHEDULE OF A KING-IN-THE-MAKING

A MARATHA house is generally built round two courtyards; the front courtyard, having a pillared colonnade round it with an archway to the street, is used for the reception of strangers and the recreation of the men of the household; the back courtyard, used generally by the women, has an altar in the centre planted with sacred basil. In the front colonnade, the men would recline in the evenings. Servants bring oil lamps, the company rising to salute with lifted hands the sacred flame regarded as a symbol of life.

This must have been the happiest moment of the day for Dadaji – rest after long hours of wrestling with the business of the estate – rest and leisurely perusal of his scrolls of Sanskrit verse – the quiet evening, the soft lamp-light, the black squat Sanskrit characters opening up worlds of beauty. Presently he would call Shivaji, and the boy squatted down beside him while he recited the sonorous couplets of old epics, singing of the heroes of Hindustan. And Shivaji sat entranced, while the lamp flames leapt up in the night, and great moths tumbled about the carved pillars of the colonnade, and the dreams that filled the memory of his earliest childhood became fixed in a passionate ambition.

As though to prepare himself for the long ordeal of his life, Shivaji spent his days in an arduous routine of daily exercise. He

gathered round him a band of hill-men, and with them wandered over the same hills, where he had spent those perilous years of his childhood. In the ravines, where he had then stumbled wearily, he now strode as master. He loved, as all his life, to subject himself to every strain, to test his strength to the utmost. He turned to lonely paths, where even his companions hesitated to follow ; he scrambled along the rocky ledges of sheer cliffs, sending eagles and yellow vultures screaming from their nests. In time he came to know every mile of that wild hill-country, as familiarly as his own house in Poona. And the hill-men, at first peering distrustfully from their stockade villages at rumours of a stranger, presently came to greet him with admiration. He had a smile for all of them ; and we know from all who recorded their impressions of him how attractive his smile was. These hill-men were one day to form the back-bone of the Maratha army.

After a long day in the forest Shivaji would return to Poona, the hills violet behind him, and before him the rolling yellow fields. As every Hindu usually does, he would go first to his mother on returning to the house. At that hour she would be worshipping the sacred Tulsi before the altar in the centre of the inner courtyard. The altar was planted with holy basil. She walked slowly round the altar, a lamp in her hand, the golden petal of the lamp-light dispelling the gathering darkness. When her prayers

were over she would talk to Shivaji. They were so much together that they understood each other perfectly.

Presently, he would leave her for his supper, for in a Hindu family the men and women are apart. His supper – a little salted rice and milk, or a few maize-cakes, - would be served in the colonnade of the front courtyard, Shivaji reclining against a column, the little pile of rice set on a plantain leaf before him, and all around the leaf the maid-servants had drawn designs in coloured flour.

And after supper followed his studies with Dadaji. So the years passed, and Shivaji grew to manhood.



Aspirations for a New Order

WHILE Poona was his base, Shivaji was not content to stay put on the plateau of the Deccan. An inner urge kept taking him around the mountainous countryside, discovering new hill tracks, some of which were difficult to follow. Dadaji Konda Dev encouraged this love of an outdoor life. The old man believed that this followed from Shivaji's natural desire to visit the various corners of his jagir. He had little idea of what was really at the back of the young man's mind.

Out of these seemingly harmless outdoor expeditions, which grew in number as the days went by, Shivaji started making contacts with new people, who were the natives of mountainside. Towards them Shivaji began to feel a natural affinity. They in turn were pleased to see their own Jagirdars come to visit them, despite the parching sun and the heavy monsoons and defying the difficult mountain tracks which Shivaji had to cross on horseback and on foot.

To climb these high mountains and wade through the dense forests of the Western Ghats, Shivaji spent many days and nights in the jungle. The wild beasts who frequented this area in greater abundance than now, did not deter him from plotting his camp wherever he had to halt for the night. This was the hazardous life of his

fellowmen; this was the life he too would follow. In this area, and particularly in the district of Maval, there lived a sect of very poor people, who called themselves after the district and were known as the Mavalis. Mavalis were a sturdy, hard-working type, untainted by the sophistication of civilisation. Their problems were basic ; they only wanted food to eat and a garment or two, albeit dirty, with which to clothe their nakedness. But these people had character in them, a priceless possession, probably formed the ruggedness of the surrounding hills. As the Mavalis came within the orbit of his jagir, revenue taxes were levied on them by the Jagirdar who was Shahaji himself. Shivaji, who was administering the Jagir on behalf of his father, began to realise the strain of these taxes on the extremely poor people. He, therefore, told Konda Dev that in view of the barren soil on which these people could cultivate but little, there should be some remission of taxes for the Mavalis.

Despite the fact that the Mavalis were a backward people and not too civilised, Shivaji developed a fondness for them. He encouraged the idea of their getting enlisted in his service. He gave them small and un-important jobs – of being couriers taking messages from Konda Dev to the various parts of the district and of serving as peons who attended to household work. A few, who showed talent for military service, he began to enroll as soldiers. According to the historians of the day, the salary the Mavalis received in the service of the Jagir varied between one and two rupees per month. There were other jobs and inducements offered to the Mavalis,

especially those who could wield a javelin. Their duty was to protect the village people from the attack of wild beasts. A man-eating tiger or dangerous wolf, if killed by one of them earned him a suitable reward. The wild beasts were taking a toll of human life. The object of the rewards was to make this part of the country safe to live in.

Among the Mavalis, there was also a dangerous lot who indulged in brigandry. These men attacked the villagers returning from work in the evening and robbed them of whatever possessions they had. In consultation with Konda Dev, Shivaji encouraged the idea of peons and sepoys guarding the roads making them safe for travel for the innocent and the unwary. The idea of Home Guards thus took root in Shivaji's mind as also the idea that as the future Jagirdar of this territory he would have to defend the people who inhabited it. Food was scarce in this Mavali area, and the people were therefore exhorted to grow fruit which grew easily in the mountain regions. The improvement of the lot of the Mavalis became Shivaji's early concern. Out of this small experiment the idea occurred to Shivaji that if these natives of the soil were encouraged in the right way, and not discredited as useless as the foreign conquerors had done, they could have a utility value, which could increase with time. Foreigners never interested themselves in the welfare of those natives who were of no use to them. Foreign domination had brought about exploitation. Only in a free country, governed and administered by the natives themselves, could these sons and

daughters of the soil rise in stature and enjoy the fruits of their civilization.

Therefore, according to Shivaji's youthful mind three things seemed essential. The first was to throw off the foreign yoke. This meant a clash with the authority of Sultan in Bijapur, a clash with the Muslim forces which sustained the Sultanate, and a clash also with those who, like his father, helped to maintain the Sultan in power. Later, there may also have to be a clash with the Moghuls who periodically descended on the Deccan for loot. The second essential was that after the foreign

yoke had been cast off, an independent kingdom should be carved out, with a Hindu chieftain at the head of it, who would naturally be closer to the people than any Muslim or Moghul could be. And the third idea was that even this Hindu chieftain must encourage and welcome the co-operation of the people in the administration of the jagir. These three ideas, though not clearly defined at the time, started to take roots in Shivaji's mind : the removal of the foreign power from this territory, the establishment of a Hindu state, and establishment also an elementary form of democracy.



ADMINISTRATION OF DADAJI KONDDO

DADAJI KONDDO was a terror. His rage was consuming, burning the wrong-doers like a forest fire! As a tutor to Shivaji he was a strict disciplinarian. If example is better than precept he was an embodiment of the principle. He was straight-forward in his dealing with people and abided by the rules which he himself imposed on others. As a result, he was both feared and respected by all. With all this, he was very kind, and his concern for the people was very touching.

Dadaji's administrative skill was well-known. He paid full attention to the needs of the farmers. Fields, rich with crops, started yielding plenty of good grain. His achievements won the admiration of all people. Dadaji once got a miscreant called Phulaji Naik arrested and brought him to Lal Mahal and chastised him severely for his bad behaviour. Likewise, Krishnaji Deshmukh also paid dearly for his anti-social behaviour. A miscreant or wrong-doer had to pay adequately for his deeds. There was no escape. So strict was he as an administrator.

Once Pant named a village after Shivaji and called it 'Shivpur'. It was set among beautiful surroundings, it had hills with green trees and bushes all around. After setting up this village, Dadaji got the idea of converting its surroundings into mango groves. Mangoes of all varieties were to

be planted, and the orchard was to be so rich as to put to shame even Adhilshah's reputed orchard.

After due planning, the work started. Varieties of trees were planted and they thrived on the rich soil. Jijabai was immensely pleased with the orchard, which was named after Shahaji – 'Shahbag' was its name. Pant tended the plants as he would tend his own children. His men toiled for four years and the orchard grew into ripeness and spread their fragrance in all directions ; soon the emerald-like lumps appeared that later got transformed into raw mangoes. Trees were laden with fruitage and bent down with their weight. The green of the mangoes slowly ripened to a rich yellow tinged with red. Dadaji thought of showing the orchard, full of ripe mangoes, to your Shivaji and so he requested Shivaji, "Sircar, our orchard at Shivapur is now in full fruitage. I wish you would have a look at it."

Young Shivaji readily consented.

Horses were brought in and they set out for Shivpur. They crossed Katraj Ghat, and entered the orchards of Shivpur. Mango trees, rich with ripe fruits, welcomed Shivaji. They saw the trees grown to their full height spreading like umbrellas. The mangoes could be plucked easily by the hand as the trees were not very tall. There was obvious pleasure on the face of

Maharaj. Dadaji felt gratified. A smile transformed the otherwise wrinkled face of Dadaji. Shivaji said, "Pant, these fruits will be fit for the treasure house of Bhausahib (his father)."

Dadaji smiled. At last his efforts had truly borne fruit. He pointed out one tree in particular to Shivaji and said, "Balraje, this was the first tree to blossom, and the first to bear fruit among the whole lot."

Shivaji then walked among the trees, admiring them one by one. He wondered at the liberality of the trees that yielded fruit in such profusion and at such a tender age.

Dadaji's attention was caught by a yonder tree. He was attracted by a mango, that was just ripe and looked reddish yellow. The mango was really very attractive. Its colour and quality would not allow Dadaji to turn his attention elsewhere. Dadaji plucked the mango with his right hand and looked at it with childish joy. The juice was still oozing out of the broken stem when suddenly Dadaji's face became more and more serious. A moment ago he was delighted, but now all his pleasure seemed to have vanished. He looked at the mango. His eyes were filled with tears. His hands were trembling. Shivaji was still looking at the trees. He threw the mango and instantaneously drew his sword from its sheath. When Shivaji came closer, he could not believe what his eyes saw. Dadaji held a sword in his left hand, ready to chop off his other hand. The right hand was held straight. He was biting his lips with rage.

He was just about to strike. At that moment Shivaji cried, "Pant, stop that, stop that !"

He ran towards Dadaji and caught hold of his left hand. "What are you doing, Pant?" asked Shivaji.

"I was going to chop off my right hand", replied Dadaji.

"Why ? What happened, Pant ?"

"This hand has betrayed me".

"What do you mean ?" wondered Shivaji while still gripping Dadaji's left hand in the same manner.

"Sircar, I plucked a mango without your permission ! A crime has been committed ! There can be no excuse ! The crime must be punished ! Sircar, chop off my right hand yourself."

"No, no, Pant ! What is the crime in it? You planted the trees. And if you pluck a mango, I find nothing wrong in it ! Who will blame you ? It is so succulent."

But, "I have not committed even such a petty crime so far !" was the remonstrance. "If such petty crimes go unpunished, bigger crimes would be perpetrated. The entire administration would become corrupt ! You lose your wealth, you lose your Kingdoms ! This is not fair ! I have plucked the fruit without your permission. I must be punished."

That was how Dadaji governed. To him every act was to be carefully weighed before it was executed. He was as ready to cut off his own offending hand as he would have done in punishing other offenders.

The Tryst

THE young and agile form of Shivaji ached for action. Tidal waves of turmoil rose and engulfed him. He could not contain them. "How long? How long was he to wait thus?" seemed to be the unending query posed by his mind. Like all true devotees of Mother he waited for Her call. "Why this delay?" he kept questioning Her.

The Divine Mother had Her own plans and as Her chosen instrument he was to abide by it. The brooding lines and beetled brows became a constant feature of his face. Was he also to live a tame life? Wait for the scraps thrown from the ruling master's tables? Better death than the dishonour of slavery? Thus he mused. Driven by the tautness of indecision and anxiety he entered his mother's chamber for the comfort that had never failed him so far. Jija Bai looked up. Her heart missed a beat. An unearthly light seemed to radiate from her son. "Yes", she thought "Bhavani has at last taken hold of Shiva. Soon the rulers would have hell to pay for."

The fire of resentment and the rising waves of resolution bottled up within the frail form of Shivaji seemed to spill out. He came and stood by his mother and said, "The call has come". Jija Bai looked at her son with bated breath. "Yes, the hour has struck. The great Mother has sounded her clarion call and you have answer it, my son. But should you not ask your

master's permission? After all your father has entrusted you to him." The obedient son bent his head in submission and waited for Dadaji Konda Dev to come. As usual the revered head showed itself at the doorway at the appointed time. He seated himself at his accustomed place and was about to start his work when summons came from Jija Bai's chamber. The old man hurried out and was soon in the presence of his young pupil and Jija Bai.

The room was large with a number of carved wooden pillars. At one end the light of an oil lamp shed its limpid glow illuminating the face of Bhavani, the Mother Goddess. The morning worship was over. Mother and son waited in the sacred presence for the preceptor's arrival. The usual formalities over, Shivaji pitched in straight. "Pant", the young boy quietly said, "I am sure that you are aware of the chaos all around us. The country is overrun by foreigners. Our temples are in ruin. There is no honour left amongst us. It is high time that something is done about all this." The fervour and urge of the young man's utterance sent a thrill through the ageing form of Dadaji Konda Dev. But then prudence prevailed.

"Pardon my impudence Bal Raje" (that is how the preceptor called him). "Proud as I am to hear of your noble resolve, certain misgivings prompt me to sound a warning note. This land of ours has long been battered down under the heels of hordes of foreigners. Today her might is a forgotten dream and I am afraid that an attempt to free her from this iron grip may also remain ...a....mere.....dream !"

As Shivaji listened to this reminder of the stark realities so vividly painted, the breath that blew itself in short gulps, the beetled brows and the deep flush on the face eloquently expressed the storm that raged within his young bosom. One could see that the storm that gathered would wreck him or ruin those who were to be victims of it. Obstacles were to be pushed aside with resolve. His mind was made up and no power on earth was to stem the tide that had risen to such tremendous dimensions. In measured tones Shivaji said : "No, Pant, I am convinced that it is not to be a dream. In the attempt to make it a reality I am ready to lay down my life. In the meantime, I have only one request to make. Would you grant it?" "What is that, Bal Raje?" asked Dada Konda Dev. "Your blessings" said Shivaji. A soft smile lit up the care-lined face. "It is yours, Bal Raje. . . . and will always be there." In silence three heads bowed in fervent prayer while Bhavani beamed benevolently on them.

The sun had risen above the hills touching the tops with his golden magic wand. The mist that enveloped the hills was lifted revealing the verdant greenery of the vegetation. A band of young men clambered up the hill side to the Rohideswar temple. Their determined faces fore-told eventful happenings of the future. Since they were clad in white, with a sash, from which a scabbard hung it was easy to conclude that these were warriors. What brought them to the temple courtyard ? The priest was there and so were some other people. At the appointed time more

young men came. Among them was Shivaji. As the priest's incantations started, young heads bent in silent prayer. Prayer for what ? Now the Linga was anointed and sacred water was poured over it. As if at a silent command all the heads were raised and a host of swords flashed up and met above the sacred symbol of Shiva. In deep sombre tones Shivaji intoned the pledge, - it was a pledge to stake his own life for the freedom of his people. The same words were echoed by his companions who also vowed loyalty to Shivaji, whom they acknowledged as their leader. Dadaji Konda Dev and Jija Bai watched on in silent awe at the profundity of sentiment and the deep earnestness of the young men bound by a common pledge.

This great event took place in 1645. How well Shivaji stood up to this great pledge was to be proved a few days later. Fresh with fervour he set out with his friends to find out if law and order prevailed in his own territory. Alas ! tyranny and the brute power of man was ever the same all over. With blanched face and tightened lips he heard that the Patel of Ranjha had dishonoured a woman. This was not to be treated lightly. His hand tightened on the hilt of his sword as he sent out messengers to fetch the offender. Maximum punishment befitting his crime was pronounced. He was to atone for it in terms that would not leave others in doubt about what their fate would be if the same was repeated. This then was young Shivaji whose wrath was not roused against any religion in narrow bigotry but was ever set against insolent might and inhuman wrongs.

A Slave is Always a Slave

BIJAPUR was the capital of the Adil Shahs, the Muslim Sultans who had a Kingdom of their own in Deccan. The Sultans were tributaries of Muslim domination over India. The founders of the Sultanates were originally in the employment of the Bahmani rulers of Deccan that began to wane, and with that the individual Sultans attempted to consolidate their own individual spheres of influence, declaring themselves independent rulers. India as a whole had no identity. The country was hacked into two sections, the conquerors who came from across the borders and the people of the soil who either became the conquered or remained dependants of some local chieftain, who broke away from the conquerors.

It was at Bijapur in 1641 that young Shivaji, then only 14 years of age, began to feel the difference between those who belonged to the ruling classes and those who were the ruled. In the territory in which he lived at that time, it was the supremacy of the Muslims which clearly stood out. What irked the lad was not the difference in the two religions, but the glaring inequality between the rulers and the ruled.

There was little awareness of democracy in those days. Nevertheless, without understanding the principles and theory of the political or public welfare, Shivaji at an early age felt the first spark of a revolt against the prevailing inequality. It was a

mere coincidence that the resistance had to be primarily against Muslims, for the country was mainly in the hands of the Moghuls, and he rebelled against them.

From an early age, Shivaji had a great preference for simplicity of living. Life as one constant exile and one long journey through rugged mountain tracts, demanded that he develop a simple way of living that could be lived anywhere. He appeared to lack the accommodating ways of his father. With Shivaji simple living was almost a fetish and he expressed his abhorrence for all forms of luxury. He appeared to lack the accommodating ways of his father. He had respect for those who revealed either wisdom or learning, and expressed without fear his contempt for the idle rich.

Shahji was, however, greatly disturbed by his young son's rudeness towards those on whom his own existence depended. He felt that one should adopt a practical attitude to life and that if it was ordained at any period of time that the Muslims should rule over our land, there was no harm in serving them so long as one's faith, which was Hindu religion, was not interfered with or affected, by Muslim sway. Shahji wanted his son to adopt this outlook, instead of fighting a battle with those who were superiors by sheer might and power. He gave his own examples and argued that he was a Hindu Chieftain well treated by the Muslims, one who received great

favours from the Sultan. The lad was stubborn. He kept saying that such patronage could only ease the irksomeness of being a vassal ; it never changed the status itself. A slave was a slave and golden shackles could not change that stubborn fact.

Shahji did not give up hopes of changing the mind of his rebel son. He relied on his own parental authority, for every father believes that he can eventually mould his son to the pattern which he thinks is best for him. By tactful conversation, by occasional admonitions and frequent persuasions he induced Shivaji to accompany him to the Sultan's Darbar. Before taking his son to appear in the court he coached the young man on right conduct at the court. On the day of the Darbar the rebel in Shivaji got the better of the loyal son in him, and as father and son appeared before the Sultan, the father bowed low, while the son only made a slight gesture and took his seat by his father, his head held high and with no signs of submission on his countenance. The Sultan, observing that his General Shahji was accompanied by a young man, kindly inquired who the boy was. Shahji diplomatically explained that the boy was his son Shivaji and that this was his first appearance at Court, thus making up for the scant salutations which Shivaji had offered the Sultan. The aged Sultan understood his Hindu Courtier's embarrassment and overlooked the young man's lack of etiquette. He went on to present jewels and robes of honour to Shivaji welcoming him to the Royal Darbar.

Shivaji took the presents given to him, but when he returned home that day he cast away the court dress which had been placed on his shoulders, dumped the gifts in a corner, never caring to take a second look at them. The lavish furnishings and easy life reflected in the mien of the nobles repelled Shivaji. The Darbar, glittering with the ornamentations and heavy carpets, contrasted sharply with the bare stone walls and floors amid which Shivaji romped as a boy and grew up to rugged manhood. The atmosphere, scented heavily with must, incense and attar only brought him nostalgic memories of the fresh air of the mountain side, laden with subtle scents of nature and the smell of brown, caked earth responding to the first showers. The men, with their handsome delicate features, fresh complexions, and well cared for features, brought to his mind, and showed how hard life was for his sun-browned brethren at home, whose bathing salts came only from their sweat and mud was their only cosmetic.

The splendour of the Royal Court only magnified the vision Shivaji already had of the contrast between the ruler and the ruled, and intensified his repulsion for Court life. The secluded life he had all along, away from Court life, was responsible for Shivaji's nature. Had he been at Court, and seen his father constantly bowing down to the Sultan, and beaming at his favours, Shivaji perhaps could have been influenced into that life, and his spirit of rebellion would not have taken the upper hand.

Now came the time for him either to decide between accepting the ways of the court

or stay aloof from it, and of course, Shivaji chose the latter course.

Behind Shivaji's behaviour was always his early realisation that he and his people were the have-nots of the land. If he rose in rank or position as his father had done, it was because of the use the Sultan could make of him to prop up his own position. To be aware that one is only a vassal requires the strength of character. That Shivaji was aware of it at the age of thirteen, does credit to him. It evoked in him a hitherto unknown national pride. That he was a Hindu and therefore different in religion from the Muslims was not so material to Shivaji as that he was a native of the soil along with his father and forefathers, part of the land itself, while the Muslims came from a land that was far away and taken possession of our own earth. Classified regionally, he was a Maratha, and to be a Maratha was indeed a matter of pride to Shivaji. But his main pride was that he was part of the motherland, and an Indian.



The Butcher of Bijapur

MIR AMJAD ABIDI, the great noble of the realm and one of the chief counselors to the King of Bijapur, growled. The khansama had served the food and the aroma of the curries increased the nobleman's appetite. But when he started eating, he gasped in horror ! There was no meat !

"Begum !" he shouted with a cry of despair and pain.

Three women came running in, followed by the Khansama, an old cook. The women were young and rather pretty, vivacious and pert. They saw the anger on their husband's face but it did not mean anything to them. They were too young to know and appreciate the pent up emotions and intricacies of desperate rage. They were twenty-two, twenty and eighteen years of age, respectively, while their husband was past fifty.

"Is something wrong?" Mohammedi Begum asked. She was the oldest of the three. He growled.

"Where is meat?" he shouted. "Do you think I'm a buffalo to eat only grass?"

"Hai Allah !" Shahzadi Begum exclaimed. She was the youngest and, at the moment, his favourite.

"Now, what has Allah got to do with meat?" he asked stingingly.

"Don't you know that meat is not available these days?" Mohammedi Begum said. "The butchers have been asked to give up slaughtering cows."

"What nonsense! Who gave the order?"

"The Sultan," said Razia Banu, the middle one.

"The Sultan gave no such order"

"Hai ! Hai !" Shahzadi exclaimed. "You go to the durbar every day and you do not know anything about the king's fireman ? The servant has gone to the market several times but there's not a single butcher there."

Mir Amjad Abidi got up, his eyes red, his beard and moustache bristling. A hungry man is an angry man, and he was in a rage. He walked out with long strides, determined to get at the root of the matter.

Mohammed Adil Shah, the ageing Sultan of Bijapur, was in the harem. And Amjad Abidi wanted to see him. It was an odd hour to be advised on the affairs of state and he disliked this noble.

"Well, what has upset you now ?" the Sultan queried. "You look oddly miserable."

Mir Amjad Abidi bowed deep and salaamed to the king.

"I am miserable, Alijah. I am hungry," he said in low voice.

"Ya Allah !" the Sultan exclaimed. "The richest man in Bijapur and he has no food to eat !"

"I don't mean that, Jehanpanah," Abidi put in immediately. "My khansama couldn't serve me meat."

The Sultan saw the humour in this and burst out laughing. Abidi looked disconcerted.

"No meat? What happened to all the butchers?"

"There are no butchers," Abidi said in a hollow way.

"Mir Amjad Abidi, you must be joking. Butchering is a profession. What will the butchers do if they give up their profession ? If the butchers are not here or there they must be somewhere."

"They used to have their slaughter houses and their stalls on the main highway, Alijah. But today I rode four times up and down the highway, and found that their stalls have been taken over by other traders – those of vegetables and fruits. There was no meat displayed, nor were there any butchers."



The Sultan laughed again. The gruff voice gave way to a cackle.

"No meat," he murmured, and burst into fresh laughter. He saw the serious face of the counselor and sobered up.

"I remember now," he said. "I had ordered the butchers to remove themselves from the centre of the city and move to the outskirts in the south."

"But why, Alijah?"

"For communal harmony. I want to avoid hatred and unhappiness among my Hindu subjects, and I do not want to offend their religious sentiments. They worship the cow, you know. I have done it in the interests of internal peace."

Abidi was taken aback.

"Jahapanah, the butchers have been there since Allah knows when. Why this sudden change?"

A female attendant came in with a goblet of wine and a long glass in a small round tray. She poured the wine into the glass and gave it to the Sultan. The Sultan drank it with relish.

"I heard you got a new wife" he asked Abidi.

Abidi looked at the king.

"Why the change, Alijah?" he asked again.

"Oh, that ! It was not sudden. You know I love my subjects. Only nobody told me that the Hindus were perpetually hating the Muslims because of the slaughter of cows. I have not stopped the slaughter, only I shifted the slaughtering houses."

"Who told the Jehanpanah about this ?"

"You are a persistent scoundrel, Abidi. Well, if you'd like to know, it was Shahji Bhonsle's son, Shivaji, or whatever name he called by."

"I understand, Alijah. May I withdraw ?" The Sultan nodded and Abidi walked out. The king turned his attention to the girl. "No meat," he murmured and burst into a loud cackle.

Abidi returned crestfallen. But under-currents of rage seethed within him. A thirteen-year-old Hindu boy to tell the Sultan to stop butchering of cows ! This was indeed audacious, extra ordinary !

He was curious to know what power the boy had over the king. The damned Maratha !

The three begums fluttered around him like moths around a flame. The wanted to know what had happened. But he was exasperated. He only thought of the boy who had made the king obey him.

In the days that went by, he met other nobles, and each in his own way felt insulted. They felt that the king was a good and understanding man but undue pressure had been brought on him by a boy. So, the boy had insulted them by cutting off their supply of meat in the name of religion. The boy was dangerous. If he could influence the Sultan now, how much power would he not wield when he grew up !

They conspired to get rid of Shivaji. There were only two ways : either Shivaji should

be killed or he should be driven out of Bijapur.

The conspirators met in the entertainment hall of Mir Amjad Abidi's house. Five peers sprawled on the soft divans, quaffing wine, chewing betel leaves and nuts, and enjoying the dance of Gulbadan.

The guard announced the arrival of Kasim Querishi, a butcher.

Abidi clapped his hands and the dance stopped. Gulbadan withdrew with her musicians.

Kasim Querishi walked in. He was a medium-heighted, rough-looking man, with thick moustaches and thicker muscles. His face looked as if cut out of stone and it looked cruel, brutal. His head was clean shaven. He was dark and bestiality seemed to drip from every pore of his body.

He made an uneasy bow to the nobles, salaaming them.

Abidi spoke : "Kasim, you have been forbidden by the king to sell meat on the highway. Where are you selling meat now?"

"In the southern part of the city, master." Kasim said, his voice gruff and rasping. "Very few people come all the way to buy meat there. It is too far away. We will have to give up our trade if this should go on."

"Don't do that," said Shahabuddin, a peer of realm. "Do you know who was responsible for all this?"

"The Sultan, master."

"No, you idiot. It was Shahji's son Shivaji"

- Mirza Ismail, another noble, said.

Kasim guffawed, "I know the boy. How can he be responsible, master?"

Abidi lost his temper. Kasim was a fool, an imbecile.

"He told the Sultan," he said hotly, "and the Sultan got rid of all of you."

"That's a rotten thing to do," Kasim conceded.

"But we will rectify matters," Shahabuddin said. "Tomorrow you will sell meat on the highway. Shivaji will pass that way. If anything happens, we will be there to take all necessary action."

"What will happen?" Kasim asked, puzzled.

"And what will the Sultan say? It would be breaking the law!"

"Do not worry about the Sultan. We will answer him. It's Shivaji we have to worry about."

Kasim was all brawn and really thick-headed.

"Why? Shivaji is only a chokra. As big as my little finger."

"He is a noble's son, you know. He might pick a quarrel with you, or abuse you. If he doesn't, we want you to provoke him to do so."

Some sense seemed to dawn on Kasim.

"We don't know. But will you do as we say?"

Abdul Samad Khan threw a bag of coins.

"You want to kill the boy?" he asked.

The bag fell at the butcher's feet with a loud jingle.

"It is yours if you provoke the lad," he said.

Kasim picked up the bag. "It shall be done, master."

"Tomorrow , at the time when Shivaji passes on the highway to the durbar, remember to be there."

"Yes, master."

He was dismissed. Mujahid Asafuddaulah quaffed the wine.

"Send for Gulbadan," he said. "The sight of the butcher has upset my stomach."

Abidi clapped his hands and the guard appeared.

"Tell Gulbadan to come in," he ordered.

The music began and Gulbadan danced.

Next day, the people were shocked to see Kasim Querishi sitting at the city gates with a basketful of meat. The people flocked in numbers to buy the meat, but the prices were exorbitant and prohibitive. Quarrels rose in the air, and soon everyone was shouting at everyone else.

Shivaji rode his horse with ease. He was a short lad of thirteen, with an aquiline nose, thin lips and a determined chin. He was dressed in the rich clothes of a courier and was on his way to the durbar. He saw the furore and stopped.

Kasim saw the boy and grinned. Shivaji saw him at the same instance and was shocked. Selling meat on the highway was forbidden. Kasim came up to Shivaji and said belligerently, "Does the young master want some cow's meat?"

He laughed at his own joke and began to display the meat to everybody. Shivaji's face darkened with shame. There was a blaze in his eyes. He jumped from the horse and rushed at Kasim.

Kasim saw the boy and his face twitching with contempt. Others saw him and wondered what the little boy could do.

Swiftly, Shivaji drew his sword and slashed. Before anyone could even squeak, the head of Kasim Querishi rolled on the ground. Shivaji calmly sheathed his sword and walked back to his horse. He got on to it and rode back homewards. There seemed to be a great peace in his heart, and the calmness on his face suggested it.

There were hoarse shouts of dismay and consternation. Everyone began to talk. There was even fear on some of the faces. Then, soldiers came rushing up, led by Abidi, Mirza Ismail, Shahabuddin, Mujahid Asafuddaulah and Abdul Samad Khan. They had expected a quarrel, a wordy battle, a hot exchange of harsh words, not a death.

The whole scene looked confusing, and people ran helter-skelter. Before long, Bijapur was ringing with the name of Shivaji and his killing of the butcher. There was tension in the city now. The Muslims looked at the Hindus with apprehension. Fear lurked in the alleys and by lanes. A Hindu boy had killed a Muslim. What would a Hindu man do?

Abidi looked at the gathering throng and said : "Justice will be done. The king shall be informed and Shivaji punished."

But he was angry that his plan had misfired. He had wanted to kill Shivaji and in the confusion nobody would have known. Fate had turned the tables, and only regret was

left behind. Everyone went his way. The body of Kasim was left to rot in the market place. The nobles went to the king.

"You're strange boy, Shiva. You are my son and yet you are a stranger to me. What do you hope to achieve? You insult the king in the durbar by not bowing to him and make yourself ridiculous in the eyes of the peers of the realm. You are only boy and yet you behave so differently. And you have the audacity to tell me that you cut off a butcher's head just because he sold meat by the city gates. What's wrong with you, Shiva? Are you ill?"

Shivaji looked at his father, his eyes unflinching, his face stern and rigid.

"He provoked me to buy cow's meat, father. Please let me go away from here, father. I'm sick of this city life, this pomp and ceremony, these intrigues of the court...."

"Where would you go?" the father asked, puzzled. "A son should stay with his father and follow in his footsteps."

"I am born of the Sahyadris, father. I will go back to the mountains and the open spaces. I will go back to the earth I belong to, the soil I love and to the people whom I know and understand." Shahji looked puzzled.

"There will be hell to pay for what you've done. All right, go. I'll tell Dadaji Kondadev to take you to Lal Mahal, to my Jagir at Poona."

"Thank you, father."

Shivaji touched his father's feet and walked out. Shahji saw him go and started with puzzlement. He would never understand the boy. A very strange boy !

Abidi met the Sultan. "Still no meat, Mr.Amjad Abidi?" the king queried and laughed boisterously.

"A dreadful thing has happened, Alijah. A crime has been committed. Shivaji has murdered a butcher."

The king laughed some more. "No cow's meat, so you are after human meat ! So you have cut a butcher." Abidi looked exasperated. "Shivaji had committed a crime, Jehanpanah."

"Oh that ! The butcher disobeyed the law and Shivaji must have enforced it. Probably, Shivaji was a little over-enthusiastic."

Abidi bowed and withdrew. As he walked out, he heard the king say, "No meat," and burst out into a loud laughter.

Abidi bit his lip. His other nobles met him outside in the courtyard. The laughter seemed to follow him. The Sultan would pay for this cruel joke. "Come, my friends, we have much work to do," he said.

He set about planning the Sultan's downfall.



The Capture of Torna

AROUND the crackling fire they sat, the pungent smell of wood-smoke filling their nostrils. The attendants fetched them warm drinks which they imbibed. Then Shivaji started to address them. He enquired about the fruits and food crops. He asked about the local people, their problems, altogether a variety of questions. Gradually, he came to the point. "This fort of Torna," he said, "is a good place. If we could get it, it would be a place of our own. From here I could keep in easy touch with all of you. We must get it." "Hoi," came the chorus from the three chiefs.

"But how?"

"Not difficult," Shivaji explained to them, for he knew the life of the land.

"Do we attack it?" one of the Deshmukhs asked.

"It would be better if the Governor could be induced to give it up," Shivaji replied.

"Hoi," came the chorus once again. They had understood the point the young Jagirdar was making. It would be a grand thing if the Governor could be made to give it up. "Hoi," the chiefs agreed. They nodded their heads in unison.

"We will tell him that you have news from Bijapur to take charge of the fort," one of the chiefs volunteered. Torna was inadequately garrisoned by the Bijapur forces, it not being even remotely suspected by the Sultan that anyone had

any designs on his forts in Maharashtra. A Governor with a small garrison guarded Torna, as if it were a police chowki for the preservation of local law and order. A Governor was no great official of government; he was only a local headman paid by the Sultan for his allegiance and allowed to lord over the local Mavalis with the authority of the Sultan in far away Bijapur.

To the Governor, Shivaji dispatched three of his active Mavali chiefs. They were the ones who had shown earliest enthusiasm for Shivaji's idea of consolidating the Hindu element in the area and gradually taking the administration of that territory into his own hands. Yesaji Kunk, Tanaji Malusare and Baji Pasalkar were the names of these three chiefs which indicate nothing now, except that they were the men who took the initiative in uttering the first "hoi" to Shivaji.

"Hoi" meant instinctive obedience to Shivaji. When uttered in a quick staccato monosyllable, it left no time for questioning; it allowed for no argument; "Hoi" or "yes" it was lending their support to Shivaji's spoken word. The idea of inducing the Governor to hand over was good, but not forceful enough and was not sufficiently convincing if the Governor wanted proof of such a communication. What was lacking in conviction or authority could be made up by an alluring offer of the yellow metal. A bag of gold could work well!

Shivaji bought out the gold required, for the idea of owning the fort of Torna appealed to him. Gold enough and to spare, would always be available, but forts were few, and with possession of the forts there came security, stability, strategic power. Shivaji had borrowed the gold from Dadaji Kondadev. So long as it was for the protection of the Jagir, it was worth spending, Shivaji had argued with his old guardian. In any case, it was the wish of

the heir to the estate that it should be so spent. Kondadev had no option but to give his young master the gold he wanted.

So went the chiefs at Shivaji's bidding on the first successful errand of diplomacy, but not without a price, which, however, did not matter. In 1646 Torna came into Shivaji's hands, the first fortress of his dreams.



THE BAIT

THE old man lay ill. The blurred vision and the inaudible speech told their own tale. Dadaji Kondadev was to pass into the pages of a glorious past soon. Young Shivaji sat by the man who had been his friend, guide, and loyal subject. He held the aged hands in his own and tried to infuse warmth into it. Induction was of no use, now. For the past few days Shivaji had not left the side of his master. He had nursed him with the devotion of a son.

With the premonition of death the old man turned his eyes on Shivaji. He seemed to be muttering some incoherent words. Shivaji bent his head low to catch the words that said faintly, "Forgive me if I have ever spoken harshly to you, Bal Raje, it had been only for your good." Shivaji assured him accordingly and stammered out a request for forgiveness on his part, if he had caused his tutor any worry. The prescience of the dying inspired Dadaji to a sudden realisation of Shivaji's destiny, and he advised him to restore the old virtues of Sanatana Dharma, when he rose to the peaks of power. With these words the old man departed for his heavenly abode.

Shivaji keenly felt the loss of Dadaji. He knew how much he owed to him. The outer courtyard in the palace at Poona seemed sadly changed. Gone was the figure that bent over the low desk, containing scrolls

of Sanskrit verses, gone his deep absorption over reports from the districts and the unending accounts ! After all, this was inevitable. The old order changed, yielding place to new.

The death of Dadaji Kondadev found Shiva ready for his task. He had already been trained in martial exercises and civil administration. He had familiarised himself with the troops of his father's western jagir and the people he would have to govern. Shivaji had also taken part with his mother or his guardian in judicial investigations and public decisions of legal disputes.

After the death of Dadaji it was Shivaji's aim to bring all parts of Shahji's Jagir under his own control, so as to form a compact state under a single supremacy. The fort of Chakan guarding the road to Poona from the north had been entrusted by Dadaji Kondadev to Firangoji Narsala, who later professed allegiance to Shivaji and was confirmed in his post. The officers of the Thanas Baramati and Indapur on the eastern margin of the Jagir peacefully submitted to Shiva's authority.

Thus inch by inch Shivaji was scaling up the slippery wall of power, when a sudden check was brought in by alarming news from Karnataka. Shivaji got news that his father was arrested and all his property was confiscated by the Bijapur Commander-in-Chief. Shahji was brought out from prison one day and told that he would be bricked up alive unless Shivaji presented himself at Bijapur. He was chained to the back of the niche and masons began to brick the entrance.

Shivaji was in a terrible dilemma. He could only resort to diplomacy for rescuing his father, and diplomacy pointed only to one path. The Moghul Emperor was the hereditary enemy of Adil Shah and every rebel against Bijapur was sure to gain the Emperor's patronage. Shivaji realised that Moghul Emperor alone was strong enough to intimidate Adil Shah.

A plan slowly took shape. A few days later a special messenger took a letter to Prince Murad Bakhsh, who had been recently appointed by Shahjahan as Viceroy of Deccan. Shivaji wrote to Prince Murad Bakhsh entreating him to secure the Emperor's pardon for Shahji, his father and protection for him and his sons in the future, and offering to come and join the Moghul service.

To this Murad replied on 14th March, 1649 asking him to send a trustworthy agent first to report his demands. Accordingly, Raghu Pandit was sent to report. Shivaji's messenger was treated with flattering consideration. Prince Murad Bakhsh wrote gracious letters not only to Shivaji but also (further to embarrass Bijapur) to Shahji imprisoned behind the brick wall. It was a strange reversal of fortune for Shahji.

An Imperial letter could not be withheld. The stiff sheet bordered with elegant designs and stamped with the seal of a

great purple hand arrogantly out-spread, had to be treated with the same respect as an utterance of the Emperor from his throne. In the letter to Shahji Prince Murad wrote, "Be free from anxiety. A dress of



honour has been sent to you as a mark of our favour. We trust that by its arrival as a good omen you will appreciate the extent of our Imperial Condescension."

And to Shivaji it was written : "You, Shivaji, worthy of magnanimous treatment, recipient of our favour have implored Imperial help and your letter is pleasing to us." The Sultan of Bijapur had no alternative now but to order Shahji's release from his tomb of bricks.

The Tales of Valour that Rock-Forts Tell

WE decided to take a drive along the high road from Poona to Satara through Katraj Pass. We sped past the mango groves of Shivapur, past the ancient town of Shirwal. A number of forts raised up their heads like grim sentinels reminding one of the glory of a monarch who dared to defy the might of the Moghuls. There stood Sinhadgad for the capture of which Tanaji Malusare gave up his life. There also stood forts of Purandhar and Vajragad, that witnessed the valour of Murar Baji, and Sajjangad hallowed by the memory of Saint Ram Das and Satara, the capital of Maratha Empire.

Fort after fort with its battlements and reinforcements, that we passed, spoke volumes of Shivaji's military genius. The sites were generally atop hills accessible only by narrow and steep foot-paths that zigzagged along unscalable precipices. They were all defended by stout stone walls. The hill sides were rendered difficult to approach by bushes of thorny opuntia, that forms the common feature of the vegetation in these places. As the eyes roved over the forts, my mind raced back a few years and recalled the account of the Military Tactics of the Marathas by Surendra Nath Sen that I had read. There he states that the forts were well equipped – "every fort was provided with a Darukhana or a power house and Ambar Khana or store-room for provisions. The

water supply was not forgotten. Even a small fort like Satara can boast of more than one tank and a well that supplied excellent drinking water even today after a century of neglect."

Torna was Shivaji's maiden effort in the art of King-craft. The eaglet had spread out its infant wings on to the immense field of life. The wild expanse of hills and plains lay before him for his exploration, or was it exploitation ? The shrewd eyes alighted with precision on Torna, twenty miles from Poona. With a swift strategic swoop Torna was firmly clasped, and he went on to other pursuits.

Shivneri has the unique privilege of having welcomed the infant Shivaji into the world. There Jija Bai had bent her head in fervent prayer to Bhavani the Mother Goddess whose shrine once adorned the place. The fort which was once in the possession of Shahji was later taken over by the Moghul. More than once Shivaji tried and failed to recover the place. Raigad, the stronghold of Shivaji's power and prowess, overlooks the immense blue expanse of the Arabian Sea on one side and the purple range of hills on the other. Stupendous in its enormity, Raigad was the witness of many important events in this monarch's life. It was in 1656 that Shivaji attacked this eerie of Chandra Rao More and ousted him to take life-long possession of it. This place still echoes the Vedic incantations of the

red letter day in Jija Bai's life – the coronation of her son as Chhatrapathi. An account of this imposing ceremony is left for posterity by Henry Oxinden, an Englishman, who was present at the time. Apart from this, Raigad claims the unique privilege of being the scene of the wedding ceremony of Rajaram, Shivaji's son. Jija Bai, the contented mother, closed her eyes after 80 long years at this very place, which later saw also the last hours of Shivaji himself on the fateful day of April 3, 1680.

Rohida, sacred to Mavalis as the hide-out from which they swore allegiance to Shivaji in his mission to win freedom from Moghul yoke is built on a spur of the Sahyadri range. All that remains of it today is its dilapidated walls relieved by fifteen water reservoirs, that whisper to us across the years the concern and skill with which Shivaji equipped his forts. Rohida it is said was the first among the earlier forts to fall into Chhatrapathi's hands.

Sinhgad, the scene of a sacrifice – Tanaji's immolation at the altar of his country's freedom ! One almost visualises the rope ladder suspended from the cliff by which Tanaji ascended the high walls of Sinhgad. The agility of his leap, the ingenuity of his plan is even today a saga fit for the bards to eulogise. Sinhgad tops the cliff which forms the Sinhgad-Bhuleswar range. This

fort is built on a summit of the same flat-topped rock which rises up dizzy precipices, nearly fifty feet high. Shivaji captured this fort in 1670 and added it to his collection of other strongholds.

Purandhar, the bone of contention, was repeatedly besieged by the Bijapurians and Moghuls. Twice wrested from the invaders, the defence of this fort lost for Shivaji Murar Baji, one of his ablest soldiers. Stout in defence, wily in attack, this fort was the witness of many pitched battles.



Purandhar fort, 18 miles to the south-east of Poona, stands on an elevation and frowns upon the land below even now.

It was at Pratapgarh that Afzal Khan had his momentous meeting with Shivaji. The eastern side of the lower fort is sanctified by a temple dedicated to Bhavani, where Shivaji spent many hours in prayer. It is said that this fort was built by Moropant at the command of Shivaji. It stands on a high rock near the source of River Krishna and commands full view of the surrounding country. A tower built by Shivaji stands out from the eastern side, - it is this that houses the remains of Shivaji's adversary, Afzal Khan.

The hill-fort of Vasota stands at the head of a small valley which branches off from Koyna. It is built on a flat and looks down on the valley below. The land round and about this fort is said to be very ancient. It was once in the possession of the Shirkes and the Mores from whom Shivaji acquired it.

The most impregnable hill fort of Mahuli was the scene of repeated assaults by Shivaji who at last captured it. The thunder of hoof-beats still resound along the three terraces. Once in the possession of Shahji it was captured from him by Khan Jaman and later retrieved by Shivaji.

Set amongst a triangular formation of hills, Sajjangad stands today as a testimony to the devotion of royal disciple to his master. The fort stands on a scrap of black rock built up in places. The sheer height to which it rears up makes all approach difficult. It is said that Shivaji captured this hill-fort and gifted it to his master, Ramdas. Panhala crowns the hill that rises above the plains of Kolhapur. Three magnificent double gate-ways guarded by a flight of steps stand as testimony to the builder's skill. Of these three gate-ways, two have been mutilated beyond repair. It was after a long and protracted attack Shivaji was able to wrest Panhala from Bijapur.

Janjira, the fortified island, lies at the neck of a creek, girdled by walls that rise to a sheer height of 40-50 feet. The water laps in low rhythm against battlements that are strongly loop-holed. Their surfaces are interrupted at equal intervals by 19

bastions. Today the large and handsome entrance welcomes visitors to peep back through three centuries and read from the stone battlements the story of the people who fought a successful battle against tyranny.

Shivaji's determined efforts to secure the fortified isle of Janjira and his constant inability to do so made him anxious to possess and equally fortified island to protect his vessels. An intensive survey of the coast was made by Shivaji's sardars. After long deliberations the rock opposite



Malvan was chosen as the site fit for Sindhu Durga. This extensive fort, with its irregular projecting points and deep inundations, measures more than two miles. This fort has the decided advantage of not having a single point outside its ramparts, which is not commanded from some point from inside. A shrine dedicated to Shivaji himself is a special feature of this fort. Surat, the premier port of the Moghul Empire in the latter half of the

seventeenth century, was twice sacked by Shivaji, first in 1664 and again in 1670.

It was the greatest commercial centre in India for the distribution of Persian, Arabian, Egyptian, African, Chinese and European commodities ; besides this it was the principal Centerport for the products of Gujarat and the Malabar Coasts on the one hand and for the inland produce as far as Patna, Agra, Lahore, Kashmir on the other. No other port could rival its traffic, wealth, prosperity and fame.

Shivaji raided Surat from the 6th to the 10th of January, 1664. The port of Surat stood on the south bank of Tapti, 12 miles from the sea ; but the city close to the port was quite defenseless ; it had no walls to protect it. Its wealth was boundless. "The looting was unresisted and extended over four long days and nights and Shivaji scorned to carry away anything but gold, silver, pearls, diamonds and such precious ware."

On October 3, 1670, Shivaji raided it for the second time. He had 15,000 strong cavalry and artillery with him. He ransacked it and appropriated a rich booty worth Rs.66 Lakhs.

Many more such forts lie scattered over Maharashtra proclaiming the genius of a single individual who dared, and successfully subdued, the might of the foreign hordes that tyrannised Bharat.



The Re-Union

SHIVAJI loved mountains. He loved the vision of vast stretching lands, and loved dreaming of bringing those vast lands all together, uniting them to make them into one country where all shall be brothers and sisters, no matter what caste, creed or religion they ascribed to themselves. That was his vision. That was his dream. And the dream coming true seemed remote to him, when as a boy of fourteen he watched Adil Shah's troops rout and rampage his Poona Jagir. Dadaji Kondadev's experience, wisdom, administrative and battle skills did not save it a bit.

Shiva pondered over the situation. Why did this happen ? He had a Jagir. The people of the Jagir were his, and he had an army of sorts composed of his own subjects. And there was Dadaji to head it efficiently, to plan a campaign. Yet they could not even put up a feeble resistance against Adil Shah's troops. They were simply hunted down and hounded like helpless animals in the open. In the open! That is it. That was what caused these defeats, thought Shiva. They were in the open, with nothing to protect them, and a powerful assault could scatter his forces. He must have a fort and he must take one, wrench it out of the hands of the Bijapur Sultan, and with it as his stronghold, go on taking others. His Jagir must expand, and everywhere there must be forts to defend the expanding land. While Shiva

loved mountain ranges, he was obsessed with the desire to acquire forts.

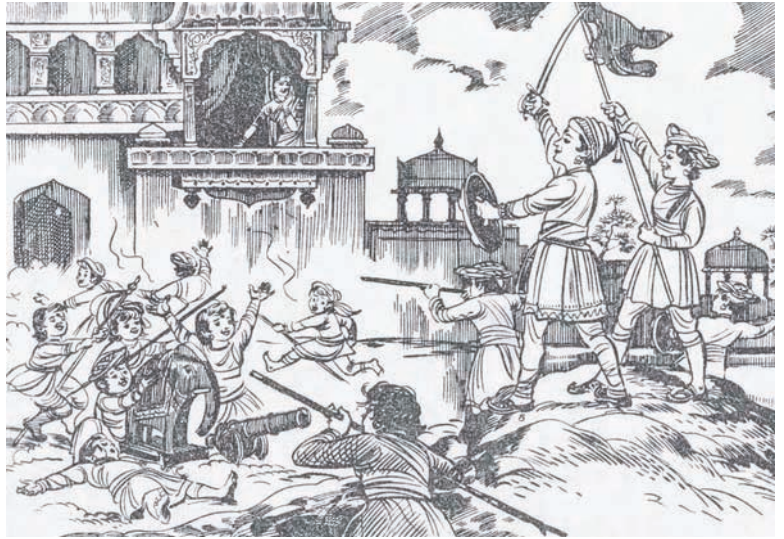
By this time he was thirty-four, the dream born out of a consuming love and obsession had come true. The forts of Torna, Kalyan, Pratapggarh, Kondana, Purandhar, Panhala and Rairi were his. His Jagir was now a Rajya, stretching over vast areas. Adil Shah, who routed and rampaged his Poona Jagir effortlessly, had now to labour hard to keep his own territories in his grip. He was none too pleased by it. Shiva had to be checked. That he was a power to reckon with Adil Shah knew. To hunt him and bring him down from the position he had ascended to by sheer genius, effort and persistence was no mean task. And Adil Shah loathed exerting that much. Instead, he planned to tackle Shiva on the sentimental front. Shahji, now 68, was still at his Court. The boy Shiva had now grown into a man. He had not seen his father for

over a quarter of a century. Why not play the old man against the young man, rouse the love and longing that remained imprisoned within so long without finding expression and prop them up as a barrier to the rebellion in the young man's heart ?

Adil Shah sent for Shahji. "Your son is becoming an incorrigible rebel. For your sake, what he did had been tolerated so far. But he is getting too much out of hand. He is a courageous man and a good

warrior. I would not like to hunt him down like a criminal or humiliate him. I wish you would control him as a father should," he said.

Shahji pleaded with Adil Shah that Shivaji was only a "boy" and his young blood was playing mischief. The lad of eleven and odd years he sent away to Poona to be cared for by Dadaji was all Shahji remembered of Shiva. He would talk to Shiva, and bring him round, make him desist from the rebellious acts. Adil Shah agreed



that it was the best way. The forts he had so far captured could be retained by Shiva, but he was to refrain from making further assaults on Bijapur territories. A written treaty to the effect had to be entered into.

Shahji, with his second wife Tuka Bai and son Vyankoji started for Jejuri, the rendezvous he had fixed for meeting Shivaji. A date was fixed for the meeting, and Shivaji waited with an eager, yearning

heart to meet his father. Shahji visited the temples en route Jejuri paying homage to the family deity Bhavani at Tuljapur, worshipping at the family shrine at Shignapur and Vithoba at Pandharpur.

The meeting between the long separated father and son was to be a historic event. Shahji's career at the Bijapur Court had in no way enslaved him or erased his love of his own people. En route Jejuri, his visit to the shrines and the lands he crossed brought to him nostalgic memories. He longed to see his son, who brought this feeling of oneness to his people. Shivaji on his part longed equally to see his father, savour the paternal love and affection he missed during the long years, and his heart yearned for the fortunate, joyous experience of seeing his father and mother side by side. To his noble, devoted heart, nothing was more pious than having the darshan of his parents together. He awaited the visit of his father, at the age of thirty-four, with the eagerness of a ten-year-old lad.

Jejuri, the insignificant little town, had overnight become the place of importance, the historic land-mark of the meeting between the father and son. Shivaji came down to Jejuri from his capital Pratapgarh, had residences for his father and entourage built in Jejuri with all comforts and pomp befitting his illustrious status as a grand noble of a Princely Court. He waited for his father in the premises of Khandoba temple at Jejuri. With him were his mother, wives Sai Bai and Soyara Bai and his close associate, Moro Pingle. At last the retinue came into sight and the notes of welcoming music filled the air. The palanquin stopped

in front of Khandoba temple and as Shahji alighted, Shiva stepped forward, both eager, their hearts pounding with anticipation. Shivaji at once fell prostrate before his father, stretching full length with his forehead resting on the feet of the old man. Shahji's eyes were moist as he bent and raised his boy up by the shoulders and stood staring mutely at the young man, trying in vain to reconstruct the scenes of the twenty-five years that had lapsed in shaping the lad of eleven into this youth of thirty-four, his body erect with the pride of his achievements, and his head bent in loveable, endearing humility befitting his cultured ancestry. Jija Bai with here daughter-in-law came forward with the welcoming flame of scented camphor, and the family entered the temple to prostrate before the deity, to thank Her with overflowing emotion for the sheer joy of this reunion.

Shivaji took his father and the rest of the family to their ancestral home at Poona. Here, during the monsoon they were left to bask in the warmth of the togetherness where even Shiva's step-mother Tuka Bai and her son Vyankoji were drawn into the close circle of family ties and were bound by its love. Towards the end of the monsoon Shahji made ready to go back. Now had come the time to put forth the errand upon which he came. The ground had been prepared. Shiva had been thawed in the warmth of paternal love.

"Shiva, you look fine, and you look happy amidst your own people, and the people of Maharashtra look upon you with love and respect. Yet this is a hard life, the life of a soldier subject to hardships of a never-

ending war, of refuge in mountains. Why don't you join the Court of Adil Shah ?" Shivaji did not lack the respect to understand Shahji's love that made him speak thus and so was not prompted to answer in a manner that might humiliate or wound the feelings of his father. And yet, in the firm small frame of his son, who never even sat in the presence of his father, lest it should be a breach of respect that is a father's due from his son, Shahji sensed the obstinacy of an independent mind. The form that stood before him, with head bent low in utter respect and humility, would never stand in similar submission before Adil Shah, he realised.

He tried to point out that a treaty with Adil Shah would be an honour. If Shiva were not considered a force and power of equal distinction, why should Adil Shah opt for a treaty ? Why should he not march his forces against Shiva and rout him ? But the flattery of being equaled with a King was lost on Shivaji, the proud son of the soil whose heart was set on freeing it for the habitation of his own creed. This longing, this independent mind, was beyond the comprehension of Shahji, who traditionally served in the Court and was a loyal subject. With the intent to make a final effort to understand his son, he went round the Rajya his son had acquired. The survey revealed his son's heart and mind to Shahji. The entire land was free - freedom pervaded the atmosphere here. Here you could pursue your ancestral occupations without interference from anybody. Here your religion and your faith were not tampered with by someone who did not understand them. This was the

soil that gave you birth and to own it is your birthright. And the yearning to enjoy this birthright is the flame that is burning in the frame of his son, glowing in his eyes and sharpening his intellect, to plan ever new campaigns to free it further, inch by inch if necessary, be it however hard a task. A mixture of two different emotions enveloped Shahji - the regret that his was not the mind that envisioned this glorious scheme and the pride that the mind which conceived this glorious future for his country was his own offspring. Shivaji read the understanding and pride in his father's eyes and heaved a sigh of relief. To ignore this beloved old man's command and disregard him was a loathsome prospect to his noble mind. Yet, to give in, and be enable at the Adil Shah Court was a prospect equally loathsome. The comfort and luxury of a noble's life at Court did not compare with the pure joy of freedom, of working shoulder to shoulder with his brethren, building brick by brick the fortress of freedom. Upon their return to the capital, Shahji commended his son on what he achieved, and said.

"My son, your achievements are part of a vision. It is a limited vision at first, a yearning to establish for yourself a small but free stronghold. But it is a growing vision, destined to reach the far off horizons. Today, you have expanded a small Jagir into a Rajya with fortresses that can withstand and ward off foreign invasions. Tomorrow this will expand into an Empire uniting our entire country and making the entire soil of our Bharat Varsh free, - as free as it was in the bygone days of Rama and Yudhisthira. I am proud

of you, my son, for you shall be the architect of this glorious Empire. I failed in my duty as a husband in providing any happiness to Jija, but she had fulfilled her part of the marital duties and gave me the supreme happiness of being the father of such a son."

Shiva stood, humble and happy and Shahji saw in him still that strapping lad of eleven whom he sent to Dadaji. He placed his arm around his son, and advised :

"To retain what you have achieved, Shiva, you require an impregnable fort. Pratap Gargh and other forts can hold back against terrible attacks, but to withstand major assaults you have to build a strong fortress on an advantageous spot. Rairi should serve this purpose well. Expand your Rajya further, but please keep away from the Adil Shahi territories, for I cam here promising to attain that treaty from you. For more than half a century I had been a noble at that Court, sallied through Adil Shah's displeasures, and enjoyed his favour and trust. Let me not, in my old age fail in the mission upon which I had come. The promise shall bind you only till my death." Shiva understood his father - and entered into the treaty that satisfied the Bijapur Sultan. His mission completed, Shahji unwillingly retraced his course to Bijapur with Tuka Bai and Vyankoji - his heart heavy with the grief of parting from his beloved son. Shivaji's promise to his father to honour the treaty bound him but for a short while, for, within three years of the historical reunion, Shahji breathed his last.

A NATIONAL HERO IN THE MOULDING

TONGUES of leaping flame lit up the evening sky as the pyre burnt fiercely, consuming the last remains of a dauntless Maratha soldier who had died of an accidental fall from his galloping horse. Not far from the crackling fire-woods stood the statuesque figure of a woman, brave and faithful, - Jija Bai, shocked beyond belief at the loss of one whom she loved most. In deference to the age-old custom of sati, she was ready to immolate herself on her husband's pyre. As the young widow paced up to the blazing fire, she paused for a moment to look over the shoulders at her son. She stood transfixed, gazing on him. It was a crucial moment that changed the course of history. Then a voice was heard :

"Mother if you also die, who will live to inspire me ? My dream of freeing our countrymen from the shackles of slavery will languish for want of your support. Oh, Mother, the country needs you at this grim hour of trial."

These were the beseeching words of the son, who was chosen by destiny to become a mighty force, moving the very soul of India, Chhatrapathi Shivaji. For Jija Bai it was no longer a conflict of duties. She felt the defiance of tradition was as much the fulfillment of her duties as of her son's will to redeem the country's honour. She retraced her steps. As one goes to the haunts of Shivaji's childhood, one sees how



far his mother was instrumental in moulding his destiny. She was his companion in play and learning. The heroes of yore with their deeds of valour paraded before young Shivaji's eyes as he sat on her lap listening to her narration, in rapt attention.

Jija Bai's training of Shivaji included the inculcation of a deep sense of revulsion against every injustice meted out to women. A sister-in-law of Jija Bai had been spirited away by the Moghuls when she had gone for a bath to the river Godavari. The hatred born in Jija Bai because of this cruel act and the historic jauhar committed by Padmini, the queen of Chitore, because of Allaudin Khiliji's lust for her, was too deep to be eradicated. All this left an indelible mark on Shivaji who, in similar circumstances, when the Patil of Ranja dishonoured a woman, punished him by chopping off his hands and legs.

The famous story of the daughter-in-law of the Subhedar of Kalyan being brought to him after the defeat of the Subhedar is far too well-known. Shivaji treated this beautiful captive with great dignity and respect and returned her laden with gifts of clothes to her husband. Another incident relates how Shivaji imprisoned one of his own Sardars who attempted to hurt the wife of one of the

enemy officers after his surrender. This respect towards women was ingrained in the mind of Shivaji mainly because of his mother's influence upon him, and the anger



that she succeeded in creating in his heart was solely against the ill-treatment of women under the Moghuls.

It was Jija Bai who urged her son to win the battle against the 50,000 soldiers of the Bijapur kingdom near Pratapgarh. It was she who inspired him to enter the camp

of the Moghul emperor, in spite of lakhs of soldiers stationed in it. It was again she who aroused his anger against the treacherous Baji Ghorpade, whose disloyalty had led to the arrest of Shivaji's father.

The effort of Shivaji to set up an independent state did not always meet with success. There were times when brave men like Murar-Baji were lost, when Shivaji had to accept compromises in spite of his own wishes. There were several setbacks and times of depression when Shivaji's mother alone could rekindle the flame of faith and enthusiasm in his heart. "Those who are frightened of obstacles and hard work have no right to expect victory," was the challenge that Jija Bai often placed before her son when he talked of giving up the whole fight and even his ambition, momentarily. She pointed out to him her own widowed state and asked him, "If your ambition is to be given up so easily, why did you stop me when I was about to commit sati?" These admonitions were enough to rescue her son from the slough of despondency and lead him on to fresh field of hope and cheer.

Jija Bai wanted to make her son a lion of a man ; history has it that she fed him with the milk of a tigress. The warrior king, ruthless in war and chivalrous to women and magnanimous to the defeated was well in the making. The seeds of Shivaji's genius in warfare, state-craft, religious tolerance as well as in spirituality were thus sown in the very early years of his life. Mother and son succeeded in re-building hopes for humanity's independence.

THE TRAITOR

"**THAT** is one good thing accomplished," Shivaji said, and Jijabai agreed. The capture of Purandar fort was indeed a good beginning for Swarajya.

But a thoughtful look came into his eyes as he gazed from the parapet of the newly-won fort.

On a nearby hill stood the Rudramal fort - and on that fluttered the flag of the Sultan of Bijapur.

"That fort", Shivaji mused aloud, "is a perpetual threat to Purandar." And it was true. A cannon ball from Rudramal could have easily struck at the heart of Purandar.

"There is only one thing to do, to safeguard Purandar," Shivaji decided, "and that is to capture Rudramal...."

Preparations were rapidly made and one day Shivaji's force laid siege to the fort.

Days went by but the fort withstood the onslaught. "How is it that the fort is still not in our hands?" Shivaji wondered. Inquiries were made and he learnt the cause the Mughal commander of the fort was a brave man - and the fort was very well stocked.

"Well, if those do not prevail, cunningness has to be used," Shivaji decided.

The next day a rumour spread in the area - "Shivaji is lifting the siege because he is taking all his forces on an important campaign in the Konkan."

It was not long before the report reached the commander of the fort. Then one day in the dead of night Shivaji's forces suddenly struck. Looking at the operation from his camp Shivaji confidently expected the element of surprise to overwhelm the fort.

But he started at what happened. The striking Maratha force was met with instant and determined opposition. Quickly sensing that the attack had not been a surprise Shivaji deployed all the forces at his command. Grimly the fort held on, till a cannon ball from outside breached a wall and Marathas swarmed in.

After a brief but bloody battle the fort fell and the commander was made prisoner. As the man was presented in shackles Shivaji exclaimed, "Untie him ! I've nothing but respect for a valiant foe...."

He made the Khan sit by his side, and said, "You are a brave man, and you executed your duty very well. I shall see that you and your family are sent to Bijapur safely....."

"I'm grateful to you, Maharaj" the Moghal said. "Your generosity becomes your

greatness as a leader. But one thing that surprised me is that you should have a traitor in your employ...."

"Traitor ? " Shivaji exclaimed, his eyes becoming hard as steel.

"Yes," the Khan said, "it was he who told us not to believe the rumour of your lifting the siege...."

An ominous silence pervaded the court. Then Shivaji quietly asked. "His name, Khan ?"

But the Khan shook his head.

"No, Maharaj, I've pledged by the Koran that I shall not divulge his name."

Again silence reigned in that tense atmosphere.

Shivaji's eyes were expressionless. But his mind was in a turmoil. His devoted band of freedom fighters had a traitor among them ! But how could he find him ?

Then Sardar Rambhaji stepped forward and said, "Maharaj, if there is a traitor among us here is one sure way of destroying him - all of us will jump down the parapet into the valley below....."

Shivaji stared. All his conquering force to embrace death for just one traitor....?



Shivaji shook his head in the negative. Then the Sardar whispered something and Shivaji nodded.

Two hundred and fifty Mavalis stood one behind the other for the fatal jump.

"Maharaj," Rambhaji called out, "he who hesitates will automatically show himself up as the traitor...."

At these words the Mavalis surged forward. Now there was no going back and the first two jumped.

Immediately the Moghal commander put up a hand and exclaimed "Stop! The traitor is dead !"

The guilty man had shown greater anxiety to come forward so that his shame-faced treachery might not be found out!



BIRTH OF RAI GARH

SHIVAJI's obsession to acquire forts resulted in his conquests for establishing an independent state. He now yearned to build a fort, an impregnable fort from where he could launch his future campaigns and spread his state far and wide until became an Empire. He thought over his father's suggestion to reinforce and strengthen the fort at Rairi. Surrounded by Sahyadri hills, this fort had a natural barrier of mountains all around, itself rising steep and high amidst them all, a vantage point of survey if enemy approached. To climb the mountain and reach the fort on any side was a task near to impossibility. With a strong wall built around, the single entrance garrisoned and ably guarded, this fort indeed would be the kind of the asset that an ambitious Empire builder could dream of.

So Rairi came to be chosen for the centre of action. One day he rode to Rairi with several faithful close followers like Moro Pingle, Sambaji, Abaji Sondev, Kavji, Tanaji, Netaji and others. In their company he made a tour of the existing fort and its surroundings. With meticulous care he went over all the details, noting the few weak joints that were there, discussing the fortifications to be introduced in different areas, until he was satisfied that all the points were established and the construction could be started. He entrusted the task of renovation the fort and reinforcing it to his able companion

Abaji Sondev. With dedication did Abaji work on the task that was handed to him, painstakingly going over every detail that was discussed during their survey and incorporating them in the construction work. Inside the protective walls of the fort were built residences for Shivaji, his officials and companions, and Council Houses and Assembly Halls to propagate administrative work and plan future campaigns, as well as barracks and colonies to house his soldiers, and a long array of shops that formed the market to supply all they needed. Garrisons were built as guard posts at different spots, and the main entrance gate was further strengthened and a posse of able guards was posted to guard it day and night. Outside, almost at the foot-hill, on an elevated spot was built a beautiful house for Jija Bai where she could relax in comfort drinking in the beauty and luxury of the natural splendours that surrounded her.

It took two years for Abaji to complete this fort. And when it was completed everyone realised it was worth those two valuable years of Abaji's time. It indeed was an impregnable fort. Shivaji took his mother around the fort explaining to her in detail all the security measures and strongholds in it. Like a young boy gleefully submitting his excellent school report, he beamed with pride, showing off his marvel fort to his mother. Jija Bai was happy, very happy for her son. But she was wary too. A woman born to bear and rear this great soldier, she was wary. Her son was proud of this fort, and it was indeed worthy of his pride. But should a soldier at any time be too sure of his defences? Would

it not make him unwary of an approaching enemy? After all, your enemy has no need to be proud of your impregnable fort. His only concern would be to find loop-holes and the concentration with which the enemy would work to find loop-holes would be lacking in the person who surveys his possession with pride. She commended him on the work, "It is beautiful, Shiva. You have indeed done well. This is what I had always wanted for you, my son - an independent abode, a free state, where my son shall not have to bow his head before anyone. From this fort, this stronghold, you shall conquer all, you will build an Empire. That is my wish and blessing to you my son, and that shall be my prayer to Bhavani always." She paused and then continued, "But are you sure, really sure, that the fort is impregnable? Have you tested its immutable strength, son?"

The words cleaved a deep line of doubt in Shivaji's mind. No one knew he had the doubt there. He still surveyed the fortress with the deep pride of a father looking upon a champion son. He named it Raigarh. He shifted his capital there. From there the Mavalis sallied forth on their new campaigns and returned victorious. The fort was blessed with the charm of luck by Goddess Bhavani and that luck spelt victory for Shivaji in whichever direction he extended his vision.

But through all this, the tiny seed of doubt Jija Bai planted in his mind remained green. And one day he called his companions and announced his intent to make a proclamation challenging anyone to enter

the fort by any route other than the main entrance, and offering a reward of a bag of gold mohars and a gold "Kankan" to one who succeeded in doing so. The large number of people who came forward to perform the task attracted by the rich reward, were hindered by the very sight of its insurmountability and retreated. At last there came a man ; he was short, but stocky ; his legs were short but thick and muscular ; his toes were turned in like the paws of an animal and his long arms and large palms suggested strength and iron grip.

Shivaji looked at the man, whom his guards brought in and announced the purpose for which he came. The man was obviously a son of the soil. His body was of the colour of black earth. He was clad in a small piece of dirty, torn cloth that just covered his thighs. It was a last piece that stood between the animal and the transition to an apology for clothing.

"Who are you ? and what is your name?" Shivaji asked.

"Maharaj, I am a Mahar by caste. I have no name. Being the eldest son in the family I am always called 'Bhau' (elder brother)."

Shivaji smiled. "So be it. What can be more suitable as a form of address than Bhau? We are all children of the same soil. So I shall call you Bhau." The Mahar shifted uncomfortably ; this great man calling him Bhau ; how could it be ?

Shivaji continued, "I am told you wish to attempt the entry into the fort. Is that so?"

The Mahar said, "Yes, Maharaj, if I may be permitted to make the effort."

Shivaji said again : "Do you realise that the task is not only arduous, but dangerous too ? The hill is very steep and there is no beaten track nor good foot-holds. If you lose your grip you may fall."

"Yes, Maharaj, that I know. My family is starving and the prize money will be useful if I win it. If I fell and died in the attempt, it does not matter, for I must die sooner or later," said the Mahar. There were other things he did not say. For one thing, it was not the money alone that tempted him. It was the first consideration, though, for he was steeped in poverty. But behind it was the urge for adventure. Besides, as a boy, his only means of play was romping in the wild growths of the hill and exploring avenues in the old fort. The chances were he could do it again. It would be a thrill to do something others did not even attempt, and of course that reward could be very useful. His thoughts were interrupted by Shivaji's words. "If money is the main reason why do you want to try this deadly task, I will give you enough money. You need not endanger your life for it."

The Mahar shook his head. "No, Maharaj, I would like to earn it."

Shivaji stared at the man. Something in the man, in his stubborn mind and will, attracted him. "here is a man who has the strength of mind to prop up even a feeble physique ; such a man can do almost anything upon which be set that mind ; and my country is full of such stubborn,

strong-willed men. Could it be that these Mahars were the ones that gives birth to the name Maratha ? Then this soil and the State I have won is theirs. And with them behind me, I could conquer anything," he thought, and, turning to man, said :

"Very well then, go ahead. If you succeed, you hoist a flag beneath the Bhagwa flag of mine as a proclamation of your achievement."

The Mahar bowed and left. Shivaji came down to the gates and watched him as he disappeared into the forest. His mother's words again rang in his ears. "Are you sure, really sure, that it is impregnable ?" Is it? is it so impenetrable ?

The man entered the thick undergrowth. It was a steep ascent and the stones were slippery, covered with slimy moss, yet, like an ape he deftly heaved himself up, his keen eyes discerning the almost invisible track he once covered as a boy. His toes gripped like the claws of a wild cat, and his hands held like a gorilla's. Heaving his body up on the strength of small holds which the palms held in iron like vice, he reached the top and climbed the wall, crawling like a lizard, grappling with his finger tips at minute projections in the stones. And then it was over ; he had crossed over the wall and found himself in the fort. From there the rest of the way from turret to turret, pillar to post, jumping from one terrace to another was as easy and natural to him as

breathing, an effortless play. And at the top he paused, and stood scratching his head. Shivaji had suggested that he should hoist a flag, but where was the flag ? He thought for a while, and decided. Untying the cloth around his waist, he tore it off into two pieces and tying back one to cover his nakedness he tied the other piece beneath the Bhagwa Jhanda.

At the base of the fort, Shivaji patiently sat and waited, talking with his companions, balancing the possibilities of success and failure of the man. And suddenly he narrowed his eyes, and peered at a small form that emerged by the side of the flag. Could it be the Mahar ? His doubts were cleared in the next instant by the cloth that fluttered out beneath the saffron flag. He clapped his hands in glee. He felt the Mahar's success was his own success. His calling the Mahar "Bhau" was no shallow pretension.

The Mahar came down by the normal route from the flag-post ; Shivaji was waiting for him, with the bag of gold and eyes full of appreciation. He made the Mahar take him to spot where he broke into the fort. He ordered a garrison to be built there, and a strong vigilance force to be posted.

That night before he slept, he answered his mother's query in his mind.

"Yes mother, I do really thing it is impregnable."



RAIGARH *versus* THE FORCE OF A MOTHER'S LOVE

SHIVAJI settled down to the complacency of security that Raigarh offered. He was proud of his capital and of his impregnable fortress. His mother's question was answered, not off-handedly but after testing and proving its impregnability, by closing down the only weak spot through which the Mahar made his access to the fort. And so he settled down in his capital at Raigarh to carry on with a smug assurance of absolute security, the task of administering his acquired state and of further campaigns to conquer and control new dominions. But Achilles heel is no legend. In each iron-clad self-defence there always remains a tiny loop-hole, a spot of weakness, which is sometimes known to the defender, sometimes unknown. When it is known he is at least wary, alert and on the look-out. But when he is unaware, the exposure of that weak point comes as a surprise blow. And thus it happened to Shivaji sometime after settling down at Raigarh. Shivaji was taken unawares in his complacency. A milk maid, a coy country girl in her teens foiled the fool-proof defence of his supposedly impregnable fortress.

She was Hirakani, the pretty wife of Ishwar Ram, who earned his livelihood by maintaining cows and supplying milk to the Villagers. The shifting of the capital from Pratapgarh to Rairi gave him the incentive to expand his business by adding new numbers to his herd. Pretty Hirakani had an amicable disposition and a good heart, and was liked by everyone except her evil-tongued, nasty-tempered mother-in-law.

She was always picking quarrels with the girl on some pretext or other, but the good-natured girl had also the wisdom not to let the quarrels develop by joining the banter and let them get out of hand. As much as Ishwar Ram loved his wife for her looks, so much did he respect her for her wisdom and strength of character. And so when it came to the supply of milk to the people inside the fort, he unhesitatingly sent his pretty young wife, amidst the bantering soldiering when his mother refused to undertake the job. And Hirakani was indeed worth her weight in gold. With her modesty, wit and quick repartee, she did good business without letting the soldiers get too smart with her. And her good heart and helpful nature had won their affection so that the banters of the Mavalis meant nothing but simple fun, and they all loved her like a sister.

Hirakani had a son, a lovely baby upon whom she doted with all her being. Come what may she would return from her business errand before dusk so that the baby had her full attention after that and also that his feeding might not suffer. Shivaji placed strict orders as to the closing and opening of the fort gates. And the gates, once closed, would not be opened again till the next scheduled time, either to let anyone go out or come in, even if it were Shivaji himself. Hirakani always returned before the gates closed, so that her baby did not have to suffer the pangs of hunger. But one day, in one of the houses where she usually supplied milk, the soldier's wife was in labour, with no one to

help. Hirakani stayed with her, with some of the neighbours to help. The helplessness of the young mother so moved her, that she stayed right by her side, unmindful of the time till she delivered a healthy boy, very much alive and kicking. It was only then, as she was helping the exhausted mother to some milk, that she realised it was getting dark and someone was lighting the lamp. She mumbled a hurried explanation to the neighbours who protested against her going at such a time and pressed her to stay back, and left in a haste. But when she reached the gates, to her utter dismay, she found them closed. The guards knew her well. She begged them to open just a crack and let her pass. They understood her predicament, sympathised with her, but had to express their helplessness. Shivaj's orders were strict. They

meant exactly what was said in so many words. There was no room for interpretations or exceptions to his commands, and none dared defy them. They advised her to go back to the soldier's house and stay with his wife for the night. Distressed and dejected, Hirakani turned back. But instead of going back to the village, she walked along the wall, prowling like an animal whose instincts are roused. In her ears droned the crying of her baby. She was like a tigress caught in a trap, with her cubs whimpering outside. All her instincts woke up – the force of that uncontrollable love and longing to get back to her hungry child egging her mind on to try and find a way out. She moved hither and thither restlessly, weeping in distress, and at last stopped at a spot, and, making

up her mind to do or die, tied her milk pot to her waist and climbed up the wall, went over it and jumped out. Outside, it was pitch dark in the jungle. Night calls of predators did not fall on her ears, for she only heard the wailing of her baby in her mind. Snakes slithering in her path did not scare her. She was hardly conscious, hardly aware of what she was doing or



how she was going to make the steep descent on the hill side. A slip would have sent her rolling down to certain death. But she did not slip. With the tenacity strangely sustained by despair she clung to anything she could catch and lowered herself further and further. At last she reached the foot-hills and unmindful of her blistered, bleeding feet and hands, ran home absorbed in delight, and picked up the baby. Her mother-in-law's invectives did not bother her. She was worrying about the baby and now she was with him. That was all that mattered. As for the invectives and insinuations of the mother-in-law, she knew she did not have to worry about them, too. She was aware of her husband's trust in her.

The next day early in the morning, as they opened the gates, one of the guards went to the soldier's house to tell Hirakani to go. Where was Hirakani ? The soldier's wife started at him in surprise. "Of Course, Hirakani never came here last evening", she told him firmly. A search proved that the milk-maid was nowhere in the fort. A despatch to her house and the answer came back prompt. Yes, she was there, in her husband's house, preparing for yet another day's round of business. The guards ran to Shivaji and related the incident. Shivaji was stunned. A milk-maid, a frail woman, to go out of the fort, in pitch dark, and scale the mountain down ? Unbelievable ! If climbing it was dangerous enough, getting down its steep sides was death itself. He sent for Hirakani. He learnt of the desperate urge that drove her to attempt so deadly a task. He saw here bruised hands and feet and the light of mother's love in her eyes. He felt humble, and, kneeling before her, placed those bruised hands upon his head, seeking the blessing of that noble, loving, courageous mother. And then he asked her to take him to the spot through which she made the exit. He ordered immediate measures to be enforced to garrison and guard to spot. As he stood watching it, his mother's words again rang in his mind, "Are you sure, really sure ?" He bowed his head.

"No, mother. I am not sure any more. I may never be sure again, and I will be alert and always ready for an attack," he thought.



SAMBHAJI MOHITE

THE fort of Purandar was in the safe hands of Murar Baji Deshpande. Shivaji established his rule over the plains or Karhe. Yet he was not satisfied, because, the sub-district of Supe was yet to be brought under his control. Unless that was done, the eastern 'gates' to Karhe plains would be open to attack. Supe was of vital importance to Shivaji. Unfortunately, it was difficult for Shivaji directly to lay siege to it. Supe was under the supervision of Sambhaji Mohite, who was the brother of Tukabai Saheb, step mother of Shivaji. That placed Shivaji in an embarrassing situation. Yet, he carefully planned a strategic move. He sent his envoy to Supe to have a talk with Mohite Mama (Uncle Mohite).

The envoy had his own doubts about the outcome of the talk, as Mohite was so closely related to Shivaji ! The envoy went to Supe. He met Mohite Mama.

"How is your 'Maharaj'?" Mohite asked sarcastically raising his eyebrows.

"I have come with a request from Shivaji Mamasahib..... The request is that you should help us in our efforts," the envoy urged.

"And get killed," Mohite completed the sentence. He (Shivaji) had his father dishonoured. Now, it is my turn !" Mohite continued angrily.

"You do not understand it, Mamasahib ! This is a sacred duty that we are performing for the sake of our country and our religion," the envoy tried to explain.

"Let Gods and religion remain in their own places ! Who will save me if the Badshah calls me for explanation ? Nobody will face him then ! " Mohite remained unmoved. "What are you saying ?" Maharaj himself will rush to help you ! Once Supe is merged in Swarajya, no enemy on earth can step on an inch of our territory," the envoy said proudly. "Yes, now I have understood the game ! Your Maharaj has an eye on Supe !"

"No, Sir ! Supe will remain under your control. But it should be merged with the territory of Shivaji for its fortification," continued the envoy undaunted.

"I know everything ! I tell you once again that you will not get Supe. They are fighting for Swaraj ! You had better bring other parts excluding Supe under your Swaraj !" with great annoyance Mohite replied the envoy.

The envoy returned to Raigarh. He told Shivaji all that had happened. Nobody doubted the decision that would be taken by Shivaji. He only said, "Alright !"

Two days passed. On the night of the third day Maharaj's orders went out to Shamrajpant Peshwe, "Pant ! Get the horsemen ready, tell them that they have to advance immediately !"

Shamrajpant did as he was told. Three hundred and fifty armed horsemen stood before the palace at Padmavati summit. Maharaj marched towards Supe along with his horsemen the same night. He explained his plan only to a few close officers in his cavalry. He insisted that the job should be done perfectly. Before the day dawned, Maharaj presented himself in the small fortress of Mohite Mama. The fortress was very small, and was not well guarded. About five to six Mavalis advanced towards the gate which was closed but soon they found a sub-gate had just opened. There were only three guards at the gate.

Shivaji and his army advanced cautiously towards the fortress. The Mavalis who had reached the gate saluted the guard and said, "Mastersahib (Mohite) had called us today to receive our tips."

"What tips ? What is the occasion for it ?" asked a guard. "Is Diwali not approaching ?" reminded one of the Mavalis.

"Diwali is yet fifteen days from now. In what way are you justified in expecting the tips beforehand ? What strange custom is it ?"

"How am I to explain it to you, now ? We have nothing to eat at home. That's why we had sent a petition to Masterji to grant us our tips for Diwali in advance. He has summoned us here this morning, so we are here," explained one Mavali.

"Very well, go ahead !"

They rushed through the gate !

Within seconds they unlatched the gate. When the guards questioned them in stupefaction, they were threatened with dire consequences. The Mavalis said, "If you shout, you will be cut to pieces, now and here !"

The Mavalis entered the fortress like stampeding cattle and Shivaji led them. The gate was wide open. The Mavalis followed Shivaji one after another. As planned earlier, the Mavalis spotted the guards and pointed their swords at their chest, and robbed them of their weapons. Within minutes the Mavalis covered the whole fortress. Not a drop of blood was shed and they captured the fortress ! The action was so swift that there was no use of raising an alarm. They were totally at the mercy of the Mavalis !

Shivaji entered the mansion of Mohite along with thirty Mavali ! He ran towards the drawing room of his uncle! His uncle was smoking his hukka while resting on a cushion. A servant shouted, "Master, it treachery...."

"Mind you," shouted Mohite mama on seeing Shivaji and the Mavalis advancing towards him ! He got up! He was surrounded by the armed Mavalis. Mohite was taken by surprise. He looked baffled. How could they have entered the fortress ?

"Kill me ! You want to kill me, don't you ? Kill me ! " He was utterly helpless and his very helplessness made him shout all the more ! His lips trembled. "No, Mamasahab ! The people to be killed are different ! It is our duty to place our heads at your feet and solicit your blessings. It is your duty to bless us in our efforts." So said Shivaji in all earnestness. He put his sword back into its sheath. All the other Mavalis followed suit. Seeing that the air was charged with emotion the Mavalis withdrew.



"Please be seated, Mamasahab !" Shivaji gently coaxed him on to a seat and himself sat beside Mamasahab. Mohite kept on gazing at the roof.

"Mamasahab ! You are like my father ! It was never my intention to insult you. I never dreamt of it. It is my sincere wish that our land should be freed from the clutches of Badshah and to establish a Swaraj for the welfare of the people. It is my sacred duty to see that freedom of worship, honour of women and justice are

re-established. I am only an instrument. The force behind us all is Goddess Ambika ! All that I am today I owe Her. It is Her blessings alone that has raised me to this eminence."

Mohitemama now saw the greatness of his nephew ! He had not seen any person in his life who had opposed or arrested a man merely to ask for his blessings ! He had seen many who had beheaded their victims. He never thought that Shivaji had such a large heart, so full of reverence for elders. He had thought that Shivaji was a vagrant and a wastrel !

"Kindly come along with us to Raigarh and help us in our venture," Maharaj tried to coax him.

Mohitemama spoke to him in a choked voice, "No, Raja ! You are really great. How can you ask for my support ? You will never be unsuccessful. Your fame will spread all over the world ! You may now take over this sub-district of Supe. I must go !"

"No Uncle ! Where will you go ?" asked Shivaji.

"To Karnataka! I shall pass my days there," said his uncle. Shivaji urged him to stay at Raigarh again and again, but Mohite was firm in his resolution. And with a heavy heart Shivaji agreed.

Mohitemama was given a warm send off.



SANT RAMDAS

CHANTING mantras all the while, the priest set himself to the task of preparing ghee oblations. The participants, numbering two Brahmin families of Jamba and Asangaon and their friends, readied themselves for the solemn moment or Muhurta, when the sacred vows of the young couple would be recited before the holy fire.

Banaji Buwa's little daughter, her eyes aglow with excitement, leaned against him while he supported her hand holding the sacrificial ladle. Her prospective husband, Narayana, a proud lad of 12, surrounded by his mother and brothers, sat upright with an air of distant reverie on his grave countenance.

The assistant glanced up at the priest and at a signal activated the fire. The priest put the sacrificial ladle in Narayana's hand and commanded the assembly's attention with the portentous word : "Savadhan", heralding the Muhurta or auspicious moment and at the mention of "Savadhan" (Take care !) Narayana's mind jerked awake.

"Take Care !" Yes. Take Care ! This was truly a divine warning reaching him through the wall of ceremonial paraphernalia. Wasn't the priest's word a God-sent arrow piercing a way through his bondage and

marking a path of light to his soul's freedom ? "Oh Lord, I shall take care. This I will !" With the agility of a jungle cat, his limbs stretched under him and loosened as if shot from a spring and in one bound he was out of the marriage pandal and in two more he disappeared out of sight, not to be seen again for nearly 24 years.

Born on the 9th day of the bright fort-night of Chaitra in the year 1608, Narayana was the third son of a Brahmin couple, Suryaji Pant and Ranu Bai, Rig Vedic Brahmins of Jamadagni lineage, who lived in Jamba by the Gadavari. The other two sons were Gangadhara Pant and Ramirama Dasa Pant. Suryaji Pant passed away soon after having performed Narayana's Upanayana (Thread Ceremony).

Ranu Bai often reproached her little boy for not taking part in household work. She would find him dreaming in a corner of the kitchen and once she asked him :

"What do you think you are doing here all by yourself ?"

"O Mother", he would reply, "I was reflecting upon the Universe."

Narayana who longed to receive initiation into the mysteries of spiritual life had approached Gangadhar, but his brother

refused to initiate him because he was too young.

The boy would have run away from home in search of the Real Teacher, had he not bided his time out of regard for his mother.

But the electrifying effect of the priest's word had touched him at the very core of his dilemma and at the most critical moment



of his life. Having thus decamped, he reached the Panchavati, near Nasik, the scene of the legendary kidnapping of Sita.

He found a cave on a hillock called Taakali by the mouth of a small tributary of the Godavari. He remained in that cave for 12 years, doing severe penance standing waist-deep in the water at the confluence of the rivers, from sunrise to midday, meditating on Raghunatha. The Lord appeared to him in the form of Sri Rama and initiated him.

From then on, he took the name of Ramadasa, living on Madhukari, collecting morsels of food from several households just as a bee collects honey from flowers, which he first offered to Rama, meditating in the river and reading the Puranas.

Compared to other and earlier saints of the Vithala Sampradaya, Ramdasas stood out as a class all by himself. Whereas those great souls campaigned for a revival of dharma alone and did not seek to make a great many disciples or change the political map, Ramadasa went out of his way to spread his creed with a zeal of a missionary. He aimed at reforming society and getting rid of foreign invaders. He used direct methods and a language geared to the necessities of the day. He was more objective and believed that a religion which has become decadent and in imminent danger of being wiped out should become active and first reform itself in order to be able to overcome such threats.

Thus, he gathered numberless disciples who set themselves forthwith to spread the message in their own towns and villages, from Karhad, Shahapur, Miraj, Chaphala, Shirgaon, Masur et. Et., forming societies, building maths and temples and making more disciples. Men, women and entire families fired with enthusiasm, renounced the world and dedicated their lives to this new movement. They showed deep and unflinching faith in God and trust in their Guru. This was the beginning of the Ramdasas Sampradaya.

Ramdasas established the main maths in Shirgaon and Chaphala. He sent a letter

to Uddhava and asked him to join him. He was given charge of the Domagaon Math. His faithful disciple Kalyana with his mother and a friend, Dattatreya, ran the Shirgaon Math. Thus he opened eleven Maths and temples in different places. The great king Shivaraya (Shivaji) lived for the same ideal and it was meet that those two pioneers of religious revival and Maratha revolution should have met.

Counseled by Sant Tukarama whose foresight caused him to go to Ramdasas, Shivaji found indeed the spiritual Master of his dreams in the short and lively Sannyasin of the lineage of Jamadagni. They were both intelligent, smart and shrewd judges of people. They both felt the burning urge to free Maharashtra from oppression and re-establish dharma and justice in the land. Ramdasas bemoaned incessantly the wave of a new materialism, the perpetual insecurity in politics and warfare, decried the overwhelming selfishness at all levels of society and the plethora of fake religious teachers, atheists, and above all, the apathy of the people as a whole.

"A Sadhu", he preached, "should awaken others but not remain in their midst, he should go on to help others and regularly meditate in the solitude of the hills and valley." In 1647, Ramdasas had discovered an image of Rama deep in the bed of the Krishna river at Angapur and consecrated it in a shrine a year later, in Chaphala.

After leaving Divakara in charge of the Math, in the Ashadha of the same year, Ramdasas accompanied by his disciples Kalyana, Akka and Ananta Swami, visited

Pandharpur, where he met Sant Tukarama, a year before the latter's passing away, and then he left for Shivathara where he wrote his Dasabodha and Abhangas and then returned to Jamba. Some say he stayed at Parli. In 1655, Shivaraya offered his whole kingdom at the feet of the Guru, who as history knows returned it to the king, asking him to rule in his stead. The same year Ramdasas went back to Jamba to attend on his dying mother. Ramdasas

to settle down atop the natural fortress of Sajjanagad, near Satara. Most Deccan Plateau mountains present ready-made bases for fortresses' sides and tops. Shivaraya fortified Sajjanagad and built a great fort.

Later on, as he watched the building of Samangad in the vicinity, his heart rose with pride at the sight of the thousands of workers swarming all over the summit,



working with zeal and agility while carrying out his behest. At this moment, Ramdasas who sensed his thoughts came over to the king and called his attention to a curious phenomenon. The saint picked up a rock from the basket of one of the workers and smashed it against a wall. To everyone's surprise it was found that the stone contained a live frog which leaped out of its erstwhile prison unharmed.

and Shivaji formed a perfect team dedicated to the uplift of their people, - one as the soldier, leader and statesman, the other as the wise counselor. In 1661, Shivaji having built the great fortress of Pratapgad, had his Guru Ramdasas install in it the beautiful image of Tulja Bhavani, one of the aspects of the Goddess Durga and patron of the king, and endless were the prayers of the saint to the fierce destroyer of Evil, the divine Mother, to further the cause of his King.

Shivaji built several forts and conquered many more, having perfected the uses of guerilla warfare. Ramdasas finally decided

Taken aback by the wonderful sight, the King with the help of his sharp acumen was quick to grasp the meaning of his Guru's action : If God could provide a frog's where withal to live within a stone, who was he to think of himself as strong and powerful ? Everything was indeed the Lord's play. God alone was the doer and he, the King, was merely his servant and his instrument. When Ramdasas saw his disciple had shed his pride as if it were an unwanted parasite, he smiled. This was the way the master taught, and no wonder Shivaji felt unabated love and devotion for such an exceptional teacher.

In his letter to him, which are still in existence, Shivaji pays tribute to him in the highest terms, and he constantly used to make grants for various temples and Maths.

“In the establishment of religion, and service of God in the relieving of the misery of my subjects and in their protection and help that I should seek to obtain spiritual satisfaction in the midst of this duty, you were also pleased to say that whatever I wished from the bottom of my heart would be fulfilled for me....”, he wrote. This is only an example of their close relationship.

One can see how his knowledge of the world fits in with his spiritual teaching. His aim was to reach everyone and encourage even the weak to spurts of renewal, courage and strength. It was in 1674 that Chhatrapati Shivaji was crowned King and he stayed for 45 days at Sajjanagad with Ramdas, feeding and caring for the poor.

In 1678 Ramdas ordered new images of Sita, Rama and Laxmana to be made in Tanjore and sent to Kalyana to take over the Math at Damagaon. Then Shivaraya who visited his guru for the last time in the month of Pausha in 1679, was informed by him of the approaching end of his reign and mission as his soul would soon gain release from the body. The Chhatrapati passed away as predicted on the following Chaitra of 1680.



PRATAPGARH

WHEN Pantaji Gopinath arrived at Pasarni hill top, he saw the whole area of Dhom, Menavali, Wai and Bardhan flooded with an array of tents. Wai looked beautiful, its green tree tops swaying to the tune of the ripples in Krishna river flowing by. But the beauty only saddened him, for the territory was then occupied by Afzal Khan's army. The entire area from the banks of the Krishna was plundered by his soldiers, who made the life of those residing were miserable.

Pantaji descended from the hill-top and came near the Khan's camp. He saw Arabs, Afghans, Bakhsaris and converted Deccan's donning military uniforms fully armed wandering carelessly within the camp. When they saw this Brahmin, Pantaji, they watched him with great curiosity mixed with displeasure. At the same time they were eager to know what his message could be.

Pantaji met Krishnaji Bhaskar at the camp. Krishnaji welcomed him. Pantaji now descended from his horse and started walking along with Krishnaji while their horsemen were coming leisurely behind both of them. Pantaji was observing every detail in the camp. He noticed the ropes of the tents spread out like fishermen's nets, innumerable elephants waving their trunks, caravans of camels, bullocks carrying water in skin pouches and also countless servants, maids, Baluchi traders, etc. Javelins tied in groups of four or five

were seen at many places, and rifles and ammunition dumps were strewn at various spots in the camp. Occasionally, he could hear sounds of dholaks (drums) and ghazals being sung in a tent or two. Pantaji and others were watched very curiously by the sturdy soldiers, while they were passing by. In another part of the camp there were several shops displaying eatables, cloth, jewellery, etc. Many jewelers from Bijapur came there with the confidence that Shivaji would be defeated and they would have a roaring business.

On the plains, cannons were placed in hundreds and chests full of ammunition were close by. They were heavily guarded by armed soldiers. From all that he saw, Pantaji concluded that Khan's camp was extremely powerful and rich, full of skill yet careless. In comparison Shivaji's army was very small and extremely poor ! Pantaji was alarmed at what he saw.

Suddenly, Krishnaji Bhaskar halted at the gate of a tent. Rich carpets were spread out with a mattress in one corner and some cushions to lean upon. Krishnaji and Pantaji entered the tent, and Krishnaji sent his clerk to Khan to convey the arrival of Shivaji's ambassador.

"Hand this letter of Maharaj to Khan Sahib," said Pantaji to the clerk passing on an envelope. Pantaji was visibly afraid at the thought of Shivaji Maharaj having to contend against the might of the Khan. "What will happen to my Maharaj ?" he murmured to himself.

"You may rest for a while. I shall fetch the orders of the Khan," Krishnaji Bhaskar

said to Pantaji and left after arranging for his personal comfort. Krishnaji saluted Khan and informed. "Shivaji Maharaj's ambassador has come to meet you honour! I have just come from Pratapgarh as per your orders."

"That's fine," exclaimed the Khan. "Now, you tell me what happened there. I am very eager to know." "Sir! You have already won half the battle! No more anxiety !" Krishnaji enthusiastically informed the Khan.

"Is it so ? How is that ?" enquired the Khan eagerly.

Krishnaji narrated, "Shivaji is so frightened that he has requested me time and again to urge you to pardon him for his misdeeds so far. Your vast and powerful army, your personal valour, and the force of your determination struck terror in him. In fact, he is trembling with fright, and your honour has robbed him even of his sleep."

The Khan was delighted at this report. "Shivaji is now prepared to accept orders from you, Sir," continued Krishnaji.

Again Khan guffawed. "He is prepared to hand over all the forts, provinces, all the riches to you and is ready even to come to you bare-footed from Bijapur."

"But for the greatness of your honour, Shivaji could not have come to terms so easily," added Krishnaji.

"I never expected even in my dreams that this wicked rogue would yield so soon ! Now he is in my hands, this son of Bhonsles,

most disgracefully shall I hand him over to the Sultan. I can finish off not one but a dozen such men single-handed, if attacked. And how can this 'mountain rat' survive ? He is now just a hare in the jaws of a lion." Thus boasted the Khan before Krishnaji.

Krishnaji then handed over the cover to the Khan. He asked him to read it. It was full of praise for the Khan. Shivaji pleaded guilty of disobedience to the Sultan, and requested Khan to pardon him and plead on his behalf with the Bijapur Sultan. He requested that he may be granted the opportunity to meet the Khan in person and present his case personally.

A smile flickered on the Khan's face. He agreed to meet Shivaji's messenger the next morning, accordingly. Pantaji and Krishnaji went to the Khan's tent next morning with presents, which Shivaji wished to be given to him. Khan was reclining on the mattresses. When they entered he ordered his men to exit. Krishnaji saluted the Khan and handed over the presents. He introduced Pantaji to the Khan as Shivaji's ambassador. Khan accepted the presents and said to Pantaji. "Your Shivaji must have understood the greatness of my power. It is my wish that Shivaji should accompany me to Bijapur."

"He will come. It is his duty. He cannot disobey your orders. Our Maharaj is ashamed of his behaviour which might have caused a great deal of anxiety to you. He has definitely invited the wrath of your honour. But it is only your honour who can pardon him. Shivaji Maharaj is now frightened ; he spends all his time worrying

about his safety. He is ready to hand over all his forts, even part of the country that he has captured to you, if only you will spare his life," explained Pantaji.

"Your Shivaji Raja was very conceited so far ! He took undue advantage of the leniency of the Sultan ! Now his tricks won't work with me." Khan turned angry.

"Please pardon Shivaji Maharaj for all his faults. He will never forget this favour all his life. When he is prepared to hand over every inch of land to your honour, why should you be so cruel to him ? He is prepared to fall at your feet with folded hands," said Pantaji.

"If he is ready to come here, you may bring him here," ordered the Khan.

"But he is afraid to come here !" solicited Pantaji.

"Very well, then, what do you want me to do ?"

"If your honour would be kind enough to come to Javli yourself, a meeting can be arranged." "What ? I come to that jungle ? to die ? It can never be. Shivaji has to come here." "But, Khan Saheb, Kindly listen to his request ! Shivaji Maharaj will be utterly defenseless and shall come unarmed with only one attendant. He is just like your son. He respects you more than his father. Kindly comply with his request. He has no courage to come out of Pratapgarrh." "So, you want me to meet him at Javli ? Well, leave me alone for the moment. I

shall think over and let you know my decision tomorrow morning."

"As you please, your honour," said Pantaji, and he saluted the Khan and turned back. Pantaji and Krishnaji walked together. Pantaji insisted that Krishnaji should make the Khan come down from Pratapgarh. Krishnaji promised him the same. Meanwhile, Khan thought over the proposal with all its consequences and repercussions, and finally decided to agree to Shivaji's request. Krishnaji also explained to Khan that Shivaji could do no harm to him even if he met him at Javli. Khan was convinced, and he conveyed his acceptance to Pantaji. Pantaji was very happy. He praised Amba in his mind for his successful mission as an ambassador and left for Pratapgarh where Jija Bai and Shivaji were eagerly waiting for the message.

"Come, come, Uncle !" Shivaji caught his hands and welcomed Pantaji.

"What ? Khan is ready to come ? That's good, Uncle, you have won half the battle," exclaimed Shivaji.

"But Khan will bring his army ! Is it a small force ? Shiva, what difference will it make, if Khan comes down ?" enquired Jija Bai.

"I am going to meet him !" Maharaj said very calmly.

"What ? yourself ? No, no, I shall not let you go," Jija Bai protested vehemently.

"No, no, we won't let you go, Maharaj," echoed all the others, refusing to let Shivaji go alone to meet the Khan.

Shivaji then requested them to listen to his point of view and explained, "I know pretty well that the Khan has come here with the definite intention of deceit in his heart. He has a huge army. We will have to so arrange that none of his soldiers can escape. If this is to be done, we must try to get his army to jungles of Javli or to the valleys of Koyna."

"But how is it that you have decided to see the Khan personally ?" enquired Moropant.

"No, If he comes along with his army into the forest of Mahabaleshwar you will tell him that I cannot see him as I am frightened. You will persuade him to leave his army in the valleys of Koyna and come alone to the foot-hills of Pratapgarh. We will raise a Shamiana for him and I shall meet him there. And if he does so, his army will be at your disposal !"

"Wonderful," exclaimed Tanaji. Jija Bai was still anxious. "If the Khan behaves himself it will be all right. Cannons will be sounded at the time of the meeting. As soon as you hear the sound of cannons, you must tackle his army."

"But how can you be sure that the Khan will behave properly ?" asked Jija Bai.

"If the Khan behaves properly, he will be treated with respect ; if he deceives, then I have got the nails of a tiger to protect

me. I shall break open his entrails. Even his corpse will not reach Bijapur. I shall not consider myself your son if I cannot avenge the insult that the Khan has done to my father." Shivaji spoke with firmness and determination to his mother. The day for the meeting was fixed! It was on Thursday, Aghrahan Shuddha Seventh, in the afternoon.

All the important colleagues of Shivaji Maharaj had assembled ; Moropant, Kanhoji Jedhe, Baji, Sarjerao Jedhe, Tanaji, Yesaji, Netaji Palkar, Jiva Mahalya, etc. were present. Shivaji assigned a task to each one of them. Sambhaji Kavji Mondhalkar and Jiva Mahalya were to remain with Shivaji during his meeting with the Khan. Meanwhile Mavalis were engaged in the blockade of the jungle of Javli from all the directions in order not to allow the escape of a single soldier and to block their way in the dense forests of Javli. Mavalis themselves hid in batches of eight or ten and were only waiting for the signal for attacking the Khan's army thus surrounded by them in the jungle. They were very cautious, alert and wrathful, waiting for the right opportunity. For Shivaji Maharaj had said to them, "This is the wish of God ! Be confident, Goddess Jagadamba is behind you. We are doing this only for the sake of our Gods, our religion and our people."



THE DEADLY EMBRACE

INSTIGATED by the Dowager Queen of Bijapur, Afzal Khan's army was on its way to capture Shivaji, destroying all the places of worship. Shivaji did not relish the idea of facing a major battle with so tremendous a force as Afzal Khan's and when Afzal Khan sent a Brahmin, offering to meet and conclude peace Shivaji agreed to it, though doubtful of Afzal Khan's sincerity in the offer. A meeting was arranged. When the Brahmin returned to Afzal Khan, he gave to the Bijapur commander a very different version of what had transpired between himself and Shivaji. He faithfully narrated the conversation that took place in the Shivaji's Darbar, of how Shivaji proclaimed that he had no intention of disrespecting the Sultan and how eager he was to meet the Khan and conclude peace. But he omitted the subsequent call Shivaji had made on him in the middle of the night from his narration. During his second meeting Shivaji managed to extract from the Brahmin the Khan's actual intentions, and learnt that he bragged about capturing Shivaji and taking him back to Bijapur in chains. Naturally Afzal Khan was satisfied at the success of the Brahmin's mission. He was flattered by the humble and repentant attitude of the Maratha who was now seeking pardon and protection, and urging the Khan to intervene on his behalf at the court of Sultan of Bijapur. "My Master", said the Brahmin to Afzal Khan, "You have put the fear of God into this young man to whom I conveyed your

messages. He is humble and repentant and will do as you say, but I am of the opinion that he is suspicious lest he be trapped in some way. For this reason he feels unable to come to you here in Wai. He urges humble that you march up a little way, perhaps up to Javli. There he would meet you more assuredly, for you would be without your formidable army around you. That would be the starting point from which you could gradually draw him into your grip, and thereafter he would be all yours to do as you want with him" thus convincing Afzal Khan that Shivaji was really afraid of the Khan and his forces.

Afzal Khan decided to comply with Shivaji's request and gave orders for the camp to get ready to move forward to Javli. "I will honour him", Afzal Khan thought. "After all, as the Brahmin has said, he has more reason to be afraid of me than I, Afzal Khan, have to be afraid of him?"

Shivaji proceeded for the peace talks, but to three chosen men who were in charge of his own forces Shivaji sent a different kind of order. These three were his military commanders, Netaji Palkar, Peshwa Moropant and Tanaji Malusare. These commanders, were in charge of his battalions in Konkan. Shivaji asked them to come closer and station themselves in the thick forest, east of Pratapgarh. But even to these three he did not disclose that there would be need to commit any

act of aggression against the Khan's forces. He informed them that this was for protection in case the Khan launched a surprise attack.

The time for the meeting dawned. The Bijapur commander slowly walked up the incline from his camp to pavilion, where the two were to meet. Afzal Khan came dressed in a full-skirted thin Muslin robe, carrying only his sword by his side. He



asked Sayed Banda, who accompanied him, to stand at a distance for that was the arrangement he had made with Shivaji. Then he came forward marching into the pavilion, where he took his seat on the richly decorated couch which had been made ready for him.

Shivaji came down from his fort, and leaving his followers at a distance from the pavilion, he approached it with only two escorts. He was apparently unarmed, but concealed under the sleeves, into which he folded his hands, were small but deadly enough

weapons, with which he could protect himself if the Khan made a treacherous move. On the fingers of one hand were tiger's claws and hidden inside the other sleeves was a dagger. As he approached the stocky, hefty Khan, who was almost double Shivaji's size, the Khan got up and advanced with open arms, ostensibly to extent a warm brotherly embrace of welcome to Shivaji. But his muscles were twitching with eagerness to crush the Maratha and his mind was in a fever. As he folded Shivaji in what was intended to be a deadly embrace he slipped one arm around Shivaji's neck and tightened his grip choking, while with the other he drew a dagger and stabbed him. Shivaji was petrified for a moment, though he was not unarmed, thanks to his steel armour. The next moment, he managed to free his arm, the arm with the tiger's claws and digging the claws into the Khan's stomach he tore open his entrails. Stung by the pain, the Khan loosened his grip on the Maratha, who then freed his other arm, stabbed the Khan several times, and before his surprised attendants could make a move, he streaked like lightening across and out of the tent.



A SPEEDY FOLLOW UP

SHIVAJI stood on the ramparts of Pratapgarh and surveyed the finishing touches being given to Afzal Khan's tomb. An ignominious death for a powerful soldier, but the insult should not be carried beyond the grave. The dead should be laid in honour.

His trusted lieutenants stood beside him in a group. Shivaji turned to them.

"A soldier never rests, till he finds his eternal rest on the battle-field. Afzal Khan's death would cause panic and confusion at the Bijapur Court. Strike into that chaos and grab an easy victory, that is how I feel. What do you say Netaji ?", he asked.

Excitement shone in the eyes of the lieutenants. "Say whither and we shall proceed there and capture, Maharaj. Your policy is always sound and we know not to hesitate upon one of your decisions", replied Tanaji and others nodded assent. No sooner had the thought crossed Shivaji's mind than a battalion stood ready to speed and Netaji took the lead. Horses' hoofs thudded as the spirit of war possessed the soldiers and they galloped towards Bijapur. The thunder of the hoofs shook the earth.

Shivaji watched the troops disappearing in a cloud of dust over the horizon and turned to his companions. "And now to turn our gaze in another direction and strike ! I shall be at the forefront this time." With lightning speed he struck at the unwary

rulers of the small territories, capturing fort after fort with little or no resistance offered by them and reached Kolhapur, thirteen days after the tiger claws tore at Bijapur's vitals. Panhalgarh stood like a prey waiting for the tiger's approach and Shivaji roared his orders to surround it. The resistance of Panhalgarh did little to repel the persistent Maratha troops and at last the Ochre flag was hoisted on the ramparts of Panhalgarh.

The atmosphere at Bijapur Court was grim. Netaji's onslaught and Shivaji's capturing forts en route Kolhapur unnerved the already down-hearted Bijapur generals. Now Panhala stood in imminent danger, and it had to be protected. Let Panhala fall into Shivaji's hands, and Bijapur might as well open its arms and welcome Shivaji into their midst. Panhala's position was too strategic. If it fell, all hope would be lost.

Rustum-e-Jaman, a stalwart and veteran of many a war came forth to take the challenge. Under him marched the army of Bijapur, ten thousand strong, while the vanquished generals vowed vengeance upon the Maratha and marched ahead of their troops with grim determination.

Rustum-e-Jaman called his generals to a conference and warned them of Shivaji's forces that were not to be underestimated. There was no need for the warning. They all suffered an ignominious defeat at the hands of the Maratha, at

one time, or another. Fazal Khan and Malik Ambar guarding the two flanks, Fateh Khan and Mulla Hai forming the vanguard with Sarje Rao Ghatge and Santaji Ghorpade at the forward base and the commander-in-chief Rustum-e-Jaman at the centre, the ten thousand strong army cavalcaded forth.

Shivaji was no less prepared than the Bijapur army for he knew that Bijapur would surely send forth a massive campaign to protect Panhala. He decided to face the Bijapur forces in the open and marched forward to meet it as it rushed towards Kolhapur. He too gave orders to the division of his forces and decided Netaji would attack Fazal Khan on the left flank while Mahadik with his troops would rout the vanguard and Pandhare would take care of the right flank. Jagtap would shatter the frontal defences of Ghatge and Ghorpade and Shivaji himself would rush through the shattered defences, to the centre and tackle Rustum-e-Jaman.

With cries of Hara Hara Mahadeo echoing all around, the Maratha troops charged. The spirit and the force of the surging Maratha troops was too much even for the well prepared Bijapur forces and very soon their defences began to slacken.

Fazal Khan turned on his heel and chaos reigned in the army, through which Shivaji plunged with his chosen men and headed straight towards Rustum-e-Jaman. Rustum's own resistance to the onslaught was feeble and soon he too retreated. Panhalgarh opened the gate-way to Konkan for Shivaji and he marched on undaunted. _____

SHIVAJI FESTIVAL

Rabindranath Tagore [Translated by
Basudha Chakravorthy]

We know not today O thou
mighty King,
Shiva Chhatrpati

On what dawned day in that
by-gone century
You sat on some obscure peak
in Maharashtra

Scanning the far horizons that the
thought flashed

Through your contemplating mind
"As far as I see and farther still,
Lies the soil of sacred India,
hacked to pieces.

These fragments shall I bind together
And unite my holy land to
house her children."

That day, when the length and breadth
Of the country vibrated to thy thought,
My Bengal remained untouched, dormant.

When the entire land rose to
your clarion call

She alone was silent.

No conch shells boomed
in her court-yards

To echo your war bugle.

She snuggled contentedly

Under the soft, clear, green apparel
Of spacious fields, clasping her children
In an embrace of warmth and
lulled them to sleep.

The day when the flame of
your passionate love

For your mother wrote in glowing words

The great Mantra of Deliverance
Thundering them to the far horizons

And flashed the fire of lightning
That presaged the end of an evil era,
And the Moghul turbans shook

and tumbled
 Like ripe leaves in the dusk of cataclysm,
 Bengal still was deaf
 To that thunderous trot of
 marching Marathas.
 At the dead of that storm tossed night
 The court at Delhi wept desolate,
 As the palace lights flickered out
 So ebbd the glow of the Moghul Empire
 Till it was put out, and left a carcass
 To the screaming hungry vulture.
 The flame died, and all that was left
 Of a long Imperial rule
 Was a heap of ashes scattered,
 never to be seen.
 That day on the borders of Bengal
 The goddess of commerce
 ushered a throne
 In the dark tunnel running beside
 a shop of merchandise
 Anointing it with the sacred
 waters of Ganga.
 The measuring rod of merchandise
 Assumed dimensions of a royal sceptre
 Ere that night ended.
 None knew that day where thou wert ;
 Thou, the thoughtful Maratha hero
 The noble son of Bharata Varsha
 Thou wert buried in memory
 When thy ochre flag streaked
 no more in yonder blue skies.
 The minds that delved into facts
 And wrote down volumes of history
 Did not read thy noble thought,
 And called thee a dacoit
 Laughing in derision -
 That thou shalt seek a crown.
 Thy loving gift of freedom to thy mother
 Was labelled as a bandit's adventure.
 I rail the gathered volumes of
 blundering history
 And cry out the agony of my heart,
 "Stop ! Stop your vociferous tongue.
 Thy false recordings shall not belie

The engraved writing of the
 Great Dispenser.
 Thy ridicule shall not veil
 The undying truth of destiny."
 Thou Royal seeker of Truth,
 The grandeur of thy thought is gathered
 And piled away in the
 store-house of God,
 Where guarded by His zealous care
 Not an iota of that great wealth
 Can rust under the march of time.
 None knew that thy toil,
 The dedicated quest of Truth
 Thou sought to establish on the altar
 In the temple of thy motherland
 Would become an undying flame
 To shine forever in India's epochs.
 Like an ascetic retreated to
 a mountain cave
 To do his penance in peaceful obscurity
 Thou hast retreated into the
 obscurity of centuries
 And now emerged like a
 thunderous rain cloud
 To deluge the world with the
 greatness of thy thought.
 And the world gaped in stunned intellect
 Wondering how this ochre flag that tinted
 The entire horizon to flaming orange
 Remained an obscure flicker all along.
 And I wonder, my poetic mind
 Struggling to grasp the meaning
 Of this un-precedented
 spectacle, musing
 How and when has your battle-drum
 Of victory sounded on the
 borders of Bengal !
 What newer and brighter rays
 thou art now casting
 Over the eastern horizon, rising out
 From thy long buried grave
 centuries ago.
 The spirit of Truth is ever alive,
 The heap of facts of a hundred centuries

Cannot drive it into oblivion.
 Neglect does not destroy it,
 Nor insult shatter its iron nerve,
 Nor quails it under any attack.
 When all despaired that the noble Truth
 Exhausted itself beyond the
 region of action
 It appeared again at the doors of India
 In the garb of a venerable guest.
 Thy lips chant the same mantra
 Thy benign eyes still envision
 A glorious future,
 Thou the disembodied ascetic
 now re-appeared
 As the fruit of your grand penance
 Thou hast brought with thee
 The strength of thy inspiration.
 Thy vast armies, hordes of
 neighing horses,
 Trumpeting elephants
 And battle cries of Har Har Mahadeo
 Have today merged into the silent flash
 Of thy glorious name.
 To seat thee, we, the Bengalis,
 Offer the throne of our loving heart.
 No far-fetched intellect visualised
 That by thy glorious name stand united
 The hearts of Bengal and Maharashtra,
 Before the power of which
 Quails the feeble concept of war.
 None knew the agelessness,
 The imperishability of thy mind,
 Whose dedication, through the
 oblivion of centuries
 Would survive and rise again
 To usher a new light, a new dawn
 On the soil of India.
 When thou, the great virtuous King
 Hailed us from the borders
 of Maharashtra,
 We did not reckon you asking,
 Nor did we feel any shame,
 As we failed to acknowledge
 That call terrible.

We did not see thy furious action
 That day, as thy sword flashed,
 The banner of freedom across the skies,
 But sat aloof, at that hour of thy strife.
 Today, thy image sits forever
 On the throne of memory
 Immortal beyond the power of
 death's destruction.
 The glitter of thy crown
 shall never subdue.
 In the resplendent light of that glory
 We have, today, realised thee.
 Eight crores of Bengali children
 Stand before the throne
 On which, thou King among Kings, fittest
 in tradition's glory
 Bringing to you thy Royal due.
 We failed to hearken to thy
 call ages back,
 But today we stand before thee
 To bow down and take
 thy every command.
 All the lands of India stand today,
 Shoulder to shoulder,
 Breathing the mystic spell of deliverance
 Thy mind contemplated ages ago.
 We shall hoist thy ascetic scarf,
 As the flag of strength to the poor,
 "There shall be an identical Kingdom of
 virtues in this land of India,"
 We shall find the strength
 to seek deliverance
 In these noble words of Thine.
 "O ye Bengalis, hail to-day,
 In unison with the Marathas
 'Victory to Shivaji,'
 March ahead in festive dress,
 Oh ye Bengalis, with the Marathas."
 May today the flanks of India,
 East and West merge in a union
 To felicitate in harmonious joy that
 glorious name.

THE JAGIR THAT EXPANDED INTO AN EMPIRE

THE news of Afzal Khan's terrible end spread shock and shook Bijapur. The realisation now dawned upon Bijapur that Shivaji was far more powerful than they were willing to believe.

Subsequent to the Khan's death Shivaji lost no time in seizing more territories and forts. Pavangad fort was captured. The fort of Panhala was also captured. The Bijapur General, Rustum-e-Jaman, who faced Shivaji near Kolhapur was routed.

Among the strategic coastal forts in Konkan was the town of Rajapur where the East India Company was trying to secure a foot-hold. The Marathas had rushed into Rajapur, but Shivaji, unwilling to clash with the British just then, ordered to cease the attack and returned with the plunder taken from the citizens. He did not wish to face trouble with the early British settlers while he concentrated on uprooting the alien rule of the Muslims.

The actual position and extent of the Maratha Empire crystallised itself in the year 1662, when the territory that fell into Shivaji's hands stretched from Kalyan to Goa, comprising of some 300 miles of Konkan coast. There were, in addition, the uplands from river Bhima to Wenna, measuring 160 miles in length and over 100 miles in breadth. That was the nucleus of the Maratha Empire, the beginning of the Kingdom which he founded for himself in fulfillment of the prophesy which Bhavani

had made to Maloji Bhonsle. His army had also grown. His infantry numbered 50,000 men, his cavalry 7,000.

The Emperor's Apprehension

Shivaji was now a force to reckon with, and he caused considerable apprehension in the minds of the Moghul Emperor, and the Bijapur Sultan. Aurangzeb, engaged then in a gory and sordid fight to ascend the throne, had little time or inclination to deal with Shivaji, but he kept Shahji's jagirs under his control, refusing to return them, despite Shivaji's repeated requests and promises of loyalty. Shaista Khan, Aurangzeb's uncle, was posted as Viceroy of Deccan, as a huge obstacle in Shivaji's campaign. Shivaji himself made no bid to enter into a pitched battle with the powerful Khan but kept egging on with his guerilla tactics and capturing small territories on the fringe. But he was enraged when the Khan, in a message addressed to Shivaji written in Sanskrit, called him a "mountain ape". Shivaji felt terribly insulted, and decided to teach the Khan a lesson.

He found a Maratha officer of the Moghul army, willing to conspire with him. The official, at Shivaji's instigation, requested permission for a wedding ceremony to be performed. With the Khan's permission, the wedding procession, including Shivaji and his own men guised as wedding guests, entered the Moghul camp at Poona, taking the Khan's army by surprise and completely

rampaging it. The Khan himself escaped with a finger or two from his hand cut off by Shivaji's sword. The shame-faced defeat at the hands of the Maratha exposed him as a careless general, upon whom Aurangzeb inflicted the added insult of a transfer to the Bengal provinces.

With Shaista Khan replaced by Raja Jai Singh and Prince Muazzam, Shivaji was again faced with the problem of reckoning with a strong foe. Yet, his ambition was neither thwarted nor did it cool off. His eyes were fixed on Janjira, but he decided to proceed slowly towards that goal, annexing territories on the way, gathering funds for his army and its maintenance. The first target was Surat, and its merchants yielded great sums, either voluntarily when he first politely asked for them or unwillingly later on upon threat of life. Shivaji, however, never mixed up the concepts of alien rule and alien religion. The Roman Catholic father and his abode at Surat, with all those who took shelter under him were spared graciously and reverently, under explicit orders from Shivaji that neither their effects nor their persons should be touched by anyone in his troops. Next to Surat came Baselor where his expedition lasted just a day, but yielded as much funds as the Surat expedition did.

Now was the time for the Emperor to take action against the rebel and check his impertinence. Under two of his powerful and able commanders, Raja Jai Singh and Diler Khan the vast Moghul armies launched a many sided attack on the Maratha. Making Aurangabad the headquarter, Diler Khan attacked Purandhar, while Jai Singh launched an attack on Sinhgad, and yet

another part of the army attacked Rajgad. The Rajput princes of Deccan, reluctant to accept Shivaji's suzerainty found some ground other upon which to join hands with the Moghuls. All told, it was a surprise attack, to match which Shivaji had not sufficient power then, and he once again played up his strategy of submission and gaining time to wait, gather strength and strike again. Diler Khan was unwilling to conclude any peace pact with Shivaji without the order of the Emperor, and under his pressure the siege of both Purandhar and Sinhgad continued.

They realised the futility of the attempt to capture Shivaji's forts which were fortified with fool-proof guard tactics, and fight his able men who launched surprise attacks on the Mughal army seiging every opportunity offered for such an attack. Finally Diler Khan also agreed to conclude a treaty with the Maratha, and at a meeting Shivaji promised to concede twenty of the thirty-two forts he held ; the remaining twelve forts with all the adjoining territories were to be Shivaji's with a grant of rupees ten lakhs revenue to be enjoyed by him. Shivaji also agreed to help and serve the Emperor in any future battle, and to depute a company of his army to the Moghul court to serve the Emperor. The treaty thus concluded was celebrated with banquets and festivities, Shivaji once again gained his strategic breathing spell to recoup and launch his attack afresh again.



THE KALYAN CAMPAIGN

FROM the towering heights of his capital fort Shivaji surveyed the surrounding dominion. The valleys and the plains stretched far beyond the reach of vision. Kalyan, though small, attracted his eye. Like a man who rightly senses the agitation of a tree's foliage when he becomes aware of the humming bees active on a hive as something different from the casual rustle of the leaves, he became aware of the real cause underlying the restlessness of the people in Kalyan.

Kalyan was under the rule of an Abyssinian nominee of the Moghul Emperor. The people of the province resented this intrusion upon them by a foreigner. The Moghuls were alien enough but somehow they took root in our land and their authority was no longer questioned. It was one thing to have Muslim Governor under Moghul employment, or their own native Governor, though subject to Moghul power, and quite another thing to have an intruder, an alien, a Siddi, thrust upon them to rule over them. The people of Kalyan squirmed under such a dispensation waiting for someone to give them just a prod to burst into action and overthrow Siddi. With the seething discontent in the mind of the populace Shivaji had little trouble in crushing whatever resistance the Abyssinian offered. On a warm afternoon in 1648, the Governor of the province, Maulana Ahmed, an Arab in the service of the Sultan, was dozing in his palace. He had, a few days ago,

supervised the despatch of a special caravan to Bijapur, carrying the year's revenue of his province. This was (as far as the central authorities were concerned) his chief duty, and as usual he had sent a strong guard in attendance. The caravan moved towards a pass in the hills leading to the plateau beyond, and thence to Bijapur. From the flat coast land the hills towered up, gaunt basalt rocks leaping from a tangle of forest, and round the highest peaks there was seen a coronet of clouds. A wild stretch of country it was, and one would hardly venture there alone, but for that well equipped company there could have been no cause for any alarm. As they entered the pass, the guards thought of little but the labour of the ascent and the heat of the day. They did not notice any movement at the mouth of pass behind them.

Shivaji, with three hundred men mounted on little Maratha ponies, was stalking them up the narrowing ravine. The creek and rumble of cart-wheels, the steady tramp of marching feet and the consequent crackling of dried leaves, and then suddenly a roar from the rear, the battle cry that was one day to be heard all over India : "Hara Hara Maha Dev ! " and the Marathas were upon the startled soldiers. The fight was soon over, and the caravan with its great treasure was in Shivaji's hands. He lost ten men in this, the first battle. He gave generous rewards to his followers and

presented large sums to the families of the ten who had fallen.

Meanwhile, in the town of Kalyan, the bazaars were empty in the noon-day heat. A party of Maratha horsemen rode quietly through the gates, past the guard-rooms and rode on to the palace and took the Governor prisoner. When the merchants stirred out of their houses in the cool of the evening they found a young Maratha called Abaji installed in the palace and the ochre flag fluttering over the city gates.

THE LEGENDARY SWORD

ON the way back from Kalyan Shivaji stopped at the Harihareswar temple. Among the treasures of the temple was a sword, beautifully charged and shining gloriously, with resplendent ferocity, with the metal looking limpid and shining liquidly like quick-silver. It seemed more like a lashing, hungry tongue of Kali than a stiff blade of steel. It seemed like active, potent, liquid power straining to flow out, engulf and erase enemies. Shivaji looked at the sword and was at once enchanted by it.

"If only I had that sword in my hand, I would conquer any foe in the world. Somehow, I feel that the sword has the power of Bhavani herself in it and if I were to hold it, Mother would lit that power flow into me and I would be an unconquerable warrior," he mused.

But he was wise to hide his feelings. The sword was actually the precious possession of a man by name Gowalkar Sawant. If it could sway the mind of so strong a person as Shivaji who was overcome with a desire to possess it - he who never wished to have anything for himself, how much more attachment would not be there in the heart of a simpler man for it? Strong as the desire was, the force of Shivaji's noble nature and character was even stronger and so the desire was at once pushed back into his mind. But Sawant, present there, noticed that look which flashed in Shivaji's eyes. He understood that Shivaji coveted



the sword, and yet the Maharaj would not ask for it. In whose hands would the sword shine better ? To what better purpose could it be used, if not Shivaji's noble mission ? Sawant stepped forward, and taking the sword in his hands, knelt before Shivaji, and offering it said, "Maharaj, please accept this humble gift. The sword is for a conqueror like you, who is fighting a battle of Dharma. I feel as though Mother Bhavani is urging me on to give you this."

Shivaji's eye shone with a tiny film of water that sprang in his eyes, out of pure joy. He accepted the sword, and a thrill ran up his spine as if some unseen power, like an electric current, ran through his blood stream. He raised the sword and touched his forehead with it, bending in obeisance.

"This is Thy gift, Mother. You understood the longing in your son's heart and you got it for me. I shall name it after you. This shall be called the Sword of Bhavani, and through it your power shall always protect me," he murmured, and rewarding Sawant generously for the marvelous gift, marched off with his precious possession.

THE BEAUTY AND HER BENEFACTOR

ONE incident in Kalyan acquired major significance, for it sheds light on Shivaji's noble heart providing glimpses of his character. During the Kalyan campaign, the Commander in charge, Abaji Mahadev, captured a very beautiful Muslim girl, the daughter of the local Mulla. She was one of the captives of the campaign and her beauty so impressed Abaji that he decided to present her to Shivaji. During the Durbar held at Kalyan after the conquest, Abaji brought the girl, bedecked and bejeweled exquisitely and presented her at the Durbar stating that he brought her as a gift for Shivaji Maharaj.

Shivaji looked at her exquisitely carved features, the alabaster complexion and her beautiful figure making her appear as if the figure had been carved out by the nimble fingers of a master sculptor. He stepped down from the throne, and coming towards the girl, placed his palm upon her head as a gesture of blessing. She trembled slightly and looked at him appealingly. Her large eyes now moist with unshed tears made them shine brighter still. Shivaji comprehended the appeal in her eyes, and smiling reassuringly at her, turned to Abaji and addressed him thus :

"Thank you very much, indeed, Abaji, for bringing such a beautiful girl into my family. I myself can boast of no extraordinary hand-someness of mien, and this lack of



beauty in my family is today amply compensated for by the acquisition of such a beautiful sister as this." Then he turned to the girl and spoke gently :

"Sister, you are so exquisite to look at that I feel you are an angel, perhaps. I am only a rugged soldier ; some people call me a mountain rat. Such as I am, I do not think I deserve to call myself your brother. If you would accept me as such, I shall feel mighty proud."

The girl's eyes shone with happiness, and a smile lit up her lovely face as she looked at Shivaji.

Shivaji again turned to Abaji. "Abaji ! A post-war Durbar is no place for such a beautiful girl. Let her now go back to her people, carrying with her all the gifts that a brother should bestow upon his sister."

Abaji's head bent low in shame for misunderstanding the impulses of his noble master. And now he was happy, for pride filled his heart at this noble conduct of his great master. And so the girl went back to her home honoured and laden with gifts of love from Shivaji.



THE VICEGERENT

Translated by J.L.Das, from the
original Bengali poem
"Pratinidhi" of
Rabindranath Tagore

On the rampart of Satara Fort
Was seated Shivaji one fine morn
When he saw his Guru Ramdas
Go begging alms from door to door.
Pondered Shivaji : "Strange, indeed,
That with a beggar's bowl moves
the Guru,

In whose abode no want there is
Who at his command has resources all,
Before whom lies prostrate the monarch,
Still his avarice knows no bounds.

To me a vain endeavour it seems
Thirst to quench from a leaky vessel
In which water is poured night and day.
How much it needs

The beggar's bowl to fill."
That instant a note he scribbled,
Summoned Balaji and to him he said,
"When to the fort for alms
comes the Guru,

This note to him deliver."
Many were the way-fares and chariots
That strode past the Guru as he sang,
"Oh Maheshwar, Oh Shankar !

To all else have you earth
and home given,

But to me only the path
have you assigned.
Mother Annapurna has of the universe
taken charge

And in Her joy do all thrive.
But, me from such a Mother,
Oh ! mendicant,

Have you snatched and made
your follower."

As his hymn he ended, and took
his mid-day bath

And came before the fort-gate
 and stood,
 Obeisance rendered Balaji,
 And the royal note at his feet placed
 And stepped aside, his head in
 reverence bent,
 His wonder roused, the Guru took up
 And the message perused,
 To him had Shivaji tendered
 his reverence
 And his kingdom and capital
 At his disposal placed.
 To the king went Ramdas
 the following day
 And said, "Tell me, my
 worthy son,
 If indeed the kingdom in me
 Vest you will,
 What mission will you serve,
 What other excellences
 have you ?"
 Replied Shivaji saluting
 the Guru
 "Most gladly will I my
 life lay down
 At your service, and abide
 by your command."
 "Take this satchel on your shoulder then
 And follow me for begging,"
 Bade the Guru.
 And so they went,
 Beggar's bowl in hand moved Shivaji
 With his Guru from door to door,
 When the monarch they saw,
 the children
 To their homes in fear hurried
 And their parents called out in wonder,
 "One who is of immense
 wealth possessed
 Is now in begging engaged,
 A rock floating above water !
 A sport of the high-souled !"
 As, bashful and trembling,
 They came to offer,

Alms to the Royal beggar.
 The hour of mid-day was from
 the fort proclaimed
 And city-dwellers their errands
 stopped to rest
 Setting to tune his "ektara"
 chanted Ramdas,
 His eyes with tears of ecstasy filled,
 "Oh Lord of the universe,
 Your ways I comprehend not,



Nothing do you lack,
 Still in men's hearts you roam
 And from all crave all."
 At the end of the day,
 His evening bath he completed
 In the river that by the city flowed,
 Then cooked the food by
 begging obtained
 And partook of it with great cheer,
 His disciple the remains accepting
 As food of grace, of holy flavour.
 The king now smiled and
 to the Guru said,
 "Royal vanity have you destroyed
 And him to a beggar reduced,
 What more do you desire,
 Great pains from his Guru
 See this slave ready to endure."

Spoke the Guru, "Heed then,
 A difficult vow have you taken
 And so a similar burden bear.
 This is my command,
 Take back your realm and govern it
 On behalf of me and in my name.
 A vicegerent of beggars
 Has God appointed you,
 Though a king, indigent and
 indifferent yet,
 The royal duties that you discharge
 Will be but my work,
 Even with your kingdom
 A stateless monarch shall you remain."
 "My son, with my blessings
 Take my saffron robe,
 And convert your standard
 Into the wrapper of a recluse,"
 So bade Guru Ramdas.
 The Sun from this throne descended
 The cow-boy's flute ceased its strain,
 And the cow-herd to shed returned,
 But the royal disciple with his head bent,
 On the river-bank sat
 His fore-head with thoughts furrowed.
 Deeply absorbed was Ramdas
 Chanting spontaneous hymns
 "Who art thou that robed me
 in royal attire
 And amidst this world placed,
 Yourself remaining unseen,
 Oh king, I have your sandals brought,
 And am seated underneath,
 Darkness descends,
 How long seated shall I wait, Do come
 And show thyself in thine Own Realm."

A PROFILE

LONG, long ago some three hundred years from now, this land of ours was the scene of a mighty drama. The stage on which this scene was played was Maharashtra and the actor was a king, a king who caused the Moghul Emperor's throne at Delhi to tremble at its very foundations. His thundering hoof-beats struck terror into the hearts of enemies, but for all that his courteousness and chivalry never suffered. Deeply religious and devoted to his mother, this king was a champion of the fallen, the weak and the suffering. To him all women were embodiments of the Mother Goddess Bhavani, whom he worshipped. Who was he? Where and when was he born? Who were the lucky parents of this great king and man, - these may be the questions that rise in your minds. Wait - these shall be answered. In the meantime, let us cast our minds back over the years and follow one of the acts of this drama.

The night was still. A convoy of cart-wheels creaked along the Satara Road to the foot-hills of Western Ghats. Tiny lamps glimmered like fire-flies from the carts. The roads lost themselves into denseness of the forest, where stood the great Hill Fort of Pratapgarh. This caravan wound its way and was soon lost.

The early morning rays of the sun touched the hill-tops. The forests still tried to keep their secret from the prying eyes of the sun but what do we hear Clip Clop



.... Hoofs of horses ? And soon a detachment of mounted Marathas burst into view. Six hundred or more of them. In the middle of this cavalry was one who stood out.

He was a lone soldier astride a dark bay mare. Erect and regal he sat there, very much the leader and master. His profile was sharp. The aquiline nose and sharp pointed features spoke volumes. He wore a cream-coloured cap which terminated in a tassel that bobbed up and down as he rode. By his side hung a sword curved at the edge. A braided gown with a sash and tight breeches formed his attire.

The villagers who rushed out on hearing the hoof-beats stopped short at the sight of the leader. They exclaimed in hushed awe "Maharaj" - "Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj." That was Shivaji, a hero to the people of his day, a liberator who freed them from the slavery of the Moghuls. The soldiers of the Moghul Emperor called him "the mountain rat", for he was elusive and had to be captured, like the rodent lost in its burrows.

Slowly he rode on acknowledging the silent reverence of these people, for whom he staked his life every moment, for whose liberty he ran the risk of capture and death. That then was Shivaji as he appeared to the people of his time.



A REFRAIN

The Advent of A Deliverer

IN the first quarter of the 17th century, the minds of the people of Maharashtra were in a most disturbed and unsettled condition. The chief political feature of the time Shivaji the Great was born and during the period of his boyhood was the advancing tide of the Mughal conquest. The trail of destruction and desolation, fire and plunder that the march of the Mughal armies left behind contributed mainly to the production of that economic misery which, joined with other factors, caused a first class political explosion in the Deccan. The people were in so eager a state of expectancy that their thoughts naturally turned to the idea of the advent of a deliverer. The man of destiny was born in February 1630 in the hill-fort of Shivneri, where his mother Jijabai (a daughter of the aristocratic Lakhujji Jadhavrao of Sindhkhed) had been left by Shahji for safety ; Shahji had just escaped from Daulatabad which was at that time being infested by the Mughals and was being hotly pursued by his father-in-law Lakhujji Jadhavrao. During the period 1630-36 Shahji was a fugitive, subject to frequent change of place and enemy attacks.

The Tender Touch

Jijabai was a proud and spirited lady ; even in the days of her misfortune she did not think of seeking the protection of her father's roof. She must have developed a hatred for the Mughals to whose invasion

her difficulties were due; this hatred was fostered by the vindictive acts perpetrated by the king of Ahmednagar, as evidenced by the frequent sights of cow-killing, the desecration of temples and shrines, the insults heaped on the Brahmin priests and the violation of the honour of Hindu women ; and she would have naturally taught her son to hate them likewise. This is seen in the open contempt he showed for Muslim authority by refusing when taken to the court, to prostrate himself before the Bijapur king as required by Muslim etiquette. He used to restrict himself on such occasions to an informal salaam. He also got himself involved more than once in disputes over the question of cow-killing ; he would attack the butchers in the streets and free their victims. Rawlinson says : "In this, we may be sure, Shivaji was instigated by his mother." A resolute, self-respecting woman, she always felt the indignity of foreign subjugation ; she ever remembered that her fore-fathers had been, before the coming of the Yavanas, the rulers of the land and did not quite like the idea of her husband's fighting in the cause of Islam. She would not allow Shivaji to be married at Bijapur "lest the Muslim defile the ceremony by their presence."

At Poona, a seat of ancient Brahmanical learning, young Shivaji was surrounded by an atmosphere of rigid orthodoxy and it is mainly to the impressions that were then left on his plastic mind and to Dadoji's parting advice that we must trace his subsequent policy, either of changing into Sanskrit the very names of his Ashta Pradhans, or of proclaiming the protection of Brahmins and cows as the aim of his noble efforts. To these early impressions

which he retained to the last, as well as to the teaching of the contemporary saints and prophets are due the profound respect in which he held the religion of his ancestors and the veneration he showed to the Brahmins.

Here, too, he came to like the Puranic legends and the two great Hindu epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata by listening to recitations and story-telling (Kirtans and Kathas). He would sit late in the night by the fire-side or under the moonlight, listening to these Kathas and Kirtans and such was his passion for the recitation of the wondrous tales of the adventures of the Pandavas, of Rama and Sita, or the ballads of the Gondhals, that it is on record how once long afterwards he even risked his life to be present at one of these Kathas.

In this way he assimilated the contents of these two valuable epic poems and got the necessary knowledge of the arts of government and war from them. Sircar says, "the noble examples of doing and suffering, of action and sacrifice of military skill and state craft, which the stores of Rama and the Pandavas afford, the political lessons and moral maxims with which these epics are filled, deeply impressed his young mind." His imagination was fired with ambition to emulate the example of the legendary heroes.

Nature's Promptings

Shivaji the Great was further strengthened in his resolve to strike for the freedom of his country and to stake everything on its result by the inspiring natural scenery round about Poona and the Bohemian life he led

at this time. Shivaji the Great used to wander over the hills and forests of the Sahyadri range in the company of his friends, and the grandeur of the landscape with the big forts of Sinhgad, Raigad and Torna for the background did not fail to make a powerful appeal to his imagination. Nature added one more impulse to seek the freedom of his land. His active mind began to love independence and loathe a life of idle luxury in the pay of the Muslim ruler. Thus "an intense love of his country and his religion - which showed itself especially in his devotion for Amba Bhavani, the family Goddess - was the natural result. There seems to be little doubt that Shivaji grew up with a genuine sense of a mission that his career was inspired by a real desire to free his country from what he considered to be foreign tyranny and not by a mere love of plunder."

Hindavi Swarajya

He must have argued : if the Deccan nobles with the Hindu help could found dynasties by shaking off the control of the Delhi Sultans, why should he not be able to do the same against the Bijapur Government ? Thus his ideal of "Hindavi Swarajya" was formed and the choice of this career which he was to follow was also made. The Mavalis had been completely subjugated by Dadoji Kondadev. The Deshpandes were mainly won over, but those who dared to defy his authority were defeated and crushed.

His Companions at Arms

Peace and prosperity having been thus established in that region, it became a source of wealth and strength to Shivaji

instead of being an unprofitable and a dangerous possession. It was from this region that Shivaji the Great drew his best soldiers, his earliest comrades and most devoted of his friends like Yesaji Kank, Baji Pasalkar and Tanaji Malusare. With these friends young Shivaji wandered over the hills and through forests and valleys of the Sahyadri mountain and thus trained himself to a life of hardihood. He was now and again absent in the Konkan for several days at a time. The Mavalis in his service accompanied him on his excursions and in hunting, and young Shivaji became extremely popular with them as also with his country-men round-about. In his visits to the different parts of the Ghatmatha and the Konkan he familiarised himself with the paths of that wild country and gathered a first-hand knowledge of its people. This personal and intimate information of the country and its inhabitants was quite essential for the future conqueror as a preliminary preparation for his military career that was to follow in due course. The hill-forts under all the Muslim Governments were, as Grant Duff remarks, generally much neglected and Shivaji the Great happened to notice this important fact on the occasion of his excursions.

The Straight and Narrow Path

After three centuries of slavery the wish for freedom was all but dead and lived, if at all, in a few hill tracts in the Maval and the Konkan. He could expect no aid from other Maratha nobles. All that the Ghorpades, the Mores, the Manes, the Sawants and others aspired to, was their own advancement at court or the enlargement of their fiefs at the expense

of their neighbours. Without resources he must raise an army. He must inspire it with his own words and with high ideals. He must fight against his own relatives and countrymen. He must face charges of treason and charges of unfilial conduct. Yet he chose 'the straight and narrow path', for a sense of his mission had fully developed in his young but thoughtful mind. Such is ever the stuff of which heroes are made. More than 2,500 years ago, three immortal goddesses had called on another eastern prince to decide questions very similar to those which now confronted Shivaji.

Ready for His Task

Shivaji the Great was now ready for his task. As Sircar remarks : "He had already been trained in martial exercises and civil administration ; he had familiarised himself with the troops of his father's western Jagir and the people he would have to govern. Initiative and power of command had been freely developed in him without check or interference from his guardian. Administrative orders had, for some time before this, been issued in his name as his father's representative, while Dadaji Kondadev had stood by watching his pupil. Shivaji had also taken part with his mother or his tutor in some judicial investigation and public discussion of legal disputes (mahazar)."

The officers that had gathered already round him were men of tried merit and devotion to him. Thus his civil and military arrangements were complete before he began to draw his ideal nearer to practice.

Military Career Begins

Shivaji began his military career very cautiously and all his earliest attempts were directed towards securing the neighbouring territory without either exciting the suspicions of Bijapur court or attracting their notice in these initial stages. From the beginning he had a very clear idea as to how he was to proceed about his plan. The chief means he employed were either coercion or compact, diplomacy or surprise attacks. He knew he could not long fool the Bijapur King but wanted to strengthen his position as much as possible before he ventured upon bigger enterprises.

Torna !

Taking advantage of the serious illness of the king of Bijapur and the consequent disorder in his kingdom, Shivaji the Great struck his first blow in 1646 by occupying the fort of Torna by tricking its Bijapur commander and immediately set to work to repair its defenses. Khafi Khan gives an admirable account of his rise to power and of the situation that contributed to it :-

"Shivaji became the manager of these parganas (Poona and Supe) on the part of his father and looked carefully after them. He had distinguished himself in his tribe for courage and intelligence. In that country, where all the hills rise to the sky and the jungles are full of trees and bushes, he had an inaccessible abode. Like the zamindars of the country ;he set about erecting castles on the hills and mud forts which in the Hindawi dialect of the Dakshin are called garhi. Before the jagirdars in those troublous times could appeal to Bijapur he had sent his own account of

the matter with presents and offering to pay some advance amount for the land on their being attached to his own jagir or to pay some advance amount for the land on their being attached to his own jagir or to pay their revenue direct to the government. He communicated these matters to the officials at Bijapur who in those disturbed times took little heed of what any one did. The country of the Dakhin was never free from commotions and outbreaks, and so the officials, the ryots, and the soldiery, under the influence of surrounding circumstances, were greedy, stupid, and frivolous. In accordance with the wishes of this disturbing agents the reins of authority over that country fell into his hands and he at length became the most notorious of all the rebels. He assembled a large force of Marathas and set about reducing fortresses.

Poona Pegged Down

"With the large treasure he discovered in the course of the repairs to the walls of Torna he proceeded to build another stronghold on the neighbouring peak of Rajgad. This bold move stirred even the languid authorities at Bijapur and Shahji was ordered to check his son's aggressions. Shahji wrote to Dadaji Kondadev to keep a tighter control on his ward but the old minister, now on the point of death, secretly sympathised with the designs of Shivaji the Great. On Dadaji's death Shivaji took over the Poona estate as his own

from his father, coerced his only rival Baji Mohite, his father's brother-in-law, to join him and tried to get him to stay at Poona, but the latter chose to be at Karnataka to join Shahji. About this time he also won over the fortress of Sinhagad and led a surprise attack on Purandhar. Thus by the end of 1649 he established his full control over the Poona district and waited for an opportunity, watching and crouching like a



tiger of his own mountain valleys until he had stolen into a situation from which he could at once spring on his prey."

The Magnanimity of Might

Shivaji the Great, now began to cast his eyes on Konkan, the fertile low country area lying between the Ghats and the sea. The first blow fell on Maulana Ahmed of Kalyan. Coming to know from his spies that a load of treasure was about to be sent from Kalyan to Bijapur he ambushed the convoy as it climbed the hills and captured the treasure with very little loss of life on his side. This was the first occasion on which blood was spilt. He

liberally rewarded the gallantry of his soldiers and made ample provision for the families of those who had fallen. The complete success of this enterprise and the generosity accompanying it gave a sense of their importance to the Mavalis and they dreaded the Muslims no longer. Soon after this Abaji Sondev attacked Kalyan itself and took the governor and his family prisoners. Towards his captives he behaved like a true soldier and allowed Maulana Ahmed to go free. His chivalrous conduct to the Maulana's beautiful daughter-in-law increased his prestige. The people were tired of the Muslim mismanagement, and the capture of Kalyan was followed by a general uprising.

Konkan in His Hands

This daring exploit marks the beginning of his career as the champion of Hindu religion in the Konkan. Fort after fort either voluntarily surrendered or was surprised, till the Konkan as far as Sawantwadi was in the hands of the Marathas. The hill of Raigad, his future capital, was probably first occupied at this time. Kalyan and the revenues of the Konkan were thus lost to the Bijapur court, and the disgraced Maulana Ahmed clamoured for revenge. But the decaying state was afraid to act openly against Shahji who had won big successes in the late Karnatic campaign. They therefore instructed Ghorpade to seize Shahji by treachery. For this cowardly betrayal, Shivaji subsequently took a terrific vengeance on Mudhol which he razed to the ground in 1661. This was the only instance where the enraged Shivaji ordered anything like a general massacre.

Mores of Javli

Shahji was released in 1653. Shivaji the Great was relieved from anxiety on that score, and was therefore free once more to pursue his ideal further. This time it was Javli and its Raja, Chandrarao More, who claimed his attention. This state of Javli included a large slip of the Ghat Matha, the borderland between the Dekhan and the Konkan and if Shivaji the Great was to be able to pass between these two tracts in safety, he must take possession of Javli or form an alliance with its ruler. The state was, therefore, of great strategic importance. But the obdurate Chandrarao More refused to enter into any alliance. It was also impossible to attack him openly with any reasonable hope of success owing to his strong position in men, money and hill forts. To these general considerations was added another of a personal nature - Chandrarao More must have been privy to the treacherous attack made upon Shivaji the Great by Baji Shamraj. Incensed at this, the Maratha leader decided to get rid of More. The various hill-forts of the Ghat Matha were then immediately stormed and the whole of the territory of the Mores fell into the hands of Shivaji. The terror of his name had now spread all over the central Deccan and practically every independent chief, including the Savants of Vali, was brought under his sway, the only exception being the Siddis of the important port of Janjira. Thus the authority of Bijapur, north of Kolhapur was almost extinguished.



THE DEADLY ENCOUNTER

JAVLI was situated in the deep forests and gorgeous mountains of Mahabaleshwar, Makarand Garh, Mangal Garh and Parghat. The mountains rose to stupendous heights and the heavy down-pour of the monsoons made the forests grow dense. The dark and heavy foliage sheltered a variety of wild animals. It was over this wild country that the More family ruled as the Adil Shah's representatives, the proud bearers of the title "Chandrarao", bestowed upon them by the Shah.

Shivaji's ambition of founding an independent Empire was still in the budding stage then. Only four or five forts were controlled by him. He wished that Chandrarao More should allow the merger of Javli into his territory, though there would be no infringement on More's right in his Jagir. But he had not approached Chandrarao yet with the proposal.

Chandrarao More was a good neighbour to Shivaji for sometime after coming into possession of his Jagir. But gradually he started showing signs of greed. He claimed the title of 'Deshmukh' in the village of Gunjan. Shilankar, who had proved his mettle during the attack on Fateh Khan when he fought the Khan shoulder to shoulder with Shivaji, held exclusive rights

to the title of 'Deshmukh' at Gunjan. Some people tried to influence Shilankar to believe that Shivaji intended to support More and help him annex Gunjan. The news of these rumours reached Shivaji's ears, and he at once wrote to Shilankar :

"I have come to know from reliable sources that some bad elements have created a doubt in your mind, that I am trying to



deprive you of your 'Deshmukhi' rights. They have also made you believe that I am after your life and the ruin of your family. But, I assure you that I have nothing of that sort in my mind. Please do not give credence to such rumours but come and meet me personally, so that we can talk over the matter and dispel all lingering doubts."

Chandrarao, of course, did not like Shivaji's support of Shilankar. But, he kept quiet as the time was not yet ripe for action. At

this juncture, Shivaji came to know that one Rango Trimbak Vadke of the Muse Valley dishonoured a woman. Shivaji always imposed severe discipline upon his subjects with regard to their conduct. Rangoba was frightened when he realised that Shivaji had come to know of his misdemeanour. He ran to Chandrarao for fear of punishment, and Chandrarao gave him refuge.

Chandrarao became bolder. He attacked Rohnide, a part of Shivaji's territory. He also killed Ramaji Patel and his son Lumaji of the village of Chikhali. The more Shivaji tolerated his misdeeds, the bolder he became. Shivaji warned him several times, asking him to abandon his troublesome ways. Where coaxing failed he threatened Chandrarao with punishment. Far from giving up his troublesome ways he was now more arrogant and provocative than before. At last, Shivaji's patience was exhausted and he decided to attack Javli. He immediately called for a conference of all his commanders, Kanjohi Jedhe, Haibat Rao Shilankar, Sambaji Kavji, Kondhalkar, Bandal Naik and Raghunath Pant Sabnis to discuss the matter. He announced seriously, "I dislike declaring war against my compatriot, but Chandrarao More is becoming too much of an obstacle to our fight for freedom. He has to be removed." The commanders launched an all out attack against Javli. The Mores were renowned for their skill in the wielding of the sword. They displayed this skill at its best in the battle that ensued, especially one of their commanders, Murar Baji. Shivaji noted his skill with appreciation. The battle that ensued was a fierce one and the Mores

resisted valiantly. Slowly but surely, they realised that Shivaji's power was something that could not be toyed with. In the face of defeat, Chandrarao fled to Rairi.

Javli was now in the hands of Shivaji. He called Murar Baji and praised his skill and coaxed him to join him in his fight for freedom. It was the same Murar Baji who later on made for himself a name as a great and valiant general in the Maratha army.

Now Shivaji left Javli and set out for Rairi fort where Chandrarao More was hiding. The fort was a strong one and was surrounded by very steep mountains and high walls.

Rairi withstood the onslaught of one long month. Shivaji persisted with the siege, knowing well that Chandrarao would not be able to stay within the fort and fight indefinitely. Sooner or later, that life of confinement would become difficult, and then Chandrarao would have to surrender, for he did not possess the strength and force to meet Shivaji in the open. Events turned out exactly as Shivaji had expected. Chandrarao surrendered. Shivaji pardoned him and returned to him the jagir of Javli. But More would not keep out of mischief. Finally, when he conspired with Baji Ghorpade and tried to join hands with the Bijapur Sultan, Shivaji came to know of this and, infuriated by More's ingratitude, attacked Javli again and captured More. Chandrarao tried to escape, but was captured and executed, and so were his two sons. Javli and Rairi came into Shivaji's hands.



A RARE FEAT

It was past midnight. Cold breeze was blowing with biting ferocity as the Mavali horsemen prepared themselves. In that dense darkness there was a deadly calm. Not a word was spoken though hundreds of Mavalis carried on their preparations. Only the occasional thud of an impatient horse's hoofs or the neighing of a mare straining at the reins, disturbed the silent night. The horses were alert, waiting for the orders of the mounted men, who in turn awaited the orders of Shivaji.

The bell in Purandreshwar temple rang aloud, its clear notes filling the night air of the jungle. Shivaji rode away from the temple immediately and Baji Pasalkar followed him. The Mavli horsemen positioned themselves with javelins tightly clasped in their hands. Shivaji dug his spurs, signaling to his stallion to speed up. The side gate of the fort opened with a creaking noise, and the stallion galloped on, followed by a horseman carrying the saffron flag, and other Mavli horsemen, with javelins raised high over their hands. Slowly the sound of the hoofs died into the darkness. Neelkanth Rao watched the men disappear into the darkness and then ordered the gate-keepers to close the gate. But before they could close it completely, a horseman streaked past at very great speed. There was hardly any opportunity for the gate-keeper to observe



and recognise him. The door was closed. Fateh Khan's camp around Belsar was sunk in deep slumber. The tents were billowing with the wind, looking like white elephants clustered together. On all sides of the camp, alert guards kept up the night vigil with burning torches. Occasionally, a guard moved around the camp with a big tin of oil, to replenish the spent oil for the torches. The bells tied round the bullocks and camels made a jingling noise in the night breeze. Long shrill calls of 'Hoshiar' from the guards, echoed from time to time. Fateh Khan's tent was in the centre of the camp. The guards kept a close watch with naked swords in their hands. Adil Shah's flag fluttered, a few yards from the tent.

Shivaji's horsemen continued their movements. The horses glided swiftly in pitch darkness. Dense forests and pitch

darkness could not deter the horsemen as they rapidly cut their way towards Fateh Khan's camp. As Shivaji approached Belsar, he reduced the speed of his stallion. He halted at some distance from the camp, where he ordered his distance from the camp, where he ordered his Mavli men to disperse in various directions to attack. Concealing in the darkness they stealthily spread out and waited, ready to spring.

Calm prevailed all over the jungle for a while and suddenly the atmosphere was rent with war cries as the Mavali groups moved in and pounced upon the surprised army of the Khan. The sleeping soldiers were jerked rudely out of their slumber and they fumbled and ran in utter confusion and disarray, their minds still groggy. They did not know what was to be done. Some ran, some fumbled for weapons ; some were caught under the huge canvases as the Marathas had cut off the strings of the tents, and were trying to find the way out. The Marathas pierced the collapsing tents, pandemonium broke loose. Shivaji himself moved around like a tiger, ordering his soldiers hither and thither, preventing the Khan's soldiers from the assembling at one place to put up a fight. Fateh Khan came out of his tent and stared at the melee in panic. Marathas raided the whole camp. They ran around with lightning speed and did not spare any life. The war cry of 'Har Har Mahadev' filled the whole atmosphere and struck terror in the Khan's soldiers. The Khan came forward to fight with a sword and a shield in his hands. Encouraged by their leader now in their midst, some of his soldiers also gathered

and came forward in defence. But, much damage had been done by then.

Although all other platoons of Shivaji took part in the plundering, the platoon carrying the ochre flag was intentionally kept at a distance. It was decided that the platoon should enter the camp only when the plunder was completed. Seeing their comrades fully engaged, they could not help pitching in.

Khan plunged into the fray with all his might. His army was vast. Shivaji knew well that he could not stand against such a vast army with his limited number of soldiers, and it was not his intention to capture the camp either. It was merely to inflict as much damage as possible, and withdraw.

After inflicting considerable damage, Shivaji gave a signal and the Maratha army cleared out as quickly as they had swarmed in. As planned earlier, Maharaj went out towards the platoon bearing the standard. Seeing that they had entered Khan's camp without waiting for instructions and were already deep inside the camp, he was worried, but there was no time to waste ! He sped towards the fortress.

The flag platoon, in the meanwhile, found themselves trapped, surrounded by about five to six hundred Pathan soldiers. They realised that their ambition had misfired. The standard bearer became the target of the enemy. They flocked round him. Maratha soldiers tried their best to foil the attempt of the enemy to reach the standard bearer. It would have been shame for the Maratha soldier to let the flag fall into the enemy's hands. The situation was

getting grave and the soldiers were falling fast. What was to be done ? The soldier carrying the flag was clutching at it as if it were his very life.

But, as ill luck would have it, he was hit by a sword. He swayed at the cruel blow, and made a mighty effort to stay upon the horse, but fell. It looked as though the flag would be captured by the enemy! Suddenly a horseman shouting 'Har Har Mahadev' rushed through the crowd, and fought his way deftly flashing his sword like lightning, reached the falling man. He caught hold of the falling flag with his left hand. He had no time to waste ; he continued to slash at the enemy with the deadly sword while, with his right hand he ordered the Marathas to clear off. He himself turned swiftly and rushed through ; his sword spelt death all the way out. Within a few moments he was out of the camp and reached the fort of Belsar. The others followed suit. They went along with the soldier holding the flag to Purandar, where Shivaji had already arrived. He was in a pensive mood, thinking of the platoon and the flag left behind.

It was the early hours of morning. Shivaji stood on Shendrya bastion with some of his men. Although he was happy for the battering that Khan got at their hands, he was also unhappy to have lost the flag. Suddenly, he saw a horseman with the flag in his hand speeding towards the fortress. He stared with unbelieving eye at the advancing men, and then a brilliant smile broke out on his face. At last, the flag had been restored.

The platoon entered the gate of the fortress. Shivaji saw the soldier holding the flag, and stared in disbelief at the young boyish face. He was a mere lad, not one of his rugged, seasoned soldiers ! Baji Pasalkar stood beside Shivaji. He too was astonished. Baji shouted at the young boy carrying the flag :

"Is that you ?"

The young boy held the flag tightly in his hand, and laughed merrily. He was the grandson of Baji. His father, Kanhoji, had warned him not to join the army as he was too young. He was too young to take part in such expeditions, thought Kanhoji and Baji was not permitted to accompany the Mavalis who went to plunder Fateh Khan's camp that night. He had been purposely dropped out. But how could that boy rest in peace ? He followed the platoon in stealth, determined to play his part in the expedition.

He was the horseman who sped through the gate after all the soldiers had left and when the gate was about to be closed ! He escaped miraculously with the flag which would have otherwise surely fallen into the hands of the enemy. Suddenly the young lad became a great hero and the talk of the entire fort centered round his astonishing valour. Shivaji praised him highly and bestowed upon him the title, 'Sarje Rao'. Baji Pasalkar beamed with pride at the valiant performance of his grandson.



THE SILENT STRENGTH

ADIL SHAH had arrested Shahji, Shivaji's father, and openly challenged Shivaji : "Young man, do you want your father to live or not ? If you do, return all the forts that you have captured from us. Abandon all your plans for your Swarajya. Surrender yourself and I shall offer you some suitable service. Are you willing to accept it ? Think over the proposal seriously. Remember the fate of your father who is our captive." This was the threat that faced Shivaji ; and he sat immersed in thought.

Jija Bai also faced similar questions from Badshah : "Tell me, do you want your husband or Swarajya ? You have provoked your son to revolt against me. Swarajya ! Recollect how your father was killed. Think over the end of your brother. How did the head of Murar Deo fly into the air when he dared talk against me ! How was that wicked Babaji Kate murdered ! Don't you remember ? Your husband's life is at my mercy. Tell me what you prefer, your husband or Swarajya ! I have selected a fine swordsman, full of valour and skill, to teach your son and his wicked friends a good lesson. He is already half way up." Mavali spies brought foreboding news. A general from Bijapur had come along with a huge army to demolish the foundations of Swarajya.

The whole of Raigarh was in panic. Jija Bai flung herself at the feet of Goddess Bhavani, and wept piteously :

"Mother ! Tell me how we have wronged you or anyone ? Our efforts were directed to make poor people happy in our Swarajya ! Why do you cause us so much trouble ? What should my son do under these circumstances ? Am I not your daughter ? That wicked Khan is about to kill my husband ! Tell me, pray tell me ! Where should I go for refuge ? Should I go and fall at the feet of that wicked Badshah ?"

She shed bitter tears.

The news that came in from time to time was far from encouraging. There were a number of brave generals with Fateh Khan, viz., Muskhan, Minad Shaikh, Hasam Shaikh, Ashraf Shah, Balaji Haibat Rao and Bajaji Naik Nimbalkar of Phalton.

Bajaji Naik Nimbalkar was a relation of Shivaji ! His brother-in-law ! Brother of his wife, Sai Bai Saheb ! Shivaji was in a dilemma. If he continued with his efforts towards establishing Swarajya, he could lose his father. If he tried to get the release of his father, he had to abandon his aims and attempts. The bright linga of Rairashwar stood in front of him. He had touched it and taken an oath, "I shall struggle for my country and religion, whatever obstacles may come in my way!" On the other hand, he could see the figures of Jija Bai and Shahji before his eyes ! Love for father ! Respect for mother ! Patriotism ! Young Shivaji, hardly eighteen years was caught in a turmoil. Swarajya was at stake

on the one side, and his father's life and survival on the other ! What could he do ? His mind was aflame. Bad news incessantly kept pouring in every day. It seemed that the spies were meant to convey only bad news ! The news of Fateh Khan's arrival near Rajgarh, the news that Khan's army had crossed Indapur, and then the news that Khan reached Bar Mati, then Kanheri, then Nira, then Jeyur and even Belsar. These caused a shiver to run through even Shivaji. Shivaji's dream of Swarajya was being wiped out by the wily hands of Khan.

Shivaji was perplexed ! Whom could he consult ? Sonapant Dabir ? Bapujipant Narhekar ? Or Mazumdar ? No, No ! They were all in a state of horror ! Could he consult his own mother ? No ! At least not at the time when she was in deep grief herself !

At that moment a shocking news reached Rajgarh : "One regiment of Fateh Khan's army had entered Swarajya territories through Shirval under the leadership of Balaji Haibat Rao."

This was followed by another : "Badshah's army conquered Subhan Mangal fort at Shirval."

Shivaji had to receive blow after blow. He was not afraid of the army in his territories. He knew that it was expected and inevitable. But, he was definitely shocked at the check that Badshah had applied by arresting Shahji and this was treachery ! Shivaji was in a panic ! His whole movement seemed to have failed, at least temporarily. In his own Mahal, the main fortress of Rajgarh, Shivaji sat sunk in deep thought. The curtains on the arches

fluttered in the breeze. Kondana fort was visible. It stood erect and tall, almost touching the sky. Maharaj was in no mood to be captivated by nature's beauty now.

What was that sound ? The sound of bangles and toe-rings ? Shivaji looked up and in utter surprise saw Sai Bai Saheb standing near the curtain.

"May I come in ?" she asked.

"Please do," replied Shivaji, with a faint smile on his face.

Sai Bai Saheb sat near Maharaj. She wore a vermillion mark on her fair fore-head. Her ears twinkle with diamond rings. The young girl, barely eighteen, said in a tender voice, "What makes Maharaj so thoughtful ?"

"You know pretty well ! Shahji Raje has been treacherously arrested by the Badshah. His life is in danger ! And Badshah has released a major part of his army to smash us. The army has reached Jejuri !" explained Maharaj.

"That's all ! Is it that which has caused you all this worry ?" asked Sai Bai Saheb in astonishment.

"is that a minor event ?"

"No ; but, why should Maharaj find it so difficult to cope with this simple situation ?" wondered Sai.

"Do you find it so trifling ? My father is about to lose his life ! If I go to get him released all our efforts for Swarajya will be in vain. I shall have to return every inch of the territory that we have fought so hard for. We shall be reduced to slavery.

It is a choice between my father and the Swarajya of our people : both of them are dear to me. Both are worthy of worship by me !"

"Yet, what is the difficulty ? You can have both ! You can save father-in-law and still cherish Swarajya ! Nothing is impossible for a person like you."

Suddenly, Shivaji glanced at her in surprise, for she spoke with determination and confidence.

"My dear Queen !" Maharaj stared at her but she continued : "Why is it not possible ? I am only a woman ! Women do not know much about politics or war. But I am certain that for you, of all persons, nothing is impossible !" she said.

Shivaji kept on staring at her in wonder.

"Goddess Bhavani has given you the strength of a lion ! She has given you intelligence and wisdom. How can anything be impossible for you ? Plan things in all earnestness and you will be successful ! And while trying to rescue your father from those wicked enemies, if you succumb in a battle, I do not see anything wrong in it. You will be doing your glorious duty !"

Shivaji was stunned ! He was struck with her wisdom and resolve ! It seemed as if he had seen a Divine vision ! His heart was filled with awe. A smile replaced the gloom on his face. The young queen who was hardly eighteen years had spoken inspiringly to him. Nothing was impossible for him now.

Shivaji, then, went to his secret chamber. Sonopant Dabir, Baji Pasalkar, Bapujipant

and others followed him. Shivaji was more determined. He discussed some plans. "Whatever may happen, father must be released and Swarajya should not be given up. Badshah has challenged our might as well as our intelligence !" thought Shivaji.

Shivaji decided to fight with Fateh Khan ! If God really wished that Swarajya should be established, Fateh Khan's army must suffer a defeat at Shivaji's hands.

Maharaj ordered his army to get ready. At the same time he thought of a clever trick



to get his father released. He sent one of his brilliant envoys to establish contact with the Badshah at Delhi. On the one hand he solicited the help of Shahzada Murad, who was stationed at Ahmedabad as the Subedar for Gujarat, and on the other, he sent his spy towards Purandar fort.

What was the strength of Shivaji's army then ? Hardly one thousand two hundred. Soon they received the orders to march. They prepared within minutes. Let the

enemy be five thousand or five lakh strong, they were determined to rout the blighters. It was the resolve of one and all of the Mavalis. Mother Jija Bai demanded success from Goddess Bhavani for her son. The saffron flag fluttered in the breeze. Baji Pasalkar, Bhikaji Chor, Godaji Jagtap, Baji Jedhe, Kavji Malhar, Shivaji Ingle, Bhimaji Wagh, Bhairoji Chor, all of them were prepared for the great clash. Shivaji mounted his horse. The horse raised its front hoofs. Maharaj raised his hands in response and shouted the cry of victory :

“Jai Bhavani !”

“Jau Bhavani !” All the others responded enthusiastically. From the gates of Raigarh, an army of horsemen followed Shivaji Maharaj ; with faith in God and deep love for his country he set out, to rout Fateh Khan !

From behind the curtain of a window in Maharaj's Mahal at Rajgarh, two eager eyes silently bade a warm and inspiring send-off to Maharaj and his army unnoticed by anyone. She was Sai Bai Saheb ! the valiant young queen.



THE SCALES OF JUSTICE

THE forest was very dense, and deep darkness prevailed all around, and yet some soldiers managed to escape. Hundreds of them were caught. One man groped his way through the dense forests, as he moved about furtively. Every moment panic gripped him harder.

Khandoji Khopde Deshmukh was a traitor to the freedom movement, a selfish, wicked, cowardly person ! Khandoji Khopde had no respect for the invaluable work done by Shivaji Maharaj. He had no reverence for his religion, no ideal to strive for nor any courage to support the great work done by Shivaji Maharaj. He joined Afzal Khan ! but, he was not faithful to him, either ! Khan lost his life and that foolish person tried to survive at any cost. A traitor and a deserter, he was now on the run.

Where could he go ? Now that the Khan was killed, who would accept him ? He was sure that one day Shivaji would find him out and kill him. He escaped from the forests of Javli.

After the Pratapggarh battle when peace reigned for sometime, Khandoji furtively left his hide-out and reached Rohid Khore. Some villages, like Utravali, Nazre, Bazan, Wadi were in his possession. Khandoji hid himself in one of these villages, but he was in doubt as to how he could continue to live and how long ? One long year passed

thus in fear and trepidation. Sometime later. Maharaj came to Raigarh from Visalgarh. Khandoji decided to do something about his unhappy state and sent a messenger to Haibat Rao Shilankar. Haibat Rao was one of the closest friends of Maharaj. He was also the son-in-law fought loyally on the side of Maharaj, the father-in-law had shamelessly turned traitor. He had become an enemy to the fight for Swaraj !

Shameless the fugitive father-in-law sent a man to his son-in-law with a message, "I have managed to escape, but I am afraid of Maharaj. Let me know what I should do !"

Khandoji could not wait for the return of the messenger, so he went to Haibat Rao himself ! Haibat Rao was disgusted at the very sight of Khandoji. He could not imagine what favour his father-in-law would ask for ! Khandoji told him, that he would like to be pardoned by Maharaj !

It was, then, the turn of Haibat Rao to be frightened. Could he request Maharaj to save his life ? Could he even utter a word to that effect ? He could well imagine Maharaj's reaction to such a request. How could he make such a preposterous request.

Haibat Rao did not speak. Down-cast he went to Javli and met Kanhoji Naik. From his countenance Kanhoji guessed that

Haibat Rao had come on some unpleasant mission. What could it be ? Haibat Rao himself explained his father-in-law's wish. Kanhoji gave him a patient hearing. "Has Khandya escaped alive and does he still wish to live ? It is very difficult ! He can never escape the penalty of death at the hands of Maharaj !" He was sure that Khandya would lose his life with one stroke of the Bhavani sword. Kanhoji knew Shivaji's

discipline and the sharpness of his sword. He sat immersed in thought when Haibat Rao broke the silence "Naik, you are respected by Maharaj. Kindly save the life of Khandoji Khopde. I am sure, you will be successful in your attempt !"

Did it mean that Maharaj would listen to Kanhoji ? Yes, he would ! Haibat Rao was sure about it. Kanhoji had served Maharaj loyally for

many years. Maharaj respected Kanhoji and treated him like a father. So Haibat Rao was sure that Maharaj would certainly listen to Kanhoji.

With great reluctance Kanhoji accepted the task, but the problem that faced him was how he could put forward the case. Kanhoji was in a dilemma. He could neither reject nor completely accept it. Yet Haibat Rao was a loyal man. At last Kanhoji got up



and went to Maharaj. He felt that a heavy load weighed on him.

As Kanhoji climbed the steps and entered the fortress, his heart beat fast. Having made up his mind he met Maharaj alone. Maharaj understood that something weighed on Kanhoji's mind. Moments ticked away in silence. At last he managed to begin, "Khandoji Khopde of Utravali has escaped alive and now he wishes to atone for his past conduct." The Kanhoji



explained in detail while Maharaj listened in silence, a silence that was foreboding. Unable to bear it Kanhoji burst out.

"Maharaj, please pardon Khandoji Khopde !" No sooner had Kanhoji uttered these words than Maharaj flared up !

"That wicked traitor. He had no land, and I made him a land-lord. Yet he had the audacity to join Afzal Khan. He has no right to ask for mercy. Please do not ask a favour on his behalf. I cannot forgive him !" Now it became more than ever clear to Kanhoji what Shivaji felt towards traitors. A traitor was not to be pardoned. That

was Shivaji's firm conviction. That's over then. He could not plead for Khandoji any more. Yet he decided to try once again. So, he got up and pleaded "Maharaj, I am prepared to take the blame on behalf of Khandoji, but please spare his life !"

Maharaj became thoughtful. A person of Kanhoji's status was pleading for Khandoji ; if he did not agree, Kanhoji, a faithful servant of Bhonsles, revered for his age and loyalty, would be hurt ; if he did, the traitor would get away scot free. It set a bad example to others. What could be done ? He looked down and told Naik, "I have no alternative but to pardon him now that you plead for him, I agree to let him live. But Khandoji should be brought here."

Kanhoji was delighted. Maharaj had paid heed to his word. Maharaj never listened to anyone, but he agreed to

Kanhoji's request ! He felt honoured. Kanhoji descended from the fort and sent a message to Khandoji that Maharaj had agreed to pardon him and that he should go to the fort to offer obeisance.

Khandoji could not believe it ; nevertheless he was very, very happy. He came to Kanhoji and the latter took him to Shivaji. Maharaj was seated in court and Khandoji followed suit but did not dare to raise his head. Shivaji did not utter a word ! He turned and walked away in silence, unable to contain his fury. The next day Khandoji again appeared in the court to pay his respects, Maharaj looked up with blood

shot eyes. Khandoji was terrified. Suddenly Shivaji ordered a swordsman to hold the wicked traitor ! "Take him away. Though his life is spared, he shall not escape punishment. Sever his right hand and left leg."



Kanhoji Naik came to know of it. He got annoyed at What Maharaj had done ! Had he cut off his hand and leg ? Was it justice ? Maharaj had broken his promise. The more he thought of it the more angry he got. It was intolerable, he thought and so he went straight to Khandoji and gently bandaged his wounds and then went to Maharaj.

Maharaj knew well that Kanhoji would meet him when he heard of the punishment imposed on Khandoji. When Kanhoji entered, Maharaj was awaiting his arrival. Kanhoji spoke with annoyance.

"You pardoned Khandoji and told me that you would spare his life ! What value is there for your word ?"

Maharaj saw that Kanhoji was very angry; and he spoke gently in response.

"Naik, I did keep my word ! I did not kill Khandoji. I merely got his hand which fought against his own people and the leg that ran towards their enemy amputated."

"After all he was a traitor ! He deserved a worse fate." Maharaj had agreed to spare his life and had done so. Did his offence deserve any pardon ? If one escaped punishment in spite of one's treachery would it not be a bad example to the people ? Writing a letter of regret or tending an apology was hardly sufficient for such a crime. If justice had to be maintained, traitors have to be punished severely. Otherwise, Swarajya would not survive.

What wrong did Maharaj do ? Maharaj explained his responsibility as a lover of his country. Kanhoji with his long years of service should have understood all this without Shivaji's explanations, but a man is sometimes carried away by his own emotions. Emotions and sentiments have small place in the administration of justice of a country. Those who cannot shoulder that responsibility properly will bring ruin to themselves and to their subjects. Shivaji's words burnt themselves into Kanhoji's memory. He realised his folly. It was not meet to plead for a traitor. Maharaj was right ! And Kanhoji expressed his admiration and respect for him with a deeply grateful smile.



THE NIGHT-ATTACK ON SHAISHTA KHAN

EXTRACTS FROM JADUNATH SARKAR'S

SHIVAJI AND HIS TIMES

IT was the 6th day of Ramzan, the month of fasting for Muslims. The servants of Nawab's household had mostly fallen asleep after their day's abstinence followed by the heavy meal at night. Some cooks who had arisen from their beds to make a fire and prepare the meal which is taken a little before dawn in the month of Ramzan, were dispatched by the Marathas without any noise. The wall dividing this outer kitchen from the body servants' room within the harem once had a small door in it, but the opening had been closed with brick and mud to complete the seclusion of the harem. The Marathas began to take out the bricks and made an opening there. The noise of their pick-axes and the groans of the dying awoke some of the servants, who reported the suspicious noise to the Khan, but that general only rebuked them for disturbing his sleep for a trifle.

Soon the breach in the wall was large enough for a man to creep through. Shivaji, with his trusty lieutenant Chimnaji Bapuji, was the first to enter the harem, and was followed by 200 of his men. The place was a maze of canvas, screen-wall after screen-wall and enclosure within enclosure. Hacking a way through them with his sword, Shivaji reached the very bed-room of the Khan. The frightened women roused the Nawab, but before he could use his weapons Shivaji was upon him and severed the thumb with one stroke of his sword.

It was evidently at this time that the lamps in the room were put out by some wise woman. In the darkness two of the Marathas tumbled into a cistern of water ; and the confusion that followed was used by Shaishta Khan's slave-girls to carry him away to a place of safety. The Marathas continued their work of slaughter in the darkness for sometime, killing and wounding many of the Khan's women, without knowing their sex.

Meantime the other half of Shivaji's force, the 200 men, evidently under Babaji Bapuji, who had been left outside the harem, had rushed the main guard, slaying the sleepers and the awake and crying out in derision, "Is it thus that you keep watch ?" They next entered the band-room and ordered the bandsmen, as if from the Khan, to play. The loud noise of the kettle-drums drowned all voices, and the yells of the enemy swelled the confusion. The tumult in the harem, too, now grew so great that the Mughal troops became aware that their general was being attacked. Shouting "the enemy are on us," they began to take up their arms.

Abul Fath, a son of Shaishta Khan, had been the first to hasten to his father's rescue without waiting for others; but the brave youth was slain after he had struck down two or three Marathas. Another Mughal captain who lodged just behind the harem enclosure, finding its gate closed from within by the wily Marathas, let himself

down inside by means of a rope-ladder ; but he was at once attacked and killed.

Shivaji, finding his enemies fully awakened and arming, delayed no longer, but promptly left the harem, called his men together, and withdrew from the camp by the direct route, while the Mughals, not knowing where their enemies were, fruitlessly searched all their camp.

This night-attack was a complete success. The retreat from the camp was unmolested and no pursuit was made. During the surprise the Marathas lost only six men killed and forty wounded, while they slew a son and a captain of Shaishta Khan's forty of his attendants and six of his wives and slave-girls, besides wounding two other sons, eight other women and Shaista Khan himself.

The daring and cunning of the Maratha hero was rewarded by an immense increase of his prestige. He was taken to be an incarnation of Satan ; no place was believed to be proof against his entrance and no feat impossible for him. The whole country talked with astonishment and terror of the almost super-human deed done by him ; and there was bitter humiliation and sorrow in the Emperor's Court and family circle at this disaster to his maternal uncle and the "premier peer" (amir-ul-umara) of his Empire.



AT THE FEET OF TUKARAM

By D.V.PATUKAR
and S.K.DEODHAR

AS Shivaji's Kingdom grew in extent and influence, saintly men all over Deccan happily sang the name of God, and people thronged to their Bhajans and Kirtans. Shivaji was deeply religious and he encouraged discourses and devotional gatherings throughout his land. Many saints had the patronage of Maharaj, and among them there was one saint, whose sweet discourses had a special fascination for the pious young King. He was Tukaram, whose devotional songs flowed like a stream of nectar in and around river Indrayani.

One day, when the King was at the fort of Purandhar, he received the tidings that Saint Tukaram had come to Poona and would be giving a discourse in the court-yard of the shrine in a certain mansion.

"We shall go to Poona for the Kirtan." Shivaji announced. "There is divine magic in Tukaram Maharaj's words."

The Muslim Subedar of the area learnt of Shivaji Proposed visit to Poona and immediately hatched a plan. Picking out a handful of men he gave them his secret order : "Be ready for a surprise raid on the temple when Shivaji is there."

It was night and the soft glow of oil lamps filled the spacious court-yard of the temple. A large crowd of devout men and women

eagerly waited for the saint to begin, and among them sat the young King, accompanied by a few close companions.

The saint stood up, and his soft voice chanting the Lord's name filled the atmosphere. The people as well as the King listened enraptured to that sublime melody.

But some stealthy movements were noticed near the grates of the temple. In a little while it became clear that Muslim soldiers had cordoned off the mansion. A wave of panic ran through the audience. In a worried voice the host whispered to Tukaram, "The Muslims have come here to capture Shivaji."

The young King, who was sitting near, calmly said, "Do not worry about us. Please continue the Kirtan without interruption."

The saint closed his eyes for a brief moment, as if to commune with the Almighty and then continued with his hymns.

He sang without the slightest change of serenity on his face, and those in the audience who were frightened were soon soothed by the silent calm on his face and the spoken assurance of his songs.

The young companions of Shivaji were, however, alert. Tanaji, Yessaji Netaji and Hiraji Farjand talked among themselves for a few moments. Then Hiroji whispered into Shivaji's ears, "Raje ! will you please come over for a moment ? I have a plan."

The small party went to the ante-chamber of the temple for a few moments, while the saint continued with his Kirtan, but

there was now a note of urgency in his voice, as if he was urging the Almighty to protect the young saviour of the country.

Suddenly Shivaji and a small party of his companions rushed out of the gate and sprang on to their mounts. Before the Muslim force could know what was happening, the Marathas were galloping away.

"There, " the Subedar shouted, pointing to the typical turban that Shivaji wore, "There he goes ! After him, all of you !" Cursing aloud, the Subedar himself sprang on to his horse. The others followed him and the whole party ran in hot pursuit.

Inside the temple the saint calmly continued with his Kirtan. Some of Shivaji's companions returned and sat down again. On their lips a faint, inscrutable smile played.

Tukaram looked at them as they sat down and a benign joy lit up his face as he looked at Hiroji Farjand.

For it was not Hiroji. It was Shivaji wearing Hiroji's turban and Hiroji's robes.

It was not difficult for the saint to understand the trick that had been played. Hiroji Farjand had a striking resemblance to Shivaji in features and stature, and the daring young man had undertaken to lead the Muslims away on the strength of that resemblance.

"It is dangerous," Shivaji had remonstrated, but with a sly smile Hiroji had responded. "Don't worry, Raje ! We'll be too swift for the pursuers. We shall easily elude them in the darkness and reach Purandhar."

Shivaji had reluctantly agreed and the robes and turbans had been exchanged. Wearing the young King's distinctive turban and apparel, the dare-devil had taken the Muslims by surprise and sped away while the young King calmly sat, engrossed in the Bhajan.

In the meanwhile the fleet-footed Marathas had eluded their pursuers. "Allah's curse on him," the Subedar growled. "He took advantage of the darkness."

Soon the party entered Purandhar, and Hiroji reported the whole story to Jijabai. Her eyes shone with admiration for her son's brave friends.

The Kirtan came to an end in the temple. Shivaji fell at the saint's feet and touched them in reverence.

Then he said, "Maharaj, good men like you deserve all the riches in the world. I'd like to present you with some silks, jewellery and a palanquin."

The saint smiled and said, "But I'm already rich. I have with me the name of the Almighty, and it gives me all I want."

"Then, Maharaj," the pious King said, "let me remain with you. I, too, feel like leaving everything and merging myself in the name of God with you."

The saint put a hand on the young King's head and softly said, "Raje, your work, too, is the same as singing God's glory. Every man has to worship in his own way, according to his own Dharma, and your way of worship is the attainment of freedom for your country."

The gentle words lit up Shivaji's mind with the luminosity of Divine Grace, and he touched the feet of the great saint again, the saint whose music was the music of the Lord.



THE PROUD PYTHON

In his camp Shaishta Khan sat talking with Kartalab Khan.

"At last we have taken the fort of Chakan," Shaishta Khan said with satisfaction, pulling at his hookah. "But it has shown us how impregnable Shivaji's forts are."

"I have known that since long," Kartalab Khan agreed ; "I have been posted in Deccan for a long time now, and I know Shahaji. Shivaji's father personally. Both father and son set great store by impregnable forts."

For sometimes both sat thinking in silence. Then Shaishta Khan slowly said, "I have another idea. How do you like leading a surprise expedition to the coastal areas of Konkan ?"

Kartalab Khan stroked his beard thoughtfully and said, "A good idea. With the conquest of Konkan my prestige will soar at the Darbar in Delhi."

A few days later a huge Mughal force set out towards the sea. The army included many prominent personalities including a lady named Rai Bagan.

"Khan," Rai Bagan had said to Kartalab Khan at the start of the march, "Do you realise what you are undertaking ? To reach Konkan you have to cross the Sahyadri mountain range, and the passes are so narrow that not only will it be a job to

take your heavy guns through them but even your soldiers will have to march in a single file."

"Well, " Kartalab Khan had replied, "in the first place even if we have to wend our way like a snake, we would be too much of deadly python to be approached by Shivaji's men and secondly, Shivaji has no idea of our destination."

So Kartalab Khan thought, but Shivaji's spies had reported every move of the Khan, and Shivaji said to Netaji Palkar :

"Netaji, the prey is walking into our parlour. We entrust you with the job of taking care of them."

"It will be a pleasure, Maharaj," Netaji said with a broad smile. "It would be nice if you could come just to watch the fun."

Slowly, heavily, the Khan's huge army and armament wended its way through the mountains, climbing up and down the tortuous passes.

The soldiers would look at the peaks towering above them and would be panic stricken at the thought that Shivaji's men were hiding in those hills above.

"Could there be a more difficult mountain pass ?" Kartalab Khan's generals thought while negotiating one till they came to another and a more difficult one.

And in the narrowest of them all, Umbar Khind, it happened.

As the panting Mughal forces dragged their way up the inhospitable terrain, a shrill whistle echoed through the hills around and literally from all around them a shower of arrows whizzed past the Muslims.

"Ya Allah," they screamed, knowing not from where death came on wings. Before they could recover from their shock, the familiar war cry of "Har Har Mahadev", rent the skies and from every boulder and rock a Mavia sprang upon the Mughals caught in the pass, his sword flashing in the sun.

It was slaughter, as the nimble-footed Marathas jumped from rock to rock, cutting down the enemy, while the Muslims looked in vain for way to escape.

"Fight, men, fight !" Kartalab Khan shouted at his panic-stricken men in frenzy, and he looked at his big guns lying immobilized in the narrow pass.

Like monkeys the Mavlas jumped from boulder to boulder, striking at the fumbling Mughal army. The huge python, of which the Khan had spoken so proudly lay helplessly bleeding, cut into a hundred pieces.

And on an elevation above the battle scene stood two mounted men, Netaji Palkar, who had directed the ambush so superbly, and by his side, Shivaji, watching his general's skill at war.

There was also another person who watched the rout, Rai Bagan.

"Khan Sahib," she said to Kartalab, "I tried to make you understand what you were in

for, when you decided to cross this mountain with such a huge army. Now look ! Your men are being mowed down like grass. Now if you want to avoid complete destruction, there is only one way out, surrender." And she pointed to Shivaji, watching from the crest of a hill.

The Khan saw how his men were going down and cursed his fate under his breath. Glumly he beckoned to one of his generals and handed him a large white handkerchief. "Go to Shivaji as our emissary," he directed, "we want to talk peace."

As the handkerchief began to flutter in the mountain wind, the Marathas stopped the battle, and the man was allowed to climb up to Shivaji.

"The Khan wishes to apologise," the emissary began, "for transgressing into Shivaji Raje's territory. It was done on the thoughtless orders of Shaishta Khan. The Raje's father Shahaji is an old friend of Kartalab Khan, a fact Shivaji may please take into consideration."

In a short while a huge bundle of valuables lay at Shivaji's feet. Then the Khan's gunners left their guns, muskets and swords and slowly began their ignominious retreat. Shivaji watched the scene and turned to Netaji with a look of admiration.

"The credit of this victory is all yours, Netaji," he said softly. Netaji bowed happily.



HIS SOUL WAS NOT FOR SALE

NOT more than a couple of days - that was what Shaishta Khan had thought it would take to conquer the fort of Chakan when, during his invasion on Shivaji he laid a siege to it.

And the fort did look like it - a small structure on plain ground, it was built of mud. It had a force of about four hundred soldiers.

The Khan gave the order : "The fort must fall in a couple of days."

The Moghul guns boomed. Shells rained into the walls of the fort - and stuck in the mud walls. In return, Maratha guns rained fire on the Moghul army. With bravery and efficiency Firangoji Narsala, commander of the fort, directed the defence.

"Damnation !" the Khan angrily exclaimed, as he saw his force of about twenty thousand struggling for fifty days.

Late at night, a war council met in the Khan's tent. "It is shameful !" the Khan growled. "Such a small fort stands up to our mighty force for full fifty days."

What should be done ?

Ideas and suggestions - Then someone said, "I have an idea - let's dig a tunnel from our camp to the ground under one of the ramparts of the fort, then placed enough gun powder below it - and blow it up."

Shaishta Khan stopped his restless pacing and stared at the man.

"Why," he said slowly, "that's an idea ! But it must be done secretly."

The Khan gave the orders and the secret operation began immediately. On the fort Firangoji Narsala saw the stocks of food depleting. "Never mind," the fort commander said reassuringly, "whatever the odds, we fight it out."

The fifty-fifty day !

"It is complete," the officer in charge of the secret tunnel reported to the Khan, "the charge is in place."

The Khan smiled. "At least this could overcome the stubborn resistance of these devils."

On the fort the Marathas force was deployed as usual to meet the Moghul bombardment. The Moghuls were taking positions in a particular part of the fortifications. There was an expectant pause. Then

"Boom...."

With a rumble that shook the atmosphere, the explosion ripped open a rampart of the fort and a gaping hole appeared.

"Onward Attack !" the Khan gave the order and the Moghuls rushed to the huge opening.

For an instant Firangoji Narsala stared at the havoc - at the debris that flew into the air - at the mangled bodies of many of his men caught in the blast.

But there was not much time to stand and stare. The Moghuls were not far from the opening.

Swiftly the Maratha commander gave the order and a human phalanx moved up to close the gap in the defence.

"Swords in both hands, men !" Firangonji called out, "No shields !"

The Marathas jumped into the booby fray and battle raged in the gap.

The Marathas fought like men possessed. In amazement the Khan saw that his men could not get through, though they were far greater in number.

For a whole day the fight was on at the gap - and the Moghuls were kept out. Night fell, but the Moghuls did not go back to their camp. They stayed on right at the gap.

When morning came, fresh waves of Moghuls rushed at the defenders. The depleted and exhausted ranks of the Marathas were overwhelmed - but the men and their leader Firangoji Narsala, continued to fight like devils.

Shaishta Khan swept into the fort and watched the Maratha commander, his armed hands flashing everywhere like lightening.

In sheer admiration the Khan called out - "Stop ! I am yet to see a fighter like you I am proud of an enemy like you."

The battle stopped.

As Firangoji stood erect before the Khan, the Moghul commander exclaimed, "What bravery ! Come into the Imperial army - all the acme and wealth you may desire will be yours."

Quietly the Maratha commander replied, "My soul is not for sale."

"Shabash !" Shaishta Khan said, impressed all the more. "You can leave the fort with your men."

Silently, but with their heads erect still, the Maratha commander and his handful of men rode out. It was August 15, 1660.

Next day Firangoji stood before Shivaji Maharaj, his eyes turned in shame to the ground.

"I'm ashamed, Maharaj !" he gruffly said. "I could not defend the fort - I deserve to be punished."

Shivaji looked at the man standing before him. "Punished ? Yes, I'll punish you," Maharaj said slowly, "by appointing you commander of a more important fort, the fort of Bhupalgarh."

In astonishment Narsala looked up, and Shivaji smiled at him.

"Yes, Firangoji, I am yet to see a lion like you - who could hold the fort for fifty-five days when it could very well have fallen in a week."



THE LORD OF THE SEVEN CRORES

HERE was a well-known Shiva temple on the banks of the Panchaganga near Dicholim. Shivaji knew of this holy place that the Portuguese had desecrated. It presented a sad scene of utter desolation and ruin. The name of the deity in the temple was Sapta Koteswar. This was a very ancient and hallowed temple. The tolerance of the devotees was extraordinary, indeed.

Its story dates back into the hoary past when, the Kadamba dynasty ruled Goa. Gomantak, as Goa was then known, was an independent Sovereign State. Kadambas had a powerful navy, they were well known for their valour and devotion. Sapta Koteswara was considered one of the famous temples of the time. Once this temple had been gorgeous, it was full of beautifully-carved structures. In the sanctuary, there was a Shiva-lingam that shone brilliantly when it caught the light. Kadamba kings were noted for their devotion. Therefore, they addressed themselves with the appellation, "Shri Saptakoteshwari Labdhawar-prasad Maharajadhiraj Shri Kadambaveer."

First, the Sultans plundered the temple, burnt the scripts and smashed the idols. There was ruin all around. The Sultans kept the Shiva-lings hidden.

Later, the kings of Vijayanagar took a pledge to free the land with the temples and other sacred places from the clutches of the

invaders. Gomantak was freed by the Vijayanagar kings from the possession of the Sultan. Goa became free. The flag of freedom fluttered once more. The image of Gods and Goddesses were reinstalled in their respective shrines with full devotion. Once again Sapta-koteswar temple was established in the holy sanctuary of a beautiful temple and worship started as of old.

Years rolled by. There again came a time when Gomantak was destined to suffer the same fate. Now it was in the hands of the Portuguese. The Portuguese proved worse than their Muslim fore-runners. It was in the name of religion that the Portuguese committed fresh atrocities on the people. Within the span of twelve hours, six hundred and fifty temples were completely shattered. The Sapta-koteswar temple, too, suffered the same fate. Stone by stone, this magnificent edifice was consigned to the sea. The Shiva-lingam was left planted by the side of a well, so that people would have to step over it while taking out water from the well.

Forty years went by. A person named Suryarao Desai obtained permission from the Governor of Goa to carry away the lingam to Narve. He took it and kept it in his house. At last, Sapta Koteswar gained a roof over Himself.

Sixty summers passed. Then some one saw an extraordinary person, making his

way through the trees that stood in front of Shri Saptakoteshwar. This person was none other than Shivaji Maharaj !

The village of Narve stood on the banks of the Panchaganga. Coconut groves, areca nut trees, mangoes, teak, jack fruits, jamuns etc. grew in such abundance here that it looked like a jungle. About twenty-five huts could be seen between these trees. They were the huts of farmers. A narrow route snaked along these huts and stopped short of a hillock covered with trees. A water-fall could be heard leaping down noisily somewhere in the vicinity. This was the hamlet of Narve. The surroundings were enchantingly green all over. The spot had very recently merged into the Swarajya !

A red stone wall was the only man-made structure here. A huge arched recess broke the continuity of these stone walls. On entering it one saw the famous Saptakoteshwara Linga, housed in a tent-like structure, prepared from the dried leaves of coconut trees. An oil lamp illumined the inside with its soft flow. Occasionally, the sun's rays pierced through the gaps. Evidently, Lord Saptakoteshwar enjoyed His present accommodation of solitary splendour ! Shivaji stood in front of this symbol of the great Lord Siva deeply absorbed in devotion. He stood still for some time and said, "Pant, arrange for Puja, I am going to worship the Lord."

Moropant straightaway engaged himself in the arrangements for the worship. Maharaj stood underneath the mandapam. Thoughts thronged his mind. He pondered

over the name, "Shri Sapta Koteshwar ! The God of Seven Crores ! To him it meant that the Lord commanded an army of seven crores ! What a condition he was reduced to today ! This was hallowed spot for all Marathas ! He was one of the most revered of their Gods. His greatness was considered to be no less than that of Kashi Vishveswar. Unfortunately, His devotees became powerless and ignorant. That was the reason why the temple of such fame had to suffer all this desecration. Where was the trident that killed Tripurasura ? Where was the arrow that broke Andhakasura to pieces ? Where was the tabor, 'Damru' and the 'Third Eye' that burnt proud Madan (Cupid) to ashes ? Where was that terrible army of ghosts ? And where was Bhavani-Parvati who killed Mahishasura ?" Maharaj stood gazing lingam still shone more brilliantly !

Really, where were those sacred, unconquerable weapons ?

Maharaj took his bath and sat for worship. The priest started chanting mantras ; lamps were lit. Fragrance filled the air ; water for Abhisheka was poured over the lingam. For the first time, the 'hut' of Saptakoteshwar resounded with the chanting of the Vedas. Occasionally, a vagrant ray peeped through the numerous gaps and one or two of them fell on the bare body of Maharaj.

The worship was over. Suddenly a dried leaf from the roof fell, and it made a sound. It fell on the shoulder of Maharaj. He laughed, and he brushed it aside. The priest said, "Maharaj, really it is a good omen !"

"What do you mean ?" asked Shivaji. "Maharaj, Saptakoteshwar Himself has demanded something from you !" replied the priest. "What is His demand, Guruji ?" enquired Shivaji. "Maharaj, the Lord demands that a new temple be constructed. He is the family God of many kings. Now, we are in Swarajya (it is our own rule). We are in the kingdom of one who rules as a trustee of God. Saptakoteshwar should no more be allowed

to remain in a neglected spot like this," explained Guruji.

"Yes, that is my wish as well, Guruji ; a fine temple will come up in time. Worship will be performed carefully and without any fear or worry in this land of Kadambas. Nobody will dare to disturb Him."

"let that happen ! Let there be peace and wealth !" Conches and bugles sounded in confirmation.



AND THEY SILENTLY SLIPPED AWAY

SHAME and defeat were written all over his face. Fazal Khan burnt with the sense of disgrace of a son who could not avenge his father's ignominious death. Worst of all, Panhala fell into Shivaji's hands. Allow him respite now, and destruction of Bijapur would be complete. To add to the fears already entertained by the Bijapur Sultan, news reached him of the alliance Shivaji made with the British. Doraji captured three ships carrying valuable goods, belonging to Afzal Khan, which had fallen into the hands of British. He also captured a British official by name Philip Chifford and brought him over as hostage and this forced the British to promise their help to Shivaji.

Who, among all his defeated generals, would dare to head an attack on this rebel Maratha ? The Sultan pondered over the situation. And then in a flash it occurred

to him that Siddi Johar, the insolent Bijapur Sardar who was at Kurnool, would be the right one. Could he not be put in charge of a fresh campaign and made to march against the Maratha rebel ?

A letter went to Siddi and he arrived at Bijapur Court. The Sultan spoke honeyed words dripping flattery and solicitude. Who else but the powerful Siddi, could attack and capture the crafty Maratha ? He could take whatever forces he wanted from Bijapur and he would be the supreme commander of the forces. Siddi was sufficiently flattered. With a vast army of thirty thousand he thundered towards Kolhapur. Shivaji heard the news of the terrible army coming under Siddi Johar's command with the complacency of a man knows how to take calculated risks. His main concern was to choose the base from which resistance could be offered to the

Bijapur troops. Upon reflection, he decided to thwart the enemy attack from Panhala fort. Better resist from the enemy territory itself than recede towards his kingdom and let the enemy advance that far. So Panhal Garh was the refuge from which Shivaji decided to offer resistance to Siddi's forces.

Siddi marched in great pomp to Panhala, his thirty-thousand-strong army flooding the region in great waves. At first he tried to send troops under cover of firing from the rear. But as the troops came within range, Shivaji's soldiers opened fire and forced them into a hasty retreat. A few such frustrated attempts made Siddi realise that it would be futile to pursue this strategy further. What was needed was a giant cannon that would hurl its deadly contents at the fort walls and shatter them. Such cannons were, however, found only in the possession of the foreigners. He called his generals to a conference and placed the problem before them. Fazal Khan, Afzal Khan's son, came up with a suggestion. He argued, "The British at Rajpur could give us such a cannon. Shivaji no doubt acquired a large territory and acquired sufficient strength and force, but the Bijapur Sultanate is an established State with greater strength, and these foreigners who came here to carry on business would surely see the wisdom of pledging allegiance to the stronger powers. They would surely help us"

Siddi agreed that there was every possibility of their acquiring help from the British. A messenger was immediately dispatched and Siddi sat back in satisfaction, awaiting the favourable reply from the British.

Revington promptly consented to help Siddi. Now that Philip Clifford was returned in safety, there was no longer any need to abide by their promise to Shivaji. Looking at the vast army of Siddi surrounding the Panhala fort and Shivaji trapped inside with a very small force, Revington decided that this was the end of the Maratha. What, then, was the sense in sticking to him and defying the Sultan? The Sultan could, on the other hand, offer many concessions to facilitate their trade if now they helped him in his hour of need. So Siddi was not disappointed in his anticipations and the deadly cannon was brought soon at the Bijapur camp. Shivaji was bidding his time within the fort with complacency. He knew that the Bijapur forces could not approach the fort. But his calm was shattered one morning as a giant explosion like that of thunder filled the air. Simultaneously, the earth shook as the fort wall took the impact of the huge cannon ball. With a start he rose and came over to look at the cause of the disturbance. In the distance, he espied the huge mounted cannon, manned by the British. "The traitors," he muttered to himself indignantly. "So they have now joined hands with Siddi. Well, these cannon balls can do nothing to Shivaji's forts, and that they will soon learn," he thought.

The siege continued relentlessly for three months. Inside, Shivaji and his men were intensely apprehensive. It now appeared as if he had been trapped within these walls. Siddi could take his own time and break into the fort when he wanted to, and Shivaji would be there to be conquered!

At Poona, matters were taking a bad turn. Shaishta Khan lay siege outside Poona with

the huge Moghul army. Jijabai grew more and more apprehensive as the days rolled on and the siege of Panhala continued without any trace of relief. No one was at hand to be sent to help her son from without. She became desperate and at last decided to march out herself to help her son. At this juncture Tanaji arrived on the scene. At the bidding of Jijabai he rushed to the help of Shivaji. But of what avail could his small troop be in facing the Bijapur forces in the open ? Shivaji heard the rattle of gun-fire in the distance and saw a platoon from the Bijapur army in that direction. He knew Tanaji would have come to assist him. With a leaden heart he watched the Bijapur platoon's return, knowing that Tanaji came, and went back in the defeat. He felt utterly helpless, trapped inside the fort. More than the worry about his own capture was the worry over the state of affairs in his kingdom. "What was happening in Poona ? What if some other enemy chose this juncture to attack Poona ?" His mind was racked with such questions.

Then one day there came a surprise to him in the form of a beggar. The beggar wished to see the Maharaj and was ushered into his presence. And, lo ! the beggar turned out to be a spy who managed to elude Siddi's vigilant eyes and found his way into the fort. He brought news of the grave situation in Poona. The Maharaj's presence there was essential. Shivaji's brow darkened. So there was trouble in Poona, he sadly mused. "While he was trapped here, his own kingdom was threatened out of all security. But how could he manage to go there in this hour

of Poona's need ?" His thoughts came to a sudden halt as though he was jerked out of a slumber. He stared at the spy and blurted out, "You... you entered this fort from without. How did you pass by Siddi's troops unobserved ? How, indeed, did you enter here ?"

The spy spoke with quiet confidence. "There is a way out, Maharaj, beyond the vigilance of Siddi. It is risky, no doubt, but it would be a worthwhile risk to take." Shivaji mused a while and came to a decision. Leaving 5,000 men with Triambaji Bhaskar to command the fort, he would try to escape to Poona. 600 men would follow him. Siddi had to be thrown off his guard. Shivaji sent a message offering to come to terms. The messenger, Gangadhar Pant, flattered Siddi enough about his greatness and convinced him that Shivaji was miserable, trapped inside the fort, and would come and meet Siddi the next evening, alone and unarmed, to discuss terms of a treaty. The Bijapur army was also getting restless over the prolonged siege and was happy to learn that Shivaji had at last given in. Tension relaxed.

In the fort, preparations were silently made for the escape of the 600 men with Shivaji. Nature blessed his plan and darkness enveloped the entire area as clouds hid the moon. Covered in black shawls, the 600 men silently trooped out and sped away, carrying Shivaji in a palanquin.



THE COUNTERFEIT

SIX hundred figures moved like shadows as the escaping troops descended down from the fort by a secret path. The torrential rain muffled the sounds of their foot-falls and the pitch darkness of the night hid their forms.

In the fore-front was the spy leading them on, and Baji Prabhu brought up the rear guard, keeping one eye on Siddi's camp. The camp lights glimmered faintly through the darkness and occasional sounds of merry-making floated out through the night air.

As they reached the level ground at the foot of the fort, the sounds became louder. Now they were close to Siddi's camp.

The way out was through a thicket that passed through the camp itself. With bated breath and fervent prayers to Bhavani, they marched through and came out on the other side of the camp and started on the open stretch before them. Forty miles from there was Visalgarh, their destination. Would they

come out unobserved through the enemy outposts before the darkness was dispelled by dawn ? There was no turning back now, and they marched ahead, but a hundred questions tormented their minds. Misfortune struck as they were almost out

of the danger zone. A flash of lightning revealed the silently moving troops and a guard stared in stunned silence, unable to believe his own eye. Next moment, before the surprised troops could pounce upon and silence him, he turned and disappeared into the darkness. The soul of fast-running hoofs now fell on the ears of the 600



men who waited in miserable silence. There was not even a moment to lose, they realised, and started moving fast.

The sounds of merry-making in Siddi's camp was broken by the thud of the galloping hoofs of the guard's horse. He burst into

Siddi's tent, unannounced, babbling excitedly and incoherently. From this babble Siddi gathered enough information to deal him a shocking blow. Shivaji escaped ! Siddi raved and cursed, cursed everyone and himself for letting the Maratha's fooling to succeed again. Then he recollected himself and ordered a troop, commanded by his son-in-law, to pursue the escapers and capture Shivaji.

The silent troopers heard the hoofs in the distance. Baji Prabhu came to the palanquin of Shivaji and murmured something. Soon a major part of the troop merged into darkness, just as the Bijapur soldiers burst upon the remaining men and captured the palanquin.

In the presence of Siddi the palanquin was lowered and from it descended a man ; Siddi Johar stared at him. "This man cannot be Shivaji. The royal bearing associated with Shivaji is not present in him," he thought, as he asked him, "Who are you?"

The man replied, "My name is Shivaji."

"You fool ! Tell me the truth. You are not Shivaji. Who are you, and where is the mountain rat ?"

The man replied, "I told you, Sir. My name is Shivaji. I am a barbar from Panhala fort. The three months' siege exhausted the provisions inside and unable to stand the starvation. I made a bid to escape."

"And you are being carried in a palanquin like a prince ? Tell me why you are being

so supremely honoured." Siddi's tone was sarcastic.

"That was Shivaji's plan," replied the barber. "He came to know of my wanting to run away, so he offered to let me go, on the condition that I should ride a palanquin. If your sentries saw it, the idea of Shivaji's escaping would cause confusion here. Some of your troops would disperse to pursue the escaping people and he would attack you, taking you by surprise and speed away to his kingdom."

"So that is it," Siddi nodded thoughtfully. "You insist, then, that Shivaji is still in the fort."

"Yes, Sir," the barber replied. Just then the sentry who reported the escaping party stepped forward.

"The party I saw much bigger. I don't think that the entire party was caught up. Even now Shivaji might be speeding away," he said. Siddi Johar cursed under his breath. Was he to pursue some unknown escapers or keep vigil on the fort only ?

At last he decided to accept the idea that Shivaji was escaping. He sent his troops in the direction indicated by the guard, and alerted his men to be more vigilant in the siege of the fort.

The shadowy figures moved on. Soon it would be dawn. The time on their hands was very little and they had a long way to go.



A LIFE TO PROTECT A KINGDOM

THE silent feet marched on. Their ears were turned to pick out any sound above the rain splashing and their feet were trudging through the mud.

They were now four miles from Vishalgarh, nearing Gaziapur Pass in the mountains. As they neared the pass, in the faint light of the early dawn, Baji Prabhu turned and saw in the distant plains a huge troop moving on towards them, galloping fast. As he turned to Shivaji and spoke, his face was calm and set.

"Maharaj, I am going to tarry here with half the men. The pass is narrow and the path leading to it is narrow, too. Those troops cannot march into the pass together. We will fell them as they trickle through the pass." He announced his decision.

Shivaji protested.

"But Baji Prabhu, that is inviting death upon yourself. Even with this narrow pass to your advantage, you can't fight back thousands of men with only two hundred soldiers. I cannot leave you to face certain death and run away to safety."

"I am choosing that certain death, Maharaj, and the men who remain with me here also do so voluntarily. If I die in the effort it would be an honour, for I shall die for you, our kingdom and in obedience to Bhavani's decree. You cannot make things better by staying with me, and if the country loses

you at this juncture our bid for freedom comes to an abrupt end. I am sure I have chosen the only course open now. Please disappear soon and when you reach Visalgarh, fire a cannon. Its boom shall let me know that you are safe, and then, if there is still a chance I shall try to elude the enemy and escape."

He turned to the soldiers and announced.

"I am going to stay here and defend this pass till Maharaj reaches Visalgarh in safety. Those who wish to stay with me, come forward."

In unison the entire troop moved forward. Baji Prabhu and Shivaji exchanged glances through tear filled eye. Baji Prabhu took command quickly, and choosing some two hundred men, moved to the interior of the pass and stationed himself there. Shivaji embraced him, and with a heavy heart, eyes brimming with tears and voice choking, bade a silent fare-well to his brave general and men and sped towards Visalgarh.

In a short while the thundering Bijapur troops approached the pass. The pass was quiet, and the first few troopers entered it. Immediately their terror-stricken voices, mingled with roars of "Har Har Maha Dev" rent the air. Masud, the Bijapur commander realised the situation in a flash.

"A trap, is it ? There can't be many men out there. Charge in. Sooner or later they will all fall, and we shall yet cross the pass and capture the Maratha," he roared.

Like sheep to the sacrificial slab the Sultan's men rushed into the pass, to be hacked by the merciless Maratha swords. But Baji Prabhu was becoming restless. "How long more could he hold on ? Had the Maharaja reached Visalgarh ?" Questiones flashed through his brain as his sword slashed about, hacking the Bijapur soldiers as they rushed in. His men were falling fast. If only that cannon's boom came on, he could order those who remained to make a bid to escape. When would it come ? His body was caked with blood. The pass was an ugly mass of severed bodies. Baji was wounded, and with the blood draining out, his strength was fast fading.

Then over the air came the thunderous roar of the cannon. It boomed in his ears and echoed through the pass.

"Give me an indication of your safe arrival at Visalgarh, and then if there is time and chance, I shall elude the enemy and escape," Baji Prabhu said to Shivaji. The signal came, but it was too late. There now was neither time nor chance for the hero who took a plunge into a suicidal attack for his country's sake. He gave a last shout to his men to try and escape and sank to the bosom of mother earth, content in the awareness of death on the battle field.



THE LONG ARM OF JUSTICE

IDENTITY, stimulation, security : Think of these in terms of their opposites. We shun anonymity, dread boredom and seek to dispel anxiety. We grasp at identification, yearn for stimulation, conserve or gain security. The extent of a given need will vary from species to species, population to population, individual to individual.

A behaviour pattern or a cultural tradition is successful if it satisfies a maximum of innate need. Human warfare has been the most successful of all our cultural traditions because it satisfies all three basic needs. War provides glory for some and, in a subtle fashion, identity for all. Through squads and companies and regiments there are a thousand satisfying pigeon holes.

War is also most powerful stimulation ever produced in the history of the species. No philosopher, viewing the horrors of warfare through astigmatic lenses, can grasp the attraction which war presents to the civilized - and territorial - man. It is the ultimate release. In all the rich catalogues of human hypocrisy it is difficult to find anything to compare with the belief that people do not like war.

The continuity of human evolution from the world of the Animal to World of Man ensures that a human group is in possession of a social territorial principle. "Patriotism" is a calculable territorial force,

which released by a predictable situation, will animate man in a manner no different from other territorial species.

Territory is the cause of war in the sense that it takes an intruder to ferment it. But what territory promises is a very high probability that if intrusion takes place, war will follow. So also was it with Shivaji, whose expanding territorial activities won for him both friends and enemies, loyal adherents and treacherous traitors, among whom is the chronicle of one that follows.

Adilshah of Bijapur sent Khavas Khan to conquer all the parts of the country which were captured by Shivaji after defeating Ikhlas Khan. Chieftains like Siddisarvar, Shahr Hazrat and Shaikh Meeran accompanied him in this task. There were some Hindu Chieftains who were prepared to fight Shivaji. It was a sad story for India that even the step-brother of Shivaji, Venkoji - joined the enemy's camp. Nimbalkar, Ghatge, Shirke, Jadhav etc., were the other chieftains on the side of the enemy who were eager to arrest and destroy the growing power of Shivaji Maharaj. Had they understood the great cause for which Shivaji was struggling, the course of history would have been different. Shivaji's very close relatives laid hurdles in his way. One of them was Rajbahadur Baji Ghorpade. Actually, Baji Ghorpade belonged to the Bhonsle family ; but he preferred to sell his services to the Muslim rulers. He considered it his sacred duty to go against Shivaji's efforts for the establishment of Swarajya

in all possible ways ! He had Shahji arrested. He managed to be an obstacle in the way of Shivaji merely to show Adilshah how loyal Baji was to him ! This loyalty gave him utter satisfaction.

Khavas Khan planned his strategy in such a way that Shivaji should not know any of his moves until he reached Konkan ! But he was totally unaware of the fact that every detail of his move was being reported to Shivaji through his expert network of spies. It was known to Shivaji that Baji



Ghorpade stationed at Mudhol was to meet Khavas Khan in Konkan along with a regiment in order to assist him. Shivaji decided to kill Baji Ghorpade at the outset. He was furious when he remembered all the mis-deeds of Baji Ghorpade. He was the same Baji who entered Shahji's tent along with Afzalkhan and Mustalakhan and treacherously wounded him. He had seen

Shahji in shackles ! The same Baji was now thinking of attacking Shivaji Maharaj ! What courage ! Shivaji was not prepared to wait and give Baji a chance to let him meet Khavas Khan. He reached Mudhol immediately to put an end to Baji.

Baji was about to start for Konkan ! In fact, he had nearly completed the preliminary preparations. When he came to know that he had been surrounded by Shivaji's men from all sides he felt trapped. With the spreading of the news that Shivaji had come in person, shouts like "Run, get away, Shivaji has come" were heard everywhere ! And before Baji could plan a counter attack on Shivaji the latter had reached Baji's residence ! Baji was certainly a brave and experienced soldier ! He was expert in handling a sword ! He drew his sword and started a duel with Shivaji.

A bitter fight ensued. Shivaji's anger was already kindled. Baji thwarted all the efforts of Shivaji by his skill in swordsmanship. He defended himself using his shield with masterly strategy.

Occasionally, he tried to attack Shivaji with his sword. Baji could not withstand Shivaji's fury. He started fleeing. Shivaji took a long hop, and with one severe blow he put an end to Baji's life.

Shivaji thus set another example of his extreme severity of punishment in dealing with traitors.

THE WIND BLOWS SILENTLY

SMT. NAYANTARA DESAI

Translated from the
original in Marathi

SHAISHTA KHAN's name struck fear in the hearts of the people in and around Poona. Poona had been looted, plundered and laid waste by this terrible tyrant. The untold sufferings that the people had to undergo pained Maharaj deeply. In the very teeth of heavy and almost overwhelming opposition Shivaji managed to recapture Lal Mahal, Kondana, a sub district of Supe from the clutches of Shaishta Khan ! But, many valuable lives were lost in these expeditions and many subjects rendered homeless. Maharaj's concern for his people's suffering, physical, emotional and economic, could hardly be described. He was seeking a way out of this tyranny and Jija Bai understood Shivaji's anxiety. It was the early hours of the morning and the sun's rays gently touched the surroundings with its golden wand. Bells jingled as the cattle were on their way to the pasture. Somewhere a lone cowherd played on his flute. It was at such a time that Jija Bai had entered her little temple for worship. Shivaji had invited some of his most trusted colleagues viz., Moropant, Anaji, Bahirji Naik, Hamsaji Mahite, etc., for drawing up a plan in secrecy. It was Shivaji's practice to worship in his temple first, then pay obeisance to his mother. That day Jija Bai had waited long enough in that room and



finding that there was some delay, she sent for Shivaji.

Shivaji got up, informed his other colleagues and went into the room of worship. Putala Bai, his wife, stood at the entrance. Seeing him she smiled and modestly stepped by. The mild glow of the oil lamp, the scent of flowers, incense and sandal paste added to the sanctity of the place. Shivaji knelt and touched his fore-head to the ground in salutation of Goddess Bhavani after which he saluted his mother in the same manner. "Long live, my son," the mother offered her blessings. She got up and touched his eyes applying holy water which was preserved in a decorated golden vessel. Maharaj cherished these blessings. His mind grew stronger when he received them. Once again he saluted the Linga, the symbol of the great Lord Shiva, and sat down close to his mother.

"Son, though I have been noticing your growing anxiety I have been unable to find the reason," said Jija Bai, as she patted him on the back lovingly.

"Masaheb, you are perfectly correct. We are faced with a financial crisis at the moment. Our subjects have been the victims of the cruelty of Shaishta Khan. They have looted, tortured and rendered absolutely helpless. It is my duty to take care of them.

"Though we propose to collect the wealth by attacking the most wealthy part of the Mughal Kingdom, I am at a loss to decide upon the source that should be tapped. That is why we are anxious." As Shivaji explained his difficulties, the tremor in his voice indicated his deep concern.

"Son, forget your worries and come along with me," said Jija Bai as if there was no cause for concern at all. She bowed before Goddess Bhavani and left the room. Maharaj followed her. They mounted a bastion of Raigarh. Jija Bai pointed towards the north west and asked Shivaji, "Can you think of a richer possession of the Moghuls than the one that lies in that direction?"

"Surat!" Shivaji replied without hesitating a single moment.

"Son, you had better attack the city of Surat which is a veritable treasure house. Gather as much wealth as you can. By attacking Surat you will serve the double purpose of acquiring wealth as well as teaching Badshah a lesson for his past wrongs," Jija Bai elucidated her point.

"Masahe, you have solved my problem and put an end to my anxiety. If I am able to build up Swarajya for our own people. The major part of the credit will be yours," Shivaji said with overflowing gratitude. He bowed down in reverence.

Jija Bai fondly embraced him and patted him on his back gently. His locked up energy had been released and Shivaji was now ready for the great task. The very next day Maharaj invited all his important colleagues and placed before them his plan for the raid on Surat.

Moropant, Anaji, Tanaji and others were overjoyed. Preparations were afoot. They had to go about it in utter secrecy. No one outside the circle knew of the plan. While Shivaji was thus engaged he heard a very heartening piece of news! Shah

Jehan, father Aurangzeb, had died at Agra and the latter had moved northwards. Shivaji Maharaj felt greatly relieved !

The rains had ended. Fields full of crops were ready to be harvested within a matter of days. Trees stood erect as if to watch the bountiful crops with satisfaction ! There were signs of satisfaction all over. Rajgarh prepared itself to bid farewell to its sovereign. Shivaji came to Pratapggarh along with his family. 'Nav Ratri' festival was being celebrated. On the ninth day of the festival, Goddess Tulja Bhavaji seemed to give Her silent benediction for the proposed expedition. Maharaj was immensely pleased. The next day, i.e., Vijaya Dasami day, Maharaj summoned Balaji Naik Bahirji, who came and stood by his side, and said :

"Bahirji, you are our best spy. Our efforts for freedom depend on your skill. So far, we have always counted on your help. Our success has depended mainly on you. Now, as you know, we are moving towards Surat. We have very little knowledge of Surat. So, please go to Surat and gather as much information as possible. At the same time, don't forget that you will now have to cross Mughal territories."

"Maharaj, I am at your service. I shall start tomorrow," replied Bahirji and left immediately after paying his respects.

Next day Bahirji and a band of people came to see Shivaji. Bahirji introduced his assistants, the Ramoshis to Maharaj. Shivaji scrutinised each one of them very minutely and smiled his approval. Bahirji and his party now disguised themselves

and entered Surat under the guise of a band of Fakirs.

Surat was indeed the richest city of the Mughals. There was a strong fort on the banks of the river Tapti, from which the city of Surat fanned out in all directions. Aurangzeb had a military force ten thousand strong for the defence of Surat. Turks, Arabs, Dutch, English, all of them flocked into the city of Surat, because they were given ample facilities for trade. There was a tremendous flow of goods throughout the year, and the markets of Surat were flooded with goods and people. Multi-storeyed buildings lined the broad roads of Surat, palanquins built of sandal wood were found frequently moving through the streets, all of them indicating the prosperity of the city. That Surat was the most favourite city of Aurangzeb was obvious and it deserved to be so ! Bahirji entered Surat along with his band of Fakirs. He was immensely pleased. He scrutinised each corner, bungalow, and trading place. He scanned all the guard posts, estimated their strength and studied their loop-holes. Nothing escaped his eyes. Finally he returned to Rajgarh and saluted Maharaj. Shivaji was very happy to see him. He took Bahirji to his Mahal. Bahirji supplied him with all the information he had gathered. They then decided on a strategy.

It was the beginning of the month of Margazhi (Agrahayan). It was the marriage season. The whole atmosphere was filled with the music of Shehnais and the beat of drums. Jija Bai became very active as she herself took a major part in the marriages of the sons and daughters of

some Mavalis. Shivaji was in a pleasant mood. An auspicious day and time was fixed for the expedition. The day dawned and Shivaji prepared himself to set out on the expedition. Royal musicians played martial music. At such an auspicious moment, Putala Bai, wife of Shivaji applied the vermilion mark on his forehead. Shivaji secured his sword and dagger to his waist. He applied sandal wood paste on his forehead and prostrated full lengthen salutation to Goddess Bhavani. He then made his way to Jija Bai. She was sitting with young Sambhaji on her lap. Seeing Shivaji, Jija Bai stood up to receive her son's loving greetings. Shivaji touched her feet. "May you be successful, son," the mother blessed. Young Sambhaji eyed his father with wide-eyed wonder so natural to a child. The latter's heart was filled with love. He lifted his son and tenderly kissed him.

"Young one, I am going to Surat. Don't try to displease your grand-mother, otherwise she will leave you alone and run off to Pratapgarh," Shivaji joked gleefully.

Soon they were off to Surat. "Har Har Mahadev", the sound struck terror in the ears of Muslims. They got frightened and came to see. One of them asked, "Who are you ? Where are you going ?"

"We are a marriage party," replied Bahirji and said to other, "Say, 'Har Har Mahadev'." Others responded and the party went ahead.

Shivaji and his Mavalis moved ahead without any hindrance. They grew bolder as they drew closer to Surat. But, the people around were obviously frightened.

When the Mavalis reached the outskirts of Surat they were stopped by the guards. "Where are you going ?" asked the guard commander. "We are the soldiers of Aurangzeb Badshah and are heading towards Ahmedabad," replied Bahirji. They could not afford to wait for consent or refusal. They marched ahead. Luckily, the guard was sleepy and chose to allow them to pass through.

Winter had set in. Nights were pretty cold. The Subhedar of Surat, Inayat Khan, was pulling at his hooka while he rested against a cushion. A decanter filled with wine was by his side. His eyes were red with intoxication. The stains of music that filled the night air came to a sudden stop. Inayat Khan had to be helped to his residence as he was fully drunk !

The next morning the tides were high and the waves roared as they tossed and fell. And on the other side, the Mavalis raised their martial slogan, "Har Har Mahadev". So deafening was it that the whole of Surat woke up in horror ! Shouts of 'Ya Allah ! Ya Khuda !' were frequently heard all over Surat. Inayat Khan got up from his deep slumber. He came out and shouted in anger, " Why are you shouting ?"

"That Maratha King Shivaji has come !" People reported trembling. Even the English, Dutch and Arabs joined in.

"Stop it. Be quiet. He is not Shiva. I am informed that a Mughal regiment is marching towards Ahmedabad to assist Mahabat Khan," Inayat Khan tried to pacify them. "If he is Shiva, we will deal with him !" he continued.

The poor chaps, who went to Subhedar with some hopes, returned in disappointment blaming their luck.

Shivaji had already issued order to raid the rich localities of Surat. Meanwhile, he had sent his ambassador to Inayat Khan. Inayat Khan became visibly upset. Nevertheless, he managed to keep his face expressionless and read the letter which was brought in by the ambassador.

"Maharaj is waiting near Burhanpur border. It is your business to meet him and fix the amount of tribute. Give it all in one lump sum. If not, Surat will cease to be Surat. Mind well. You will be responsible for the consequences !" So the letter said.

The ambassador watched the expressions on the face of Inayat Khan while the latter was reading the letter. There was silence everywhere. Inayat Khan's restlessness was obvious. But he restrained himself and stroked his beard. In a subdued tone he spoke to the ambassador : "Why is your king so annoyed ? We shall have a feast of dance and arrange music for him ! Our court dancer will go and invite the king personally ! We shall then receive your king and discuss the tribute. Convey this message of ours to your king." The ambassador turned back and Inayat Khan smiled cunningly.

Inayat Khan then sent a message to Tabassum, the court dancer. She arrived within a short time and saluted him. Inayat Khan kept staring at her for sometime and then said, seriously, "Tabassum, you are going to the most important night of your life. The greatness of Mughal Empire and my destiny rest on your head. If anything

is found wanting in you, you will have to pay the penalty."

"Khan Sahib, I have always obeyed your commands. I would not dream of refusing anything you want. Why do you doubt me now ?" she replied. This made Inayat Khan all the more happy. He said, "Listen, the Mughal Empire looks forward to tonight's success. If it is successful, we shall be highly honoured by Badshah. In turn, you will also be honoured with some title."

"But, Khan Sahib, you have not told me anything. You have not explained what is to be done tonight." She was obviously confused. Inayat Khan kept on looking at her beautiful face for several moments. He was satisfied at her innocence. He furtively looked here and there and in a hushed voice told her : "Tabassum, that Shiva of Marathas has come here. It is your responsibility to invite him. Go to his camp personally. Use all your charms and get him here tonight. When he is fully drunk poison his drinks. Then there will be no sign of Shiva left tomorrow morning !" And he laughed loudly. His laughter became loud and more dangerous. Tabassum was frightened at the mere mention of the word 'poison' . She was sweating all over.

Tabassum returned to her mansion. As usual, her parrot uttered the words of welcome, but she was not in a mood to look at it. As she went to bed, she went on thinking, staring hard at the ceiling.

Suddenly she shot up with a mild whistle indicating that an idea had flashed through her. She was very pleased with herself, and she hummed a little tune.

The sun sank in the west. A reddish glow tinged the western sky, while a few clouds caught up the glow of the setting sun. The traffic in the streets of Surat hurried to a close. Tabassum dressed herself exquisitely and waited for the palanquin. The palanquin came at the specified time and she set out for her destination. Within what seemed a few moments, the palanquin stood before the tent of Maharaj. The guards sought Maharaj's permission to enter. Maharaj asked the guards to send the guest in. Tabassum walked into the tent of Maharaj, paid her respects and held a tray covered with Muslin before Maharaj, standing at some distance. Shivaji looked at her very closely and, then, in a very low voice told her to take a seat. But she continued to stand.

"Maharaj, unless you accept this present I shall not be able to sit, " said Tabassum. Shivaji admired her and removed the cloth over the silver tray. There were a garland of diamonds and a chain of pearls in the tray. Maharaj took the first in his hand but returned it to the tray. He remembered his daughter, Sakhu Bai when he looked at her grace and charm. He kept on gazing at her for sometime. She sat with extreme modesty.

"Maharaj, I am a singer and a dancer at Inayat Khan's court. The Khan has sent me to invite you as his guest for the programme tonight," spoke Tabassum softly and kept still for a moment. She stared at Maharaj in an attempt to understand his expressions. But Shivaji's face was blank. She looked around and said, "Maharaj, the concert to be held tonight is not meant to be an entertainment. It is for deceit,

treachery ! I am to offer you poison in a glass of wine. That disgraceful responsibility has been forced on me !" Her face became pale.

"You may go ahead with your plan when I come to attend that concert. You will earn a prize for it, perhaps even fame." She stared, and Maharaj looked at her. He observed the changes in her moods as reflected on her face. Her eyes filled with tears. She came forward and bent before him so that tears from her eyes dropped on the feet of Shivaji. "Raja Saheb, please do not doubt me. My father turned traitor. I am innocent for all that. Please do not make me more unhappy by disbelieving me," she said. Her charming face turned pale. Tears ran down her cheeks. But, Shivaji was more surprised by what she said. He could not understand why this Muslim girl had warned him. There must be something more than meets the eye. Maharaj stared at her face as if to know more about her. She proceeded : "Raja Saheb, not a word of what I said is untrue ! I may be wearing a Muslim gown, but I am a Hindu. My mind is Hindu. I tell you this only to protect your life." Once again her eyes filled with tears.

"I can't understand what you are saying ?" Maharaj wondered.

"Raja Saheb, I am the daughter of a Maratha general who left the Marathas and joined the Mughals. He later on deceived the Mughals, as well. Our house was burnt. My mother was killed. I had been brought up by an old Muslim music teacher. Therefore, I had to accept this profession in which capacity I am asked to offer you

poison ! Raja Sahib, it is my desire to wash off the sin of my father, by doing my bit to keep you, the supporter of lakhs of people, alive. I have disclosed everything to you. Please believe me." Saying this she again fell at his feet.

Shivaji's eyes took on a faraway expression and he saw a treacherous person standing before his eyes. He was Khandoji Khopde ! Once again he looked at her and asked, "What is the name of your father ?"

"Khandoji Khopde," she replied.

Suddenly, Maharaj's feelings were stirred to the depths. He patted her on the back. He looked upon her as his own daughter. With great admiration he said, "Really, my daughter, you are a brave girl. Your father deceived us. And you, his daughter, are trying to risk your life in order to save mine. Brave girl, I am proud of you." He removed the garland of pearls around his neck and gifted it to her. Tabassum looked at him in wonder. She had been standing. Now she quietly bent and once more touched his feet. He told her, "Dear girl, get up now, it is getting late. Go to your mansion." "Maharaj, I shall bring a glass of wine before you during the night. But you should not touch it. This is my sincere wish. I have to do all this due to my helpless position. Please forgive me !" Tabassum said.

"My child, tell Khan Sahib that I do not drink. I am really pleased with you. 'Tabassum' means smile ! I met you and I am sure that I shall leave this place with a smile. It is all the grace of the Lord."

Tabassum sat in her palanquin and reached her mansion. This time, she did not forget

to listen to her parrot. Time was short and she had to get ready for the night's programme.

An elegant Shamiana was raised to greet Shivaji. The pillars were beautifully carved, with rich rose brocades braiding it. Thin Muslin curtains sealed off one passage. Rich Kashmir tapestry covered the mattresses and cushions. The Shamiana was decorated brilliantly with diamonds, pearls and rubies. Fragrance of various perfumes filled the air. A richly decorated carpet was spread with two cushions on either side. The platform was richly carved. Tabassum took her seat at the appointed time. She was a young girl of about eighteen. She was clad in a rose-coloured gown, and wore a chain of pearls with matching ear-rings. She was the very personification of beauty and grace.

Musicians took up their instruments and Tabassum was attracted by some movement at the entrance. Inayat Khan respectfully ushered Shivaji inside. He indicated a seat for Maharaj. Both of them looked happy. Maharaj sat along with Inayat Khan. Other guests, including some Dutch, English and Arabian traders also sat at their respective seats. Maharaj was the cynosure of all eyes. He looked handsome, in superbly tailored, snow-white gown and head dress with a plume of pearls above it. He wore ear-rings, also of pearls.

Tabassum prepared herself for the concert and took her seat. The audience was served with essence and roses. Rose-water was lavishly sprinkled all over. Tanpuras struck the opening notes followed by the tabla. Tabassum looked around with a slight

smile. She prayed silently and began the recital with Raag Abhogi Kanada. The night passed, as the melodious voice spread an atmosphere of serenity. Maharaj appreciated the song. "Wah ! Wah !" he said and appreciatively nodded. Tabassum was delighted and cherished the praises in her heart. Then she switched over to Rag Jogia which produced a different effect on the audience as they started swinging their heads to the tune. Shivaji thoroughly enjoyed the quality of music she presented and responded appropriately. But Inayat Khan grew restless. He glanced at Tabassum immediately after she completed the recital. Without waiting for a moment, she got up from her seat and brought two glasses exquisitely fashioned and full of wine. She handed them to Maharaj and Inayat Khan respectively and rushed to her seat. Shivaji kept the glass down in the tray. Inayat Khan looked at him wonder.

"Khan Sahib, you may help yourself with pleasure ! I am on fast today !" Maharaj said with a sweet voice. "At least taste these fruits," Inayat Khan requested in a coaxing voice. Maharaj smiled a bit and said, "I am sorry, Khan Sahib, I do not eat or drink anything on my days of fasting. Please excuse me !" Once again Maharaj explained in the same sweet tone. Inayat Khan grew impatient. The night was passing along with the sweet music of Tabassum. She was now singing a Thumri, a favourite refrain of separated lovers and it held the entire audience spell-bound.

The concert was over. Betel leaf was presented to Maharaj as a mark of respect. Inayat Khan walked along with him.

"Khan Sahib, I am really very happy," exclaimed Maharaj.

"Raja Sahib, your happiness means much to our city of Surat. I believe ! Raja Sahib, my ambassador will come to you for talks. Let me take your leave now," said the Khan.

Maharaj looked around, bade him good bye and mounted on "Sulakshani" his mare. Kudtoji Gujar, Moropant, Bahirji Naik, Hansaji Mohite, all followed him. Maharaj came to his camp, went round the camp and entered his own tent. Then he opened a box in which a Shiva Linga was kept. He placed it on his own bed and worshipped it. He then moved out rather impatiently. Bahirji ran towards him. He saluted Maharaj and stood close to him.

"What is the news, Bahirji ?" asked Maharaj.

"Our vessels will reach the port today. We must plunder Surat today itself and fill them with the wealth." So spoke Bahirji. Maharaj went into peals of laughter.

It was morning. There was a traffic jam in the streets. Of course, the raid was in progress. The vessels from foreign countries were told to leave the port. The people of Surat were in a state of tension. There was satisfaction in Shivaji's camp. Suddenly a young Muslim youth entered the camp. Arrogance was writ large on his countenance. The guard was about to put an end to his life but Moropant came forward and took the youth to Shivaji. He saluted Maharaj and stared at him. He said, "Raja Sahib, I have come here as an ambassador of Inayat Khan."

"Read this letter, Pant," Shivaji told Moropant who stood close by. Moropant went on reading : "Raja Sahib, our Badshah will never forgive you. Mind you, and return all the wealth that you have looted immediately. Quit Surat. If you do this, you will get the tribute. Otherwise, you shall have to face Inayat Khan who will take it back by force !"

Moropant read the letter. The so-called ambassador kept staring at Maharaj with blood-shot eyes. Maharaj could not tolerate the text of the letter and said with fury, "Look here, young man, I am not a woman to be frightened of fighting. We are ready to face the consequences. Go and inform your Khan Sahib." Maharaj got up from his seat and stepped forward. The ambassador also went ahead and said, "Raja Sahib, there is no need to be angry ! I wish to talk to you, but it has to be done in private." Said the ambassador with a glint of evil in his eyes.

"All right," Said Maharaj and kept walking. Moropant and others understood what Shivaji wanted. So they followed him at a respectable distance.

Suddenly, the so-called ambassador who also followed Maharaj took out a dagger and raised his hand to attack Maharaj. But, the offending hand was removed in its very attempt by one stroke from the blade of Bahirji's sword. The ambassador collapsed

on Maharaj. A Ramoshi guard did not wait for a minute. The assassin was immediately put to an end. The news of the attempt on Shivaji's life spread like wild fire throughout the Maratha camp. The Marathas were furious. They killed all the Muslim captives in their camp. Even though Maharaj himself tried to maintain calm, Marathas were not prepared to listen to him. Maharaj knew pretty well that it was very difficult to control the Marathas. He ordered his general, "General continue the raid. Don't hesitate to lay your hands on



gold, silver, ornaments, diamonds, whatever you get, deposit it in treasury. On no condition should harm befall the poor people. Do not touch the ladies."

Surat was in ruins. The booty was enormous. The treasure was taken to the camp. Under the supervision of Moropant, the costly items were securely packed. Shivaji looked at it with satisfaction. He thought about the various ways of making use of the treasure. Suddenly his eyes

fell on the jingling anklets used by dancers. It was made of silver and studded with costly diamonds. He remembered Tabassum immediately. He took it in his hand and said, "Pant, debit this pair of anklets to my personal account."

Ships were getting loaded with wealth. Guards were posted to protect them. Ships set out on their voyage towards Maratha ports. The streets wore a look of utter desolation. The city, once proud of its wealth, was now in ruins. It was getting darker and darker. Maharaj stood outside the camp and watched the frail figure of a girl drawing near. Maharaj recognised her. "Tabassum, I had just now remembered you. I offer you this pair of anklets, for what you have done. I feel proud to honour you in this way."

Maharaj took them out and gave them to her. She touched her head with them, bent submissively and touched his feet. She started weeping.

"Maharaj, please make use of this property, which you have offered me, for the sake of your kingdom. I request only one thing of you, please give me refuge. I do not wish to remain here even for a moment. Relieve me from this hell. Please, Maharaj." She pleaded in all helpless.

Maharaj lifted her up and told Moropant, "Pant, I am going to change the name of this girl. Please suggest a suitable name for her."

"Tulasi," Pant looked at her and suggested. She looked down. "It's really a fine name. Tulsi, come along with us. I charge you with the responsibility of singing bhajans

to my mother. My son, Shambhu, will also enjoy your songs. The air will be filled with the sound of your jingling anklets."

Maharaj looked glad.

Shivaji laughed merrily. The rest followed suit. Tabassum (Tulasi) also joined in. Suddenly, Maharaj seemed to recollect something. He said, "Pant, do you remember that there is a bastion behind the summit Padmavati on our fort of Raigarh ? Let the bastion be known as Tulasi bastion henceforth."

"Your order, Maharaj," Pant obediently looked at Maharaj. So did Tabassum. Early next morning, Maharaj began his return journey to the accompaniment of music. Mavalis accompanied him. A young 'boy' of about eighteen followed Maharaj on a horseback just behind him. Maharaj bade farewell to Surat and set out for Rajgarh.



LEST SOMEONE SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOU

THERE was chaos in the City of Surat. The streets were full of people running away to save their lives. Women and children ran leaving their houses open. Occasionally a Moghul horseman sped past on his horse. People stepped aside to avoid the hoofs of the horses. Children cried in bewildered confusion. Rich men, while trying to escape in palanquin, were shouting to get the way cleared, ordering the palanquin-bearers to hurry up.

Whatever wealth they could take along, the people carried while escaping along with their families. Everyone was frantically trying to leave Surat. The air was thick with rumours. Through all the din only one refrain was audible :

“Shivaji has come ! Shivaji has come !”

The Mughal commander-in-chief at Surat, Inayat Khan, was so frightened that he ran to take refuge in the Fort of Surat along with his one thousand Mughal cavaliers. The Fort of Surat was situated within the City itself. They were trying to enter the gate of the fort. Instead of protecting the city, the commander-in-chief was trying to hide himself ! Shivaji had advanced towards Surat but he was still away from the city. Five thousand cavalry men of the Marathas surrounded the city waiting for his final order. Maharaj had sent word of stipulation through his ambassador to Inayat Khan : “Give us a

tribute worth Rupees One crore, and we shall return without doing any harm to your men and materials. We shall not even enter the City of Surat.”

Maharaj was demanding a tribute. He had informed the commander-in-chief in very clear terms. He said, “You give us the tribute. We are demanding it. Your commander, Shaishta Kha,, looted Poona and the surrounding areas continuously for three years, that has cost us crores of rupees. He destroyed villages, plundered and ruined them. We are demanding only a part of that compensation. We know that you are a big Subhedar of the Mughals. It is not at all difficult for you to give us just a crore of rupees. There are so many businessmen in Surat having plenty of money. Just one among them - anyone - could give us this paltry amount of one crore. If you do not meet our demand, necessary action will have to be taken to get what we ask for.”

Inayat Khan himself was a very rich man who had acquired riches by fraudulent means. He flatly refused to pay the tribute to Shivaji. He not only refused to pay any tribute but like a coward avoided a direct confrontation with Shivaji. There was neither honesty nor courage in this man to entitle him to any respect.

Shivaji at last gave his orders. Maratha cavalry entered Surat. Bahirji Naik was ahead of them all. Big businessmen were

the first targets of the attack. Along with the thumping of horse hoofs, desperate cries were heard from all sides. Weeping, shouting, wailing - all these filled the air in the City of Surat.

She was all alone in the huge bungalow. She sat with all her children nesting close to her, seeking the protective warmth of her physical presence. They were all so frightened. The building was beautiful and spacious. There were huge mirrors, cupboards, chandeliers, costly apparel, rich utensils, curtains and many such luxury items ! The drawing room was decorated exclusively in Western style. Among the many photos that adorned the walls was a huge portrait of the crucified Christ. The lady's fair complexion indicated that she hailed from the West. She was actually from Holland. Her husband was a very rich man. He earned enormous wealth in business and he spent a lot for the poor people of Surat. He was very kind and popular as a philanthropist. He died at Surat leaving behind his wife and children to live in that palatial building.

When Shivaji invaded Surat, there was much hue and cry. The whole of Surat was overcome with fear. All the people were frightened, and most of them left the city for safer regions. Many crossed the river Tapti. But, how could that widow who had come from a foreign country escape, with her small children ? How could she abandon the wealth ? She did not know what to do ! Her bungalow was in Surat, but it was on the outskirts. In utter consternation she imagined all sorts of things - that her house would be set on fire, her children killed by the merciless

soldiers raiding the city. There was no one to comfort her for a moment.

She gathered her children together and held them in a close embrace. She decided to face any consequence. She looked again and again at the portrait of Lord Jesus and wept silently.

Now the sound of hoofs was getting closer and closer. Her heart throbbed violently. She looked up. The horses were approaching. She stared out of the house and she saw about ten horsemen. They were all armed with naked swords. Now she was sure that death was at hand. The horsemen were certainly coming to her bungalow. She could see everything clearly around her. Her children clung to her ever more closely. She sobbed aloud and closed her eyes. The horsemen had stopped near her bungalow. The sound of hoofs ceased. She imagined her head severed from her body by the sword of one of the horsemen. A minute passed..... Then two.. three.. four.. six.. ten.. twenty-five! But nothing happened. She did not hear anything. The suspense added to her anxiety. It seemed she had nothing to do but await death. But nothing happened. She gathered strength and opened her eyes and looked around. The Maratha horsemen were standing near the gate of her courtyard. She wondered what they were up to. Mustering sufficient courage, she got up slowly from her seat and walked up to the door. The horsemen were out there standing still. Somehow, she moved towards them. But they seemed to have nothing to do with her. She wiped her tears and asked them in broken Hindustani, "Why do you stay outside ? I thought you

were going to loot my house, set it on fire and kill me !”

The Maratha horsemen heard her words. They smiled under their moustaches. In their rough, Maratha-styled Hindustani they replied : “Madam, it will not happen. We know that there is great wealth in this house but there is no male member here. You are a lonely lady with little children. Our Maharaj knows this. That is why he has sent us to guard this house lest someone should take undue advantage of your loneliness and destroy your things.”

“What did you say? Is it true that you have been sent by Shivaji?” asked the lady eagerly.

“Yes, Madam, don’t be afraid. Nobody will touch you or your property. We are the servants of Shivaji.”

She was struck by the nobility of Shivaji’s nature, and happiness, gratitude, and respect filled her bosom. Her lips trembled and her eyes filled with grateful tears. She ran back to her children and held them closer, reassuring them as the benevolent figure of the Saviour smiled on them from its eminence, shedding His light and grace.

THE CRESCENDO

Extract from The Rise
and Fall of the Maratha
Empire by R.V.NADARNI

The Lull

SHIVAJI the Great was, in this way, fast approaching the first crisis of his career. The reason why the Bijapur authorities had so helplessly looked on, while Shivaji’s power was ever on the increase was to be found in the internal quarrels that broke out at the capital between the different factions after Mahomed Adil Shah’s death in 1656 and the Mughal policy of aggression which was being pursued at this time against both Bijapur and Golkonda, under Prince Aurangzeb, now Viceroy of the Deccan for the second time. Soon after came the news that Shah Jehan was seriously ill and Aurangzeb had to withdraw the Imperial army and march to Delhi to fight Dara.

The Swoop on Junnar

and Ahmednagar

When Aurangzeb invaded Bijapur, Shivaji the Great with his usual astuteness offered to acknowledge him overlord of the Deccan and asked to be confirmed in his possessions which, he represented, he had seized on account of their mismanagement by the Bijapur State. Each equally wanted to take advantage of the other against their common enemy, Bijapur. As soon, however, as the Mughal army was withdrawn, Shivaji the Great suddenly



raided Junnar and Ahmednagar and captured a big treasure. He carried away a thousand good cavalry mounts which were at once utilised in raising his cavalry under the control of Netaji Palkar. On the return of Aurangzeb he again sent an embassy asking for pardon for the past raids and suggesting that he would hold Konkan in fief to Delhi to fight Dara.

The immense Spoil

Having recovered from Aurangzeb's recent attack, the Bijapur Government resolved by one supreme effort to settle their account with Shivaji the Great who had defied them for so many years. During the monsoon of 1659 preparations were pushed forward at Bijapur with feverish activity, and a formidable army fully equipped was launched against the rebel under Afzal Khan, an experienced soldier and a man known for personal strength and courage. On his part, the Great captain too was not idle. More Trimbak Pingle, a young Brahmin officer, Had been ordered to fortify the famous Par Pass of Javli and thus secure it at any cost and More Pingle did his work well, finishing the same in 1656. Suffice it to say that the crisis called forth all the resourcefulness, all the daring and courage, all the skill and mastery of details, all the cunning and foresight of the heroic soul, Shivaji the indomitable, in making his plans to face this terrible menace. In war, annihilation of the enemy forces is the objective, not the winning and keeping of provinces. So well did this "born strategist" understand this principle and so thoroughly did he draw his net that the entire magnificent army was before long levelled to the dust. "That day the Deckhan

vultures gorged their fill. Seldom has a large force been so completely and dramatically destroyed with so little loss to the attacking party. In the Maratha camp, songs, feasting, and rejoicing resounded all night. Silver and golden necklaces, robes of honour, and presents of money were given to those who had distinguished themselves in the fight or had received wounds and to the relatives of the fallen. The spoil was immense. This rout of the Bijapur army and the capitulation of war with Kamalgad and other forts under its charge completed the breakdown of the power of Bijapur in the central Deccan and increased correspondingly the prestige of the great Shivaji.

Shivaji Takes the Offensive

After the defeat of Afzal Khan's army, Shivaji the Great decided to take the offensive and teach his enemies a lesson that would not be easily forgotten. He possessed now a well organised army which was more than a match for any force that may be sent against it. If he remained inactive, that would surely invite perhaps a stronger expedition against him. On the other hand the advantage of a treaty could be secured without any difficulty by marching straight upon Bijapur while yet the city was panic-stricken. He could at least, get himself confirmed in his late conquests. He, therefore, laid his plans with great speed and secrecy and made up his mind to carry the war into the enemy's country.

He made his dispositions with a strategically skill worthy of a great military leader. He

kept one army to guard the Poona district, he detached another to counter any flanking movement from the Sawants of Sawant Wadi or the Siddi of Janjira, both of whom had, on the approach of Afzal Khan, renounced their allegiance to him ; he himself marched southwards at the head of a third. On reaching Kolhapur district, he seized the great fortress of Panhala, the key to the southern Maratha country. Vishalgad, Rangana, and Pavangad were then taken. A tardy attempt of Rustum Zaman to oppose the advance of the Marathas was beaten back and his small cavalry force was driven in headlong confusion across Krishna. The Marathas followed up their initial success by advancing up to the gates of Bijapur, plundering as they went and rapidly retreating with their booty.

Siddi and the Second Thermopylae

When the Bijapur government recovered from the effects of the first shock of the sudden Maratha raid, they sent a large army under a famous Abyssinian general, Siddi Johar. Unable to face such a force in the open field, Shivaji the Great left Netaji palkar with his cavalry division to harass the enemy in the open country and himself fell back on Panhala.

Netaji Palkar, even though successful in the beginning, was driven back by the exasperated Bijapuris. During the whole rainy season of 1660 he was shut up in the fort and was forced to make his choice between surrendering the fort or tricking the enemy once again. He decided to try the second course. Negotiations were opened with Siddi, at which he pretended

to give up the fort the next day, and consequently when the vigilance was relaxed, that same night he slipped with a few followers under cover of rain and darkness through their outposts. The bird had flown. Furious at being thus deceived, the Bijapur cavalry under Fazal Mahomed Khan (Afzal Khan's son) was sent in hot pursuit. The Marathas were caught up some six miles from Vishalgad, where they would be safe, once they got within its walls. It was on this occasion when the devoted Baji Prabhu, the Marshal Ney of Shivaji the Great, was fighting a rear guard action to stop the enemy from pursuing the main body under the Great King himself that a second Thermopylae was enacted. Three bloody assaults were delivered on the rear-guard but all of them were beaten off ; the heroic Baji Prabhu with 700 of his gallant followers fell but not before his master reached Vishalgad in safety.

The True Son

His first blow was delivered against Mudhol for past wrongs. He had not forgotten what his father wrote to him thirteen years before, "If you be a true son of mine punish Baji Ghorpade." Creeping like a tiger for its prey he rushed to Mudhol at dawn and neither man, woman, nor child was spared. He fired the town after him and with lightning speed retreated to Vishalgad. Internecine feuds paralysed the action of the Bijapur court. Suspected by the King, Siddi Johar was driven to rebellion. Thus in the hour of need Bijapur lost the services of a good general. Sawant Wadi was conquered by Shivaji and trouble began to brew again in Karnatic. Shivaji the Great

at this time brought the Portuguese to their knees and forced an alliance on them.

Raigad

With his unfailing intuition he realised the importance of a navy and formed the nucleus of a fleet with which he plundered the trading vessels bound for Janjira and other ports of Bijapur. These events induced the Bijapur court to come to terms with him. Shivaji the Great was acknowledged as the ruler of the Deccan as far south as Kolhapur and of the Konkan as far as Goa, a territory some hundred and fifty miles in length and from fifty to a hundred miles in breadth. Recognising the importance of his Konkan kingdom the king decided about this time make Raigad his capital. Raigad was not so suitable. Hereafter his troops deposited at this more convenient place their booty after their raids on Surat, Ahmed Nagar, and other towns. The capital took several years to build but the main defences were completed by 1664.

The Hero of Deccan and his Doughty Companions

During the cold season of 1662 the great cavalry leader Netaji Palkar pillaged the Mughal territory up to the very walls of Aurangabad spreading terror all around the taking vast quantities of plunder. It was clear that the troops on the spot could not cope with the Marathas and the Emperor furious at this open defiance of his authority, sent his uncle Shaishta Khan, with an immense army to teach Shivaji the Great a lesson. Aurangzeb did not have a proper appreciation of the situation. Evidently he had not reckoned with the

masterful personality of the Hero of the Deccan or his doughty companions and the patriotic spirit that animated them. Early in 1663 the whole force moved in the direction of Poona without any premotion of the coming misfortunes. The Marathas followed their guerilla tactics, hanging on its flanks, plundering the baggage and cutting off stragglers. They also destroyed the grain and fodder in the country round Poona and Chakan, thus removing all traces of human habitation.

Firangoji Narsala

Harassed and weary, the Imperial army reached Poona and occupied it. It was their intention to rest here for the rainy season and then begin the campaign in right earnest. But the ardour of the Imperialists was damped at the very outset by the determined resistance that was offered by the brave little garrison of the small fort of Chakan. For nearly three months the besiegers were unable to take the fort in spite of their superior strength and even when for want of reinforcements the town surrendered at discretion, it was not until brave killedar. Firangoji Narsala, who had excited the sincere admiration of Shaishta Khan by his dogged resistance, was pressed to enter the Imperial service on high pay. But Firangoji remained true to the cause of his master and was allowed to go back to Shivaji with his army. This gave the chagrined Shaishta Khan some idea as to what the reduction of other Maratha strongholds meant to him. But worse was to follow.

The Prowler at Night

A mighty blow was delivered at the Moghuls - "a blow whose cleverness of design, neatness of execution and completeness of success", Sarkar says, "created in the Mughal court and camp as much terror of his prowess as his coup against Afzal Khan had done among the Bijapuris." In spite of the great precaution taken by him, Shivaji the Great found means to evade his regulations and a surprise night attack on Lal Mahal (Shaishta Khan's Poona residence for the time being) was planned from his retreat at Sinhagad and was executed with great daring. The panic-stricken general



escaped only by leaping out of a window, but not before a Maratha slashed at his hand on the window sill and cut off three of his fingers. Wild was the joy of the Marathas when their beloved King returned safe to his stronghold. At dawn a party of Muslim cavalry which, in hopes of intercepting the attackers, ventured too near Raigad, was routed with great loss by means of the fire of a concealed battery. This was even worse. Shivaji's prestige

as an incarnation of Satan against whose entrance no place was considered to be proof, rose very high. The whole country talked of the superhuman feat with astonishment and terror, while at the Imperial court there was bitter humiliation and sorrow at the disaster to the "premier peer" of the empire and maternal uncle of the emperor. The dispirited Shaishta Khan was recalled and as a mark of Aurangzeb's displeasure was transferred to the penal province of Bengal without being allowed even to see the emperor on his way to his new charge. Prince Muazzam was sent to relieve him and the Khan left Deccan for good in the middle of January 1664.

Everywhere and for

Every Emergency

Raja Jaswant Singh remained as the Prince's deputy, though he was suspected of corruption and treason. Shivaji the Great, however, continued as successful as ever. "he assaulted the foe on dark nights, seized difficult passes and fired jungles full of trees." He struck coins in defiance of the Mughal supremacy. His navy seized parts on the coast of Gujarat and to the horror of the devout emperor cut off pilgrim up to ransom. Ahmednagar was plundered and even Surat was raided early in 1664. As one of the English factors wrote, "He seemed to be everywhere and prepared for every emergency."

The Sack of Surat

The sack of Surat was a feat of even greater audacity than that Shivaji the Great ever displayed before. Only nine days before Shivaji was in the neighbourhood of

Bassein but making a forced march by a roundabout route, he travelled with such rapidity and secrecy that he arrived at Surat at eleven o'clock in the morning of Wednesday, the 6th of January, 1664, and pitched his tent in a garden just outside the eastern gate. The night before, the Raja had sent messengers with a letter directing the governor and three of the most prominent merchants to come to him personally and settle the terms or the whole

But money was his real object and not cruelty to the citizens and this secured to his heart's content, he retreated by rapid marches to Konkan. Thus did the master strategist make Aurangzeb pay dearly for Shaishta Khan's seizure of Poona.

Shivaji the Great then sailed to the Konkan and ravaged the coast towns, exacting from the English factory at Karwar an indemnity of one hundred and twelve pounds.

Diler Khan and Jai Singh



town would be pillaged and burnt. As no answer was given to his demand, the Maratha horsemen immediately on their arrival entered the deserted city and made good their threat. Thousands of houses were burnt and two thirds of the town was destroyed. The looting was carried on for four full days and nights and yielded about a crore of rupees. The Marathas "scorned to carry away anything but gold, silver, pearls, diamonds and such precious ware." On reaching Surat Shivaji the Great publicly announced that he had not come to do any personal injury to the English or other merchants but to take revenge on Aurangzeb for having invaded his country.

Gradually the Mughals now led by Diler Khan and Jai Singh, two of the ablest captains, began to prevail. The veteran Jai Singh did not enter upon his task with a light heart but made his preparations with such thoroughness and farsightedness that not even the minutest detail was neglected. He opened the campaign with vigour and the siege of Purandhar was pressed on with determination. Purandhar was now doomed, invested as it was by a force which was at least ten times that of the garrison and which was led by Diler Khan with dogged determination. During the incessant fighting which lasted for two months, the Maratha ranks were thinned considerably. Early in the siege they also lost their gallant captain Murar Baji Prabhu, who attempted to reach Diler Khan by climbing the hill, by making a sortie with 700 selected men. In the severe hand-to-hand fight, the Mavalis slew more than 700 Pathans and Murar Baji indeed succeeded in facing Diler. The Khan, moved by his matchless courage called upon him

to desist and promised him his fief and a high post under him. But Murar indignantly spurned the offer and was on the point of striking at Diler when the latter shot him down with an arrow. Thus died another of Shivaji's trusted lieutenants, who never thought any sacrifice too great for the cause of independence.

Three hundred Mavalis fell with their worthy captain and the rest retreated to the fort, undismayed by their leader's fall and saying, "What though one man, Murar Baji, is dead ? We are as brave as he and we shall fight with the same courage !" The miserable remnant of the garrison continued the unequal contest but at last the

advantage of sheer numbers began to tell and Shivaji the Great found himself forced to rely upon diplomacy rather than upon the doubtful chances of a protracted war in which he stood to gain nothing and to lose everything.

The Ordeal at Agra

He saw that it was necessary for him to lie low for the time being and trust to future events for the fulfillment of his cherished ambition. Out of his 32 forts in Deccan 20 were to be surrendered, and he was to assume the position of a Munsabadar of the Mughal Emperor. On these terms truce was made. The campaign against the Mughals was thus a failure ; the great Shivaji had yet to go through another ordeal in which his very life was at stake, - his important ordeal at Agra.

Shivaji the Great extricated himself from the dangerous situation by a masterly stroke which for its deep insight into human character and knowledge of human weakness has scarcely been equalled. Where did the great king learn his principles of psychology, we wonder ! He and his



son Sambhaji escaped in sweet baskets one day and rode for their lives to Madura. Here he was met by the faithful Tanaji and after hair-breadth escapes and following circuitous routes to evade his pursuers, he returned to Raigad in the guise of a Bairagi, to the great relief of his anxious mother and his devoted subjects.

The news of the king's romantic escape and safe return spread like wild fire all over the country and great indeed were the rejoicings of the Marathas on that day.

In his absence all had not gone well. The Mughal garrisons occupied Sinhgad and Purandar and thus by their commanding position held the districts of Poona, Supe and Chakan, the three districts which he now possessed in Deccan, under subjection. In Konkan the Marathas had

Raigad and Kalyan districts together with such of the ceded forts which the able More Pingale had managed to re-occupy after he was appointed regent during the king's absence. From 1667 to 1669 Shivaji the Great was occupied with civil and political reforms except the annual raid on Janjira which was every time unsuccessful.

Ready to Take the Field

In 1670 he was ready to take the field again having consolidated whatever of his former kingdom was now left to him. He opened the offensive with great vigour and had immediate success. Judging rightly that Aurangzeb would not send any reinforcements to Prince Muazzam or Jai Singh owing to jealousy of the one and suspicions of the other, he first of all took in hand the work of re-capturing the hill forts. Sinhgad, commanding as it did, the Poona district and also because Queen Jija Bai considered it a disgrace to allow the Muslims to be in possession of it, was the first to be re-taken. This rather dangerous undertaking could be seen through only with devotion and self-sacrifice of Tanaji Malusare and his brother Suryaji.

Died with his Face to the Foe

Tanaji the brave left with 1,000 picked men and as Shivaji afterwards lamented, the fort was captured but the lion was lost. When three hundred men succeeded escalading the walls at an obscure spot, Tanaji sounded the advance but in the mortal combat that followed, both Tanaji and Udai Bhanu, the redoubtable Rajput commander of the fort, fell. The leaderless

Marathas were on the point of falling back on their ladders but Suryaji taunted them as cowards and cut off the ropes. Stung to the quick by the taunt, the Marathas rallied and raising their battle cry of 'Har Har Mahadev', charged furiously and at last the fort was won. The garrison consisting of 1,000 Muslims and Rajputs were either killed in the action or taken prisoner. "Tanaji Malusare had died, as every right-minded man would wish to die, with his face to the foe, in one of the most gallant and desperate feats of arms of an age abounding in desperate deeds. Not a great leader like More Pingale or Netaji Palkar, he was an honest and devoted soldier," such is the verdict of Mr. Rawlinson. One of the great Shivaji's earliest friends, Tanaji had been with his revered comrade-in-arms and leader through thick and thin. When Shivaji heard of his loss, he was grieved deeply as if his right hand was cut off.

One by one, the other forts held by the Mughals were soon afterwards re-captured, though in many cases the garrisons offered desperate resistance. Considering that Prince Muazzam did not receive the much-needed reinforcements from Delhi and having regard to the internal quarrels among the Imperialists, it is no wonder that the Marathas succeeded so completely in so short a time.



THE TINY MIGHT

ALION was caught ! Yes, the lion was caught ! Maharaj was deceived ! He was caught in a net ! Mirza Raja Jai Singh had promised Shivaji that he would be well looked after at Agra and shall return safely. Not even a hair on his would be harmed. He promised that there would be no foul play !

Maharaj relied on that promise and went to Agra. But Aurangzeb did not bother about the promise and arrested Shivaji Maharaj. Fulad Khan's regiment surrounded Maharaj. There was no chance of escape. To try to escape was no better than embracing death ! Maharaj understood it well. He was completely helpless ! He had been deceived ! He was over eight hundred miles away in the very fortress of his foes, along with a handful of his trusted friends, the commanders of his army. Shivaji was trapped along with his nine-year-old son, Sambhaji.

The colleagues who accompanied him were most trustworthy and possessed rare courage. They loved Maharaj. Many of them were very young ; some of them were of middle age ; only one of them was an adolescent. His name was Madari and Mehtar was his surname. He was a Muslim, who was loyal to Maharaj. He looked upon Maharaj as his father and Maharaj reciprocated his affection.

Madari looked after the needs of Shivaji Maharaj. He took care of Shivaji's clothes,

his tools. He made his bed, fanned him and at times even massaged his feet. This was the self-assigned job of madari. Madari had become almost a mother to him ! So well did he take care of his master.

Maharaj was engrossed in his own thoughts. The one problem that worried him was how to free himself from the clutches of Aurangzeb ? Could he escape at all ? Or, was he going to die in this dungeon ? Thus he sat immersed in thought all the time as the days slipped by without much hope.

On a certain day Maharaj got a bright idea ! If escape was possible it should be in a big bamboo basket ! It was a brilliant idea.

Maharaj started dwelling on the same thought till it possessed him. What was to be done ? How was it to be done ? Who should do what and at what time and place ? All the details were being worked out in his mind. The very idea of escape in this way spelt risk. Once caught, the dire disaster that awaited him was unthinkable. If he succeeded, the whole world would acclaim that as a feat. Bards would sing his praise. If he failed ? Well

Shivaji, however, decided to cast the dice with calculated caution and meticulous planning. He uttered the name of Goddess Bhavani and set out to execute his first move. He explained his plan to all his friends, because Maharaj was under arrest

in a big tent. Fulad Khan's soldiers had surrounded the tent. Fulad Khan himself kept prying from time to time. There was no possibility even of a secret meeting. Countless eyes and ears were alert to foil the attempts of Maharaj. How could he get into touch with his beloved friends?

The main part of this plan was played by Madari. His job was to massage Shivaji's feet, but when Maharaj sat in the basket, Hiroji Pharjand was to take his place, and Madari had to continue massaging the feet



of Hironi. Others were to quit that place only after escape of Maharaj. Only two persons were to remain in the prison camp. They were Hiroji and Madari. They had to leave after all had escaped. That was the plan in outline.

And, according to the plan Maharaj and Sambhaji sat in the boxes and left the prison. Hiroji lay on the cot taking the place of Shivaji Maharaj ! Madari rubbed his feet. The boxes moved. There was anxiety in the hearts of the two who remained behind. Moments moved with

lead feet. Their mouths were parched, fear possessed them, yet they could not afford to show any sign of fear outwardly. Even the slightest suspicion was sufficient to undo the whole plan ! It was indeed a tremendous responsibility ! The boxes were being carried past the very jaws of death. Hiroji was lying on the cot and Madari continued his duty at his feet. The box carrying Maharaj went out of sight along with a number of other boxes. All the boxes were gone.

Other trusted friends also escaped equally cleverly. Only two of them remained, Hiroji and Madari. Just imagine, what would have happened if they had been identified on the spot and captured ? But, the cause of Swarajya was great, and both of them, Hiroji and Madari waited to escape at their own leisure. They told the guards.

"Maharaj has just slept ! Please do not disturb him. Some people have gone to get medicine, but they have not returned as yet. We are anxious and should like to go and fetch the medicine ourselves."

"Go ahead," replied the guards.

That gave them the chance, and they escaped. All of them !

They escaped in all direction. It was rainy season. Rivers were over-flowing. Roads were slushy, ill maintained and full of hurdles. They were also being chased over long distances, more than eight hundred miles !

Braving all risks and surmounting deadly dangers one by one, all the Marathas escaped and at last reached 'Raigarh ! Maharaj too, reached Raigarh ! Hiroji and Madari also arrived. All were utterly exhausted yet Maharaj was delighted to see them. He praised them, seated them by his side and patted them on their backs. He embraced Madari and said with affection:

"My son, what a great achievement ! What risks you have taken !"

Really, Madari had suffered too much for his tender age. Just imagine ! Had he just winked at the guards when Maharaj was escaping in the box, what would have happened ? Madari for his part could have become rich, as Aurangzeb would have offered him all the wealth he wanted in the world ! But, the thought of deceit, never, not even once, entered Madari's mind.

Maharaj told Madari.

"MY son, tell me, what I should give you. Come on, ask for something."

Madari embraced Maharaj's waist and said sobbing,

"I don't want anything, Mahraj ! You make me your servant when you are enthroned ! That's all, Maharaj !"

And when Maharaj was duly enthroned, to Madari was given the honour of taking care of the golden throne !



FREEDOM THROUGH A BASKET

A GRA was a veritable cauldron, a dry, scalding, burning city, smarting under the sweltering heat and the howling dust-laden wind that allowed no respite to the denizens of the town. The narrow, filthy streets with flies and famished horses and grumbling people and shabby houses belied the fact that this was the capital city of the mighty Moghul Emperor, Aurangzeb. Except for the gleaming Taj, in pure white marble that stood on the bank of river Jamuna which meandered like a thin stream, and the towering majestic fort, there was nothing to redeem the monotony and drabness of the scene.

Emperor Aurangzeb followed a militant policy of anti-Hinduism. Though his predecessors had followed a more humane policy, though he himself had Hindu blood in him, the Emperor was a fanatic who wanted to convert as many as he could to his faith.

He also struggled to conquer regions in Deccan and to assert his supremacy over the Marathas who were led by the powerful Shivaji.

When he failed to win Shivaji by military tactics, he stooped to a sly trick to bag his adversary. He wanted to get Shivaji into his clutches by fair or foul means.

Aurangzeb directed Raja Jai Singh to extend an invitation to Shivaji to visit the Moghul Court. The Emperor offered his

hand of friendship, assured Shivaji of his warm regard and affirmed that no danger would befall the Maratha Chief.

Aurangzeb sighed in relief when Raja Jai Singh intimated the Emperor that Shivaji had accepted the invitation. The news came to him as the greatest solace. He had till then been worried about the possibility of Shivaji rejecting the invitation. The tension which gripped him vanished. He felt elated.

He decided to accord a cool reception to Shivaji, to seat him among second rate nobles, to disgrace the Maratha by showing utter disregard to etiquettes and common courtesies. He arranged for a grand Darbar to dazzle Shivaji with the wealth and grandeur of the Moghul Court, to exhibit the might and glory of the Moghul Empire.

Shivaji was shocked at the reception accorded to him. He pointed out that he had been assured of the Emperor's cordial feelings, and that it was not worthy of the Emperor to violate his solemn pledges. Aurangzeb merely laughed in derision.

However, Shivaji acted with perfect aplomb, maintained his regal poise, presented the gifts which he had brought and then withdrew. He was seething with anger and fury. He realised that he had been trapped, that the invitation was a ruse to lure him into the Moghul City to be kept under the watchful eyes of the Emperor.

Shivaji was still wondering whether the Emperor would rectify his mistake and accord him due recognition when he found himself a virtual prisoner. The house in which he stayed was surrounded by armed

guards. That was the prelude to more stringent restraints. There was no more any doubt about the ulterior motives of the Emperor. Shivaji was a prisoner, regal prisoner of the Emperor.

The heat and dust of Agra was indeed intolerable for Shivaji and his party. It was at variance with the cool, pleasing climate of the Konkan region.

Still, Shivaji hoped that sane counsel would prevail and that the Emperor would release him.

But these hopes ebbed out as months rolled by without any indication that freedom would come soon. Time was slipping by. He did not know how long he would have to live in this prison, whether he would get away from this filthy place or he would die a prisoner of the fanatical Emperor.

He had come to Agra in May, 1666 with his followers. He discussed the situation with his close associates and valiant warriors who advised the Maratha Chief to take some positive action to gain freedom. Shivaji counselled patience and stated that it would be futile to attempt to escape by fighting against the Moghuls with their immense army.

He said that it would be brains, not brawn that would deliver them from bondage.

By the end of June, Shivaji had a plan which he felt would be fool-proof. He analysed the details of the plan, discussed its salient features with his associates and finalised the ingenious scheme which would allow him enough room to wriggle out of the clutches of the Emperor.

When Shivaji sought the permission of the Emperor to allow a sizeable number of his retinue to return to Konkan, Aurangzeb was delighted. With reduced strength, Shivaji would be more firmly tied down in Agra. Aurangzeb gave his approval immediately.

Aurangzeb was also plotting for the murder of Shivaji. He decided to send Shivaji along with Ram Singh on an expedition against the tribesmen of the North-West Frontier.

Enroute, a Muslim officer named Radandaz Khan was to murder Shivaji.

Now that only a few confidants of Shivaji stayed back, the Emperor felt that he would have an easy task of eliminating Shivaji by clandestine means.

When Aurangzeb received news of the indisposition of Shivaji, he shouted in anger. He had already laid out his plan for packing off Shivaji with the party of Ram Singh so as to facilitate the murder by Radandaz Khan. He raged like a tiger baulked of its prey.

The Emperor did not want Shivaji to die in Agra. It would give room for gossips which would tarnish his name. He was interested in causing Shivaji's death by surreptitious means so that none would suspect him for the tragic death.

He posed as if he was worried about Shivaji's health. He readily agreed when Shivaji's associates asked for permission to send out sweet baskets daily for distribution among Brahmins. He, however, instructed the guards to keep close watch over the items carried in the baskets.

In the beginning, the baskets were thoroughly inspected. The guards probed and dug into each basket, assuring



themselves that the baskets contained nothing suspicious.

The vigour and zest of the examination continued for a week. Shivaji's condition, his associates told the guards, was causing anxiety. The sentries who caught a glimpse of Shivaji also realised that he had become famished and weak. His wiry frame had become thinner due to constant worry and lack of exercise.

The dispatch of sweet baskets continued unabated. The inspection slowly lost its keenness. It became cursory and casual. The sentries could not understand how distribution of sweets could save a man suffering from serious ailment. They laughed in derision when the baskets of sweets continued to flow out in larger numbers. They wondered at the ignorance of the Kafirs.

The sentries had got so accustomed to the baskets that they stopped even casual inspection. Shivaji was just waiting for such an opportunity.

He hid in a basket and was carried out along with several baskets of sweets. Another basket carried his son. They were safely transported to a spot outside the ramparts of the city. Shivaji's close confidants were waiting for his arrival.

Shivaji shaved off his beard and moustache, changed into the robes of a Sannyasi and rode off towards the North. This was a shrewd move. Once the Emperor came to know of the escape, he would naturally presume that Shivaji and his men had made a dash for the South.

In order to delay discovery of Shivaji's escape, one of his close friends, Hiroji Farzand, lay on the bed, wearing Shivaji's signet ring. He was about the same build as Shivaji. The sentries who saw him, lying in bed, caught sight of the signet ring and believed that it was Shivaji.

Early next day, Hiroji came out, told the sentries that Shivaji was seriously ill and was not to be disturbed under any circumstances. He then walked off, with

a wild grin, to join his leader. By the time the sentries noticed that the prisoner had escaped, fourteen hours had elapsed. The Emperor ordered a search. But, the Emperor's soldiers never guessed the path that Shivaji had followed. They dashed towards the South, scanned all the highways, imposed road-blocks, and arrested suspicious characters for interrogation.

But, Shivaji had foreseen the natural reaction of the Emperor's men and chartered a path through Mathura, Allahabad, Bundel Khand, Gondwana and Golkonda.

When he returned to Rajgad on 12 September, 1666 he was given a rousing reception. The people flocked in thousands all along the route to get a glimpse of him. They offered prayers, thanking the Almighty for Shivaji's safe return.

Was it basket that led Shivaji from fetters to liberty?



THE TEST OF KINSHIP

KINCAID

SHIVAJI passed through the western gate of the City of Agra and crossed the river in a boat without being questioned by anyone. When they reached the bank Shivaji took out a handful of coins and giving it to the boatman told him to go and inform the Emperor that he had carried Shivaji and his son across the Jumna. This was not an act of wild bravado. Shivaji was anxious to publicise the fact that he was travelling westwards. There was a purpose behind it.

Hurrying along the road to Mathura, Shivaji overtook the servants whom he had sent with horses as an offering to the Krishna Temple. The whole party now mounted on horseback galloped all night till they reached Mathura the following morning. Mathura is famous for its temples dedicated to the cult of Krishna. Round most of the temples are monasteries, seminaries and lodging houses for pilgrims. Wide, cobbled courtyards surrounded the cells of monks. There were pools of still dark water covered with rose petals ; heavy pylons carved with figures of gods and men and animals. Under the archways and through the narrow doorways there passed an endless stream of worshippers, priests with shaven heads in robes of yellow or scarlet silk, students or novices in simple white, princesses in curtained palanquins and beggars in clamant hordes. At dawn all the multitudes of the faithful move towards the river, whose waters lap the steps of the Krishna

temple, and there, as the first light gleams, they perform the ritual of sun-worship, lifting handfuls of water, and scattering the sun-reflecting drops before them with the prayer, "Glory of the Sun, enlighten my understanding." Mingling unobtrusively with these crowds of pre-occupied worshippers, the fugitives from Agra attracted no attention. In the cell of a friendly brahmin named Kashi, Shivaji and his companions changed their clothes. Shivaji shaved his head, cut off his moustache and beard, smeared his face with ashes and put on the yellow robe of a religious mendicant. At this waist was a begging bowl and in the hand a pilgrim's bamboo staff. His companions, too, had dressed themselves as priests and wandering friars. In India this has often been a favourite disguise.

Shivaji had to leave his son behind. He was worn out by the long ride through the night. The Brahmin, Kashi, offered to hide the lad in his own cell. He dressed him in Brahmin attire and gave out that he was his own son come to visit him. So Shivaji and his companions set out once on their travels.

They were hundreds of miles from the Maratha country. As soon as the alarm was given, the Imperial courtiers would be galloping down the great roads, warning all local authorities to be on the lookout for the fugitives. Now since Shivaji had sent horses westward and had apparently followed them himself, judging from the

boatman's report the government would naturally assume that he was making a dash for the Maratha country by the direct route south-west through Khandesh and Gujarat. So Shivaji doubled back on his tracks and raced eastwards, risking the immediate danger of running into the arms of his pursuers.

In every town and village the alarm had been sounded, and rewards offered for Shivaji's capture, along with threats uttered against those that helped him. In one village he was actually arrested on suspicion and brought before the police inspector of the village, who put him through a grueling cross-examination extending far into the night. Towards midnight Shivaji confessed his identity, but judging the inspector's character with his usual acumen he offered him some jewels as the price of his freedom. The inspector accepted the bribe and let Shivaji go. It was a lesson that he must now move with the utmost care, and so he chose to travel only at night and alone, his companions travelling by different routes.

At the time a Brahmin named Nabha happened to be studying at Benares under one of the Chief Priests. He had of late become dissatisfied. He complained that his preceptors made his work too long and kept him always short of food. He would have welcomed an opportunity of following some other occupation. One morning, before the sun had risen, he went down to river side and sat there alone, probably brooding over his grievances. The spires of innumerable temples were black against the graying sky; a few lights shone waveringly in an occasional shrine or under

some tree where a panther-skin-clad ascetic repeated his prayers; the dim mist of dawn hung low over the swift running river. As he sat there musing, a muffled figure came out of the shadows, and approaching him said, "Will you perform the ceremonial ablutions for me and recite the dawn prayer?" Nabha agreed and, in the chill and the gloom of the hour went through the Brahmin's ritual for the stranger.

Suddenly the city was awakened by a number of trumpets and drums. The police watch rode down the streets, rousing the householders and proclaiming that Shivaji's track had been traced to Benares. The stranger and the Brahmin looked at one another. The stranger said, "Open your hand," and placed in it nine large jewels, Nabha nodded. He turned away and began to pray as though nothing had happened while the stranger slipped away into the darkness. But that day the Chief Priests awaited their novice in vain. He left Benares and travelled to Surat where he bought a large house and set up practice as a physician. Many years later he confided in the historian Khafi Khan and told him the origin of his worldly prosperity. Tramping and riding, Shivaji reached the shores of the Bay of Bengal.

Even in a small fishing village the noise of his flight had preceded him. When he tried to buy a horse, the horse-dealer became suspicious.

"What do you want it for?"

Shivaji offered him some gold coins. The man's suspicions were confirmed. "You must be that escaped Maratha to be so

free with your money." In despair Shivaji offered him the remainder of his money. Once again the avarice of another saved him. But now he was glad to escape alive, with no money left, without even the horse he had hoped to buy.

Wearily he turned back towards Central India. As he neared Indore he sought refuge in a peasant's hut, trusting to traditional Indian hospitality to avoid many questions. He was welcomed as a poor wayfarer. His host's old mother hurried off to the kitchen to prepare supper. It happened that a body of Maratha irregulars had recently burst into Imperial territory. The village where Shivaji now rested was one of those that had suffered from their incursion. When the old woman came back from the kitchen she began to curse the Marathas for their desperations. "As for that brigand Shivaji," she added, "I wish to God he had died in prison." Few months later, when he had reached his kingdom, he sent her a purse containing twice the sum of money to compensate the loss.

Though Shivaji and most of his companions (the latter traveling separately or in small groups) had returned safely, there still remained Shivaji's son Sambhaji who, it will be remembered, had been left behind at Mathura with a friendly Brahman. If the Imperial authorities found him, they would take revenge on him for his father's escape. So Shivaji resorted once more to his "stratagems". He began publicly to refer to his fear for Sambhaji's life pretending to be ignorant of his whereabouts. Mughal agents reported that he seemed "very anxious about his son". Then he announced that he had received

intelligence of Sambhaji's death. He wept bitterly and ordered all his followers to go into mourning. The Mughal agents were completely deceived by this show of sorrow and assumed that the news must be correct.

A few days later Shivaji sent a letter to the Brahman, Kashi at Mathura, begging him to bring Sambhaji to Raigad. Still disguised as a Brahman lad Sambhaji set out with Kashi on his return to the Maratha country. They had a narrow escape at Ujjain where a Mughal police officer, watching Sambhaji closely, came to the conclusion that his demeanour was hardly that of a priest's son.

"Is this really your son?" he asked Kashi. Kashi said yes, and began talking glibly about a pilgrimage to Allahbad, where they had bathed in the sacred river and visited the temples, but how unhealthy they had found the climate there, unhealthy, that is, for southerners, for instance Kashi's own wife who had fallen ill there had died, and so now father and son were returning mourning to their village. The Moghul cut short his chatter with the words, "If he is really your son, let me see you both eating out of the same plate."

But Kashi, realising how carefully the police were watching every detail of his expression, never showed for a moment his reluctance ; and he and Sambhaji sat down to dine together from the same dish. Convinced by this proof of Kinship, the Mughal police released them and they reached Raigad without further adventures.



JANJIRA - A TASTE OF DEFEAT

THE fort of Janjira stuck out like a sore thumb on Shivaji's hand. He brooded over it constantly. His earlier attempts were foiled for one reason or another. Maharaj was determined to conquer this sea-fort. Before he planned the attack, however, he went to Kelsi to seek the blessing of Baba Yakut, who was a renowned Muslim saint, who had no other attraction than the worship of Allah. He treated the rich and the poor alike. He was a real devotee of God. Maharaja went to Kelsi for the vision of Baba Yakut and then only did he set out for the siege of Janjira.

Moropant had just returned from his successful expedition of Ramnagar. Maharaj was unable to capture Janjira from Siddi even after a sustained effort for about twenty years, but Moropant understood the responsibility. He led an army of ten thousand soldiers and with it marched to Janjira which he vowed he would only take after annexing Danda and Rajapuri.

He reached the shore facing Janjira. An assault was planned, for which trees in the vicinity were cut down to be used for sheds to be built in order to conceal small vessels anchored at the shore. Pant had planned to fire canon balls from behind the sheds and to break the wall of Janjira fort. On the other hand, Siddi Kasim had left Surat for Janjira along with his navy.

Once again the Maratha canons started bombarding Janjira fort. Small ships and launches with canons fitted on them surrounded the fort. The wall of Janjira fort was altogether impregnable. It stubbornly withstood the blasting by Maratha canons. Canon balls struck the fort wall and were repulsed without making a dent. The only thing that it produced was a loud sound.

Moropant was trying his best to make this plan a success. An idea dawned on him. Though difficult and daring, he thought it would be worth having a try. The plan was to place ladders against the wall of the fort and scale it ! But the question was, how the ladders were to be planted and who would do it ? The walls were huge with the turbulent waves beating underneath. The lashing waves would foil all attempts to plant the ladders on the ground, but the ladders could be rested in the vessels. Even then, with Siddi's men ever alert and on guard how could the soldiers reach the top ? Their ammunition could annihilate all the Maratha vessels in one attempt.

But Moropant was fortunate in having a daring seaman to aid him. The name of that seaman was Lay Patil. When Shivaji Maharaj built his navy, he invited all the sea-faring men (mostly fishermen) who prided themselves on being the sons of the sea ! Darya Sarang, Mainak Bhandari and Daulatkhan were some of them whom

Shivaji had enlisted. They were a band of hardy and weather-beaten men who had braved many a storm. Now they were loyal to Shivaji, and Maharaj handed them the saffron flag and the navy ! Thus did the navy start functioning. The fort of Sindhudurg or Shiva Lanka was constructed in the sea by these brave men who rendered timely help to Maharaj. The brave seafarer who now came to help in the capture of Janjira was Lay Patil, who was a fisherman by profession. The naval officers of Maharaj treated him with respect. He served Shivaji Maharaj for twelve long years. Had their seamanship not been recognised they would have remained as mere fishermen!

Moropant called Lay Patil and said, "You are a servant of Chhatrapati ! If Maharaj needed your urgent help, would you oblige him?"

Lay was astonished at the roundabout manner in which the Prime Minister (Moropant) asked for his services. He understood that the job must be a very tricky one and that was why Pant had requested him.

"Yes Sir ! I shall obey your order," replied Lay Patil.

Moropant explained to him everything in detail. "The ladders on the wall of Janjira ! Oh my lord ! The task seems to be as difficult as raising ladders to heaven !" Moropant said, "Your job is only to fix the ladders ! We have about twelve hundred soldiers ready to scale the wall and enter the fort." Lay Patil nodded assent.

Though dangerous Lay Patil accepted the challenge and said, "I shall do it !" He

went about his task along with his colleagues. It is not known how he reached the wall of Janjira. Probably he had the advantage of the darkness of the night.

It was a miraculous feat ! The tides lashed against the wall of the fort. It was pitch dark. Lay Patil raised ladders on the wall and waited for the twelve hundred soldiers of Moropant to arrive on the scene. He waited and waited. Had the Arab guards on the fort known anything about the happenings at the bottom, it would have been their end. Siddi Kasim had captured Danda-Rajapuri in the same way. So Moropant thought that the same plan would work in the capture of Janjira and a big load would be lifted from his shoulders.

Lay Patil had planted ladders and waited for the soldiers of Moropant. It was so dangerous a venture that Lay was tempting death every moment. One hour elapsed, then two ! The waiting seemed endless. It was dangerous to continue to wait, because if the guards came to know of their existence, their fate would have been sealed. Lay had performed an incredible feat, but the army was not playing its part. Another two hours went by. Lay grew apprehensive ; he was sure now that nobody would come to scale the wall. It was dangerous to keep on waiting and foolish to boot. Dawn was breaking. Once the Black guards saw their ladders, it would be the end of the whole matter. At last, Lay Patil removed the ladders in disgust and vanished with his associates.

What was the real trouble ? Nobody knew. Who was at fault? One could only guess. May be, the plan was not known to all concerned. Janjira remained unconquered

by Shivaji Maharaj, as neither Moropant nor the soldiers actually utilised the daring feat of Lay. Lay accosted Pant later and said, "We raised the ladders and waited for your soldiers. When it was near dawn, we returned !"

Moropant felt very sad. He was astonished at the rare courage of Lay Patil. He accepted the blame on himself. The siege



of Janjira continued and they waited till all the stock of grains and supplies in Janjira was exhausted. But how long could they keep on waiting ?

A naval force under the Mughal general Siddi Sambul advanced towards Jaipur and laid it waste. Siddi Kasim had already advanced from Surat with five hundred Arab seamen. When he came to know of the Maratha attack on Janjira, he rushed towards Janjira and attacked the Maratha

navy. An encounter ensued in which the Marathas had to release the siege. That was the second defeat that the Marathas suffered in their attempt to capture Janjira. Janjira remained unconquered !

Efforts continued. Moropant went back to Raigarh. Lay Patil the brave officer, Padadurg Subhanji Mohite in charge of the fort, Subhanji Kharade the flag officer, and others went to Raigarh, to pay their obeisance to Shivaji. Moropant had already narrated the whole story about Lay and his valour at the same time admitting that the cause of defeat was due to his own lack of co-ordination. Maharaj was immensely pleased to hear of Lay and his daring attempt. He ordered Moropant to present a palanquin to Lay. Shivaji was always ready to encourage heroism and valour even though the attempts proved futile. But though he ordered the palanquin, Lay Patil refused it. He fought shy of fame and honour. Maharaj was more pleased than ever before with his behaviour. He ordered a ship to be built and asked Lay Patil to man it.

Maharaj enquired of Lay : "Who offered the title of 'Patil' to your family ?" "Badshah had conferred the title !" said Patil. Maharaj saw that it was not high enough and called him 'Sarapatil'!

He also honoured the officer Padmadurg with a palanquin.



THE FLIGHT FROM HELL

AURANGAZEB basely broke the terms agreed upon between Shivaji and himself at Purandar by assisting Siddi of Janjira against him. He blatantly put an end to the truce by sorting to dubious and cunning ways. At last, the scheming mind of Aurangazeb hit upon a master plan.

The Maratha army numbering around six thousand were near Aurangabad. Generals Pratap Rao Gujar and Niraji Raoji were the commanding officers of camps of the Maratha army stationed at Aurangabad. It was as part of the truce that Sambhaji, Shivaji's son was to be provided an army of six thousand men by Aurangazeb. But Sambhaji being immature, it was decided that Pratap Rao and his colleague Niraji Raoji were to be under Muajjam, the son of Aurangazeb, though they did not have to serve him actually. Muajjam disliked fighting. The prince was given to a life of pleasure. He liked and admired Shivaji Maharaj ! Though an epicurean by nature, Muajjam was very shrewd and a man of foresight. If he got opportunity to revolt against his father. Shivaji would have been helpful him ! This was what he looked forward to.

On Sambhaji was conferred the chieftainship of a village in Berar and this gave him the right to maintain an army of six thousand soldiers. Ravji Somnath Subhedar took care of the army on his behalf.

He respected both of them. The Marathas in turn maintained cordial relations with him. They kept up a regular correspondence and received guidance from Shivaji Maharaj at Raigarh. This state of affairs continued for three years.

One day the whole of the Maratha camp was humming like a hive. Pratap Rao and Niraji received a call from Muajjam. But nobody could tell why the call came.

Pratap Rao and Niraji immediately rushed to Muajjam. The latter stayed in the interior chamber of the fort at Aurangabad. Rao and Niraji Pant entered the fort. Muajjam took them to a secluded corner and said, "Look, I have received a confidential message from Delhi. My father has issued a secret order to me which may be received here within a day or two. I have, however, come to know the deadly contents of the order. The order says that both of you should be arrested and sent to Delhi and all the six thousand Marathas stationed here are to be butchered and their camps looted !"

Pratap Rao and Niraji Pant were stunned as they heard the terrible sentence pronounced by Aurangazeb and conveyed by Aurangazeb's son himself. What was Aurangazeb going to do with him ? He would have them tortured and killed ! Or he would have them converted into Muslims ! It was clear. The whole plan of complete annihilation of all the six thousand Marathas

fitted well with the bigotry of Aurangazeb. This again was a breach of promise !

One more Point that was mentioned in the order was that an amount of Rupees One Lakh was to be recovered from the Marathas as compensation ! The reason was, as the order stated, that Shivaji had used the amount from the treasury of Badshah for his expenses when he was at Agra and it had to be repaid.

After conveying the above information Muajjam said, "I do not like this communication from my father at all. This is treachery ! But what can I do ! When the order is issued and it arrives I have to carry it out. It is, therefore, in your interest to quit before the communication actually reaches Aurangabad. All of you leave Aurangabad at once, with your soldiers ! Hurry up !"

Pratap Rao and Niraji Pant did not waste a moment. They were very grateful to Muajjam. They came back to their camps and immediately started preparations for leaving the place. All the six thousand soldiers completed the packing quickly and were out of the camp in half an hour !

Pratap Rao left Aurangabad. He sent a message to Ravji Somnath who looked after the land on behalf of Sambhaji in Berar. He informed Ravji to take the entire treasury and men and to go to Raigarh !

After eight days, the communication from Aurangazeb arrived at Aurangabad. The messenger handed the bag containing it to Muajjam. Muajjam opened the bag in the presence of the general who was his assistant. Aurangazeb had ordered to finish

off the Marathas, to loot their camps, to arrest Pratap Rao and Niraji and send them to Delhi. Muajjam read it loudly, on purpose, and added in a very sad tone !

"Treachery ! Treason ! We received the order today, but those wicked Marathas have packed up and gone, eight days ago. I don't know how they have left. I would have constructed a huge minar with their heads. I would have sent all their chieftains to Delhi. I would have confiscated all their property and handed it over to the Emperor at Delhi. But, the mountain rats have run away !"

His generals thought that Muajjam really meant every word of it ! He was so faithful. So dutiful ! He respected his father so much and was eager to obey his orders to the very letter ! But what could he do ? The wicked Marathas had run away ! If only they had stayed they would have paid dearly !

What remained was only the words of pity ! Muajjam informed his father about his helplessness ! Aurangazeb was astonished. How could they have run away ? Shivaji ran away from Agra a day before he was to be murdered (18th Aug. 1666). Aurangazeb had no go but to blame his ill luck. He was exasperated beyond words.

Pratap Rao Gujar left along with the whole army from Aurangabad, but he did not go to Raigarh. He attacked Mughal strongholds in the East, caught them unawares and brought a huge fortune worth lakhs of rupees with him. On the other hand, Ravji Somnath looted Mughal posts in Berar, crossed river Bhima and reached Raigarh. Both of them collected and offered a

'present' of rupees twenty lakhs to Shivaji. Actually it was Aurangzeb who wanted to obtain rupees one lakh from the Marathas. But, the Marathas did not give him a single pie ; on the contrary, looted him to the tune of twenty lakhs.

Shivaji was shocked to hear the news of Aurangzeb's treachery. Pratap Rao, Niroji Pant and the army of six thousand soldiers were saved only due to the kindness of Shahzada Muajjam. He could not imagine the consequences otherwise ! He praised and thanked Muajjam. But he once again realised how Aurangzeb had thrown him a challenge !

He heard of compulsory conversions, bloodshed, destruction of temples, breaking of idols and images of Gods. This was confirmed from the latest reports Shivaji received from Delhi. He came to know that the famous Kesava temple of Mathura was destroyed and the main idol was brought to Delhi and buried underneath a tomb ! He heard similar news about many such temples and also of conversions ! But, what could he do ? What was the remedy ?

Aurangzeb had broken the treaty of Purandar. It became quite evident that Shivaji had to launch his attacks on Mughal territories. Raigarh was once again enthusiastic ! The Lion had rested for four years, and again he had to come out of his lair. Horses snorted once again and started pawing the ground, impatient for action.



THE BARGAIN

RAIGARH was busy with the preparations for marriage of Sambhaji, Shivaji's son. As is the custom in Maharashtra, turmeric paste was smeared all over the body of Sambhaji. He was decked with coloured papers (bashing) and a garland hung from the side of both the ears. The Shirkes were of an ancient and noble lineage ; so Shivaji selected the daughter of Pilaji Rao Shirke of Chiplun for his daughter-in-law. Shirkes had struck terror in Konkan area over a period of many years. One of his ancestors had completely routed Mali Kuttuzar Zainuddin, who invaded Konkan with the aid of 10,000 soldiers. That demon of a Mughal had razed many a king to the ground and conquered their territories.

Later on, however, the Shirke family served Aurangzeb. The family received 'Dabholi' village in recognition of its services. Shivaji Maharaj needed Shirke's help in his bid for freedom. That was the main reason in bringing about this alliance. Pilaji Shirke had a son named Ganoji. Shivaji Maharaj contacted him and proposed, "Let my daughter Nanisaheb wed your son Ganoji Raje, and let us have your daughter Yesubai Saheb for my son Sambhaji." Pilaji Rao was delighted at this exchange match. He did not hesitate ever for a moment and readily consented.

Everything was arranged. Maharaj requested Pilaji Rao to join the freedom

movement and not to remain servant to the Mughal Badshah ! Pilaji Rao accepted it. Maharaj told him. "You and other members of Shirke family will be offered respectable posts but once you have become part of us you shall be relieved of your right over Dabholi !"

This was rather difficult for Pilaji to digest, as he had enjoyed this privilege for so many years. He was treated like a king and received obeisance from subjects. How could he surrender all this ? And then to serve in the military of Raigarh !

Maharaj told him :

"Raje Saheb, this involves the honour of a nation. It is a divine decree that we should serve our country and our people."

Pilaji somehow accepted the offer. And, the rights over Dabholi, were relinquished. Pilaji himself joined the Maratha army. Marriages were finalised. The four brides and bridegrooms, who were very young, got ready for marriage. Shivaji and Pilaji were now bound by a double bond. A daughter of Konkan came to the Ghats and that of the Ghats went to Konkan. Territorial differences were erased and a new relationship was forged, satisfactory to all concerned.

As the months passed, Shirke grew impatient. He disliked the present status of serfdom ! He thought to himself, "The Shirkes were once the kings of Konkan. Our Kingdom had been snatched away by the Badshah. But now I have lost even the small hold I had ! What now is left for me ?" The choice was between the rights and the service under Maharaj. He preferred to get back the rights to Dabholi.

"Shivaji Maharaj must return it to me. I am sure that he will give it back, because I am now closely related to him." With this thought in mind Pilaji wrote a letter to Shivaji.

Shivaji received it at Raigarh and gave it to Moropant to read. "Now our land has been absorbed by your Government. The right was a very old one, enjoyed by our ancestors. They served the Badshah with loyalty and zeal. It is the duty of a son to maintain whatever the father has earned. I am serving your Majesty even now. Therefore, I request you to hand the right over Dabholi back to me."

Maharaj was silent. Moropant understood his mind well. He said, "Maharaj, this is the nature of every person. Landlordship strikes deep roots, and since they confer a few petty honours people think it an insult to be deprived of them."

"Pant", said Maharaj, "These rights are potentially dangerous. To maintain them a rebellion may be incited against our effort to consolidate territories. That is why I have discontinued this practice. Our main aim is that our land should be placed on a firm footing of its own, and the titular heads should not become powerful. They should serve the cause with loyalty placing their courage and valour at the disposal of the country. They should not consider it prowess to maintain whatever their ancestors have earned. It seems that Pilaji Rao has not understood me !"

"Maharaj, do try and change his mind", said Moropant. "Pant, it is our endeavour to see that everyone should love the land to which he belongs. Faith in the motherland

is very important. I brought Pilaji Rao into our fold. I offered my daughter to his son. My aim was that he should understand and love this free realm. But, it is unfortunate that Shirke loves his rights more than the solidarity of his country, he even has the nerve to demand his rights ! Pant, I cannot give in to Shirke ! I can never do so, no, never !"

"But, Maharaj, Shirke Raje is a powerful person. He may get annoyed", said Moropant.

"Yes, he may get annoyed, perhaps! But, Pant, am I to care for somebody's annoyance at the cost of our solidarity ?"

"But Maharaj, if Shirke joins Badshah in annoyance....."

"If he does, so, he will become our enemy ! That is all there is to it. It is not difficult to quell an enemy, but if we allow him to maintain a title like this, our efforts are bound to come to naught. I admire Pilaji Rao as a brave warrior, not as the owner of lands"! Shivaji replied firmly.

"That's true Maharaj. But if you can try to keep Shirke Raje in your fold without returning his rights ?"

"It shall be my endeavour, certainly. I feel pained when I have to submit to such dirty tricks from our own people ! Our own people deserve our hearts. Tricks and ruses are meant for others, who do not consider themselves as our kith and kin. But, Pant,

we are helpless ! You write to him in the words that I dictate."

Pant brought a blank-paper and a pen. Maharaj started dictating.



"You have written that the right to Dabholi, which was absorbed by us, should be restored to you. It is not our practice to go back on what we have done. Since you have established a relationship with us, we undertake to offer the title of Deshmukh to you when your daughter-in-law, Rajkunwas Bai delivers a son." Maharaj smiled. It was not the smile of a victorious warrior, but of one who had escaped the consequences of an unpleasant situation. The letter was sent to Pilaji Rao. He read it and was happy. He was glad to know that title would be restored to his descendants at least at a later date !

On the whole, Pilaji did not prove to be very clever.



KICK THE THRONE OF SLAVERY

BEFORE leaving for Rajapur Maharaj had posted Tanaji Malusare and Pilaji Neel Kanth Rao Sarnaik at Shangameshwar and assigned to them an important task. The foot-paths in Konkan were made difficult to traverse by the torrential rains. Even the roads leading to the town of Sangameshwar were no good. Shivaji decided to have them repaired and made travel-worthy and he assigned that work to Tanaji and his soldiers. What a strange task for one of the bravest of the commanders ! But, was it not an important one ? Shivaji had rightly inculcated the dignity of labour in his leaders and followers alike. So, for the time being all of them kept aside their swords and javelins and took picks and shovels in their hands. Though Shivaji had very little time at his disposal, whenever he did get an opportunity for respite he utilised it for constructive work like agriculture, irrigation, construction of roads, dams and barrages and development of education and trade. He never neglected any aspect of public welfare.

Tanaji, Pilaji, and other soldiers made themselves busy at Sangameshwar in the construction work. Suddenly, on a dark night, Suryaji Rao (who had earlier been pardoned by Maharaj) attacked the Maratha camp. There was panic for a moment, but the Marathas stood their ground. Tanaji armed himself to meet the foe. On the other side, Pilaji also prepared to fight the enemy. A tumultuous battle

ensued. Suryaji Rao was a warrior of no mean merit or courage. Tanaji alone, in fact, was a match for him, and he even pushed him back and held his front remarkably.

Pilaji fought equally well, but seeing the superior reinforcements of the enemy, he got panicky. The enemy, sensing his panic, took the initiative in their hands and began pressing forth more and more aggressively. Pilaji was greatly flustered and feared he would be either killed or captured before long.

Tanaji, in the meanwhile, was completely unaware of the situation but he heard the exultant battle cries of the enemy and was alarmed. He immediately rushed towards the enemies and saw Pilaji's predicament. Pilaji turned on his heels and was retreating fast. Maratha warriors turning on his heels and running away from the war front in panic ! Tanaji could not tolerate such shameful behaviour. He ran behind the retreating Maratha warrior and caught him up. Tanaji flared up, "Why are you running away like a coward ? Are you not the son of Neelakant Rao who died a martyr's death ? Your father will turn over in his grave with shame at this behaviour on your part. Shame on you !" He forced Pilaji right back into the middle of the battle-field and continued to reprimand him. "When I am here to support you, why are you running away, leaving the battle-field ? You were boasting so much ; what of that now ?

Shivaji Maharaj had honoured you by giving you such a high post. Is it only to hear that you ran away from the battle-field ? At least, you should have some regard for him and gratitude for the honour that he has conferred on you." But Pilaji was afraid. Tanaji's sermons on valour and courage fell on deaf ears.

Tanaji, then got a rope which lay nearby, and secured Pilaji to a huge stone, in spite of the latter's protests to prevent him from running away. He wanted Pilaji to witness how a brave Maratha would fight the enemy. He then took his sword and shield and plunged into the battle-field.

Tanaji entered deep into the enemy lines with an ear-splitting cry of "Har Har Maha Dev", encouraging his men, "come on my men, kill the enemy", "Fight till victory is ours", and so on. The Marathas were doubly enthused by his encouragement and in the end the victory was theirs. Suryaji Rao ran towards Shringarpur to seek refuge. Tanaji released Pilaji with a smile of victory.

Tanaji and Pilaji went to convey their message to Maharaj. Maharaj honoured them for the victory but was annoyed with Suryaji who deceived him once again. Yet, he wished to make Surya Rao understand the importance of his being in Swarajya, and so he sent his envoy to Shringarpur. The envoy conveyed the message.

"Suryaji Raje, you had merged your jagir with Swarajya willingly. You fought against us on behalf of Badshah, and wronged us on a number of occasions and now you have attacked our army again at Sangameshwar. After entering into an understanding with us, you chose to break

the terms of our pact. Please explain how such a breach of faith can be tolerated ?"

"Raje, you are a brave man. Jaswant Rao Raje of Pali has come to seek refuge under you for fear of punishment at our hands. We propose to capture all the land belonging to Jaswant Rao as he has committed treachery. We expect you to come and meet us at Pali, and if you persist in abstaining from doing so arrogantly, you would be dealt with in the same manner as Jaswant Rao. Nobody on earth can save you from the fury of Maharaj." Suryaji Rao listened to the message and replied ; "You may go ahead. I will follow you."

The envoy returned to Sangameshwar and delivered the message of Suryaji Rao to Maharaj. Whether Suryaji Rao would go to Pali or not was to be known in a day's time.

Maharaj attacked Pali, and captured the jagir of Jaswant Rao within a very short time. Many of Jaswant Rao's commanders surrendered to Maharaj.

There was a fort near pali named 'Chira Durg', It was a very strong fort, covering a vast area. Its walls and bastions were exceptionally stout and sturdy. Shivaji named it Madan Garh and placed it at the disposal of an officer and other staff, to be looked after.

Pali was captured and Maharaj waited for Suryaji Rao to meet him there, but Suryaji did not turn up. On the other hand, he was enjoying himself at Shringarpur. He thought that while Shivaji attacked Pali directly in order to capture it, he only sent an envoy for a talk, and hence Suryaji

thought Shivaji did not dare to attack him. This enraged Maharaj, and he pressed forward with an army fifteen thousand strong to sack Shringarpur. Suryaji Rao was informed of Shivaji's arrival. That the situation was precarious dawned upon him (Suryaji) now. Shivaji's army was a huge one, and he knew that he would surely be defeated and captured. Suryaji fled in panic from Shringarpur.

Maharaj and the Marathas advanced towards Shringarpur with great speed. He was still thinking of the sort of punishment to be meted out to Suryaji to prevent treachery in the future, when Moropant brought the news that Suryaji Rao had vanished from Shringarpur. Shivaji was greatly disappointed at this loss of opportunity to punish treachery. He entered the town, which was deserted. Inside the palatial residence of Suryaji Rao, he saw a richly decorated throne. A golden cage, a seat of velvet to buffer the insulting kicks of the alien ruler !

With a heart surging with fury and disgust, Shivaji gave a kick at the throne.

Another symbol of slavery wiped out !

THE FORTRESS IN THE SEA

SHIVAJI stood on the shore watching the sea. It was high tide, the waves rose to tremendous heights and broke in a spray of foam against the shore. Maharaj stood watching the breakers. Krishna Savant Desai and Bhaji Prabhu Desai were two among them. The roving gaze of Maharaj suddenly stood arrested, something had attracted his attention. About a mile or two, from the shore was a small island. Maharaj studied it thoughtfully for a while, and, turning to Prabhu Desai, who stood beside him, asked,

"What is the name of the island ?"

"It is known as 'Kutre' island !" replied Desai.

Shivaji was lost in thought again. What was the island like ? What could be the size of it ? Where was it situated ? "Let us go and take a look at it," he declared.

A boat was brought. Maharaj embarked it and along with his colleagues, he rowed towards the island, which they reached in half an hour. The island was a rocky arm projecting into the sea, against which the waves lashed continuously. On the rock, almost at the centre, ran a slender stream of clear, sweet water. It looked as though the island was made to order there by an unseen hand. Shivaji passed immediate orders that a huge fortress should be constructed there.



Fortune smiled on Kutre island. It was as if the island had been in penance for centuries, standing still in the vast sea just waiting for such an occasion !

People gathered on that island coming to it in steamers, launches, small boats. Maharaj himself arrived to lay the foundation for the structure of the fort. All the paraphernalia for worship was made ready. The first foundation stone was to be laid by the Maharaj. It was suggested that the priests who were natives of that area should officiate at the ceremony.

Messengers were sent to invite 'Veda Shastra Sampurna' Janbhat Abhyankar and his nephew 'Veda Murti' Raja Shri Dadam Bhat. They declined the invitation out of fear, for they thought that if the area again falls into the hands of the Sultan, he was sure to take them to task for having assisted and colluded with Shivaji in the construction of the fort.

They knew very well that Shivaji was an ideal king and that he fought for his religious conviction. But then, his kingdom was very small, while the Badshah's kingdom was vast and well established. How could Malwan which was just on the edge of Shivaji's territory be prevented from Badshah's attack ?

Shivaji fathomed their feelings and though shocked, he made allowance for the priests' fears. Unless they were made aware of the fact that a solid power was behind them, they could not be expected to shed their cowardice. Therefore, Maharaj sent his emissaries to invite priests once again explaining to them that he would protect

them, and if they still did not accept the invitation they would be forced to come !

Both the parts promptly arrived after the second message. He welcomed them with due respect and said,

"You are Brahmins. You should live in peace, and it is my duty to see that your lives are not disturbed in any way. Most of the Konkan area is already in our hands and the rest will soon be ours. Our Kingdom is expanding and gathering strength day by day. Do not be worried at all !"

The Pundits now felt pacified, and gratefully acknowledged his protection and began the ceremonies. The sounds of musical instruments filled the air, and the chanting of Mantras blended with them. Shivaji himself sat to perform Puja. He set the first 'stone' of the first fort that was to be his naval base. The fort was named 'Sindhu Durga' and Jan Bhat and Dadam Bhat received handsome rewards. They were offered the permanent priesthood of the new fort.

Sindhu Durg started taking shape. A new ornament for Darya Bhavani (Goddess of Sea) was designed. The stony face of the island broke its gravity and bubbled with life as Sindhu Durga reared its head out of the frothing foaming waters.



DEATH OF A HERO

THE year was 1670

Spring was bouncing around, revealing its creative faculties through fresh tendrils, tender foliage, nascent buds, lush stretches of green grass, luxuriant trees and sprawling beds of shrubs and plants.

Nature was at its best, colourful, exotic and intoxicating.

Birds flirted around, heralding the onset of spring, basking in the vigour and vivacity injected by the season, keen to prance around, to love and to be loved, to mate and to procreate, to revel in the caresses of nature and to respond to its call.

Jija Bai stood at the edge of the verandah, feeling the aroma of spring, enjoying the mild warmth that roused and whipped up myriad emotions in her. These emotions, in turn, provoked her brain to indulge in fanciful dreams. Hopes of the future filled her mind. Challenging plans flashed through her brain, plans which if executed boldly, would lead her daring son, Shivaji, further up the ladder of power and fame.

The memory of her son turned her face aglow with pride. Indeed, he was the gift of Goddess Bhavani. It was She who inspired him, protected him, watched over him, guided him through tortuous and dangerous times, and helped him to carve the Maratha Empire out of the terrain over which Moghul overlordship extended.



Repeatedly, Shivaji had raided the fortified citadels of Moghul power, crippled the defence arrangements of the Moghuls, returned with rich booties. These raids had boosted his confidence and proved that the Moghuls were not invincible. In turn, these raids created in the hearts of those

who were pitted against him a grumbling admiration for his tactics mixed with mortal fear of his hurricane attacks.

In this mood of exultation, Jija Bai surveyed the sprawling scenery. She saw the Sahyadri Ranges, standing almost at the edge of the horizon, with the blue sky dipping down and kissing the top of the mountain ranges. The terrain, uneven, rolling into valleys and suddenly rising to great heights in the shape of sharp peaks, all dressed in green, created a cavalcade of emotions in her. She imagined that she could hear the tumbling, gushing, mad water-falls, rumbling over rocks, breaking into bits over sharp protuberances, falling faster and faster, glistening in the sun, dancing their way down to the plains. She visualised, in her mind, the music of the parakeet, the trumpet of the elephant, the roar of the tiger and the call of the wolf. Then, she espied the silhouette of Sinhgad

Fort, and a cloud of depression spread over her face.

It was five years since she had last been to Sinhgad, five years since Shivaji, by the terms of an agreement, signed with the Moghuls, had surrendered the fort to the enemy. At that time, Shivaji had assured her that he would not rest, that the surrender was only a tactical move, that at the earliest opportunity, he would launch an attack to recover Sinhgad.

Suddenly, the spark of desire filled her, the desire to stroll through the ramparts of Sinhgad Fort, to take a glimpse of the Sahyadri Ranges at close quarters from a lofty perch in the fort. The spark grew into a tiny flame. Then, it became a consuming passion.

She turned back to her bedroom, mumbling, "I will ask him when he proposes to capture Sinhgad. I can't wait. I am impatient. I want to be back in Sinhgad."

Shivaji rushed in, like a springing tiger, and threw himself at her feet. Jija Bai bent low, lifted him and hugged him affectionately.

She examined his dust-covered clothes, his glossy flowing beard, his radiant, alert, dynamic eyes. She patted him, gently, called for a servant to bring sherbat for Shivaji.

The mother and the son sat on an ornate carpet.

"I am indeed glad to see you, Shivaj. I have been waiting for you."

"Ma, I came rushing as soon as I got your message. What is your command, Ma, ? I

will do anything, but, Ma, don't ask for the Moon !"

"Shiva, I have been rather depressed. An unknown pain has been gnawing at my heart. Staying here at Pratapgarh, I have often brooded over your safety, about the grave risks you face daily."

"Risk is part of the game I have been playing. I have faith in Goddess Bhavani. She will protect me. I am just an instrument of Her will."

"A mother's heart is never at rest when her son lives such a dangerous life."

"Well, Ma, what is worrying you ?"

"I told you it is a pain, a sort of desire which I have tried to control, but have failed."

"Tell me, Ma, if it is in my power to remove this pain, I will certainly take immediate action."

"I hesitate to tell you. I wonder whether I should ask you to carry out my wish. It is better to stifle this desire, to allow it to fester and dry up within my soul than confide in you and ask you to undertake another risky mission."

"Ma, I will undertake any project you have in mind. Please tell me, Ma. Please."

The bearer came in, carrying a bowl full of oranges and a tray on which rested two glistening glasses, filled with sweetened sherbat. The bearer bent low, placed the bowl and the tray on the carpet and retreated.

Jija Bai picked up an orange, peeled the skin, removed the seeds from the core and

pushed one of the juicy bits into Shivaji's mouth. She fed him till he said, "Enough, Ma."

"Drink this," Jija Bai picked up the glass full of sherbat and held it to his lips. He sipped the drink slowly, enjoying its sweet taste and pleasant fragrance.

"Thank you, Ma. Now, let us get back to that pain in your heart, the pain which I think I can remove."

"Shiva, I have been brooding over the glorious days we spent at Sinhgad. Oh, it seems as if it was only a few days back that we were there, enjoying its surroundings, admiring its strength and impregnability. Ah, five years have slipped by since you handed the fort to the Moghuls. At that time, you promised to capture it for the Marathas at the earliest opportunity. When do you propose to take action? When can I live again in that fort?"

"Ma, you know the dangers inherent in an assault on Sinhgad?"

"Yes."

"It's almost inaccessible. The fort can be approached only by climbing up an almost vertical, rocky wall of over forty feet. Even the approach to the rocky wall is through dangerous, slippery paths. The fortification is very solid and strong. It would be a very risky mission. Do you want me to take an attempt, Ma?"

"That's rather strange, Shiva. I thought you would immediately see my point of view, my desire. I imagined that you would be as keen as I am to recover the fort. I

hoped that you would plan an assault and regain control over the fort. Instead, you sit by my side, detailing the odds. I don't care about the odds. I want Sinhgad to be recovered. The Moghuls have to be driven out. I want to return to Sinhgad, to live in the bosom of the Sahyadri Ranges, to roam around the fort freely, proud of its heritage, happy to hold it on as the centre of Marathas power."

"Ma, I will do anything that you want. I would rather die than fail you."

"Victory will be yours, Shiva. There is no doubt in my mind. Perhaps, this desire which germinated in me has been due to some hidden plan of Goddess Bhavani. Perhaps, the time has come to regain the fort. Otherwise, why should I be possessed by such a craze after a lapse of five years?"

Shivaji was walking up and down the ornate, well-kept room, like a caged tiger. He did not glance at the paintings hung on the wall. He had no eyes for the rare sculptures which adorned the mantel-piece. The vicker lamps, moulded out of brass, with lissome dames etched on the surfaces, did not attract him. He cast eager looks at the open door, often mumbling to himself, "Ah, if only Tanaji comes soon! He is the man for the job!"

Shivaji heard foot-steps. He turned towards the door and saw the tall, lithe figure of Tanaji Malusare. Shivaji rushed forward while Tanaji came forward, fell flat at Shivaji's feet and waited till Shivaji bent low and lifted him up with affection.

"Please be seated," Shivaji pointed to a sofa. Shivaji slumped into the sofa. Tanaji sat by his side.

"I am sorry, Tanaji, to send for you. I know you were in the midst of arrangements for the marriage of your son. I apologise."

"My Lord, I belong to you, body and soul. You have raised the Marathas from slavery, given them their individuality, showed them the path of freedom. You have lifted us from the abyss of discord and in-fights, led us bravely, established the mighty Maratha regime which is bound to last forever. We are your vassals for life. You can call me or any other Maratha warrior at any time. We are all yours to command."

"It is because of men like you that I could achieve all these successes. In the final analysis, a leader is judged by the men who follow him. I am proud to be the leader of such a dedicated band of men."

"What are your orders, my Lord?"

"I have decided that we should capture Sinhgad. I want you to lead the assault party."

"I am happy you have selected me for this task. I will capture Sinhgad for the Marathas, even if I die in the attempt."

"You know it is a very risky operation?"

"Yes, But, it is a task that has to be undertaken. The risks only make the task worthy of our efforts."

"You are a lion among men. How much I admire your courage!"

"My Lord, I shine only in reflected glory, You are the inspirer of our courage, the light that makes us glow. Your inspiring leadership has converted ordinary mortals into heroes!"

"Tanaji, when do you think you can complete the necessary preparations for the assault? What do you think would be the suitable time to initiate the move? How many men would you require to carry out the plan successfully? I leave these things to you. You shall be the master of the entire show."

"Thank you, my Lord, for this expression of supreme confidence. May God give me strength to prove myself worthy of your trust."

"Jai Bhavani!"

Tanaji decided to launch the assault on a new moon night. He wanted to crawl to the foot of the fort under cover of darkness and to make a surprise attack. He collected a band of a thousand young, bold dare-devils to take part in the campaign. He was ably supported by his brother Suryaji.

All the arrangements were completed in time. Addressing the men, Tanaji said, "We will be victorious. Goddess Bhavani is with us. I have been told that Udhai Khan, the trusted General of Aurangzeb, who is in charge of the fort, has been leading a very easy life. Five years of indolence at Sinhgad has sapped the fighting quality of the Moghul force. Lethargy and indifference, the craze to have the best of a smooth and care-free life fill them. They believe that the Marathas have no intention to attack Sinhgad. This belief is what makes our task easy. We will take them by

surprise. We will prove our might. We will have an easy time over men who have been enjoying women and wine for five years, men who have allowed their swords to rust, their muscles to rot !”

“Jai Bhavani” the warriors shouted. The cry echoed through the hills and dates.

The party moved under cover of darkness. The rugged mountainous terrain did not deter them. Most of them had been born in the area. They had taken to mountain climbing at a very young age. They knew every bend and turn in the Sahyadri Ranges. They knew its mood and caprices. They had seen how a slim, shallow, mountain stream could suddenly leave its docility, swell with swirling, fast moving current which could take in its sweep even giant elephants. They had seen paths being wiped out of existence by sudden land slides. They knew the mountain inside out.

The thick vegetation around the fort helped them to reach the foot of the fort without rousing any suspicion. It was pitch dark, except for a few owls, daring the darkness, raising their weird cries. There was no sound to disturb the eeriness and frigidity of the scene.

Tanaji poised hismen at the foot of the fort. He directed a group of men who had mastered the art of handling ghorpads to get into action. These men tied giant ropes round the ghorpads and flung the animals against the sheer straight rocky wall. The ghorpads stuck against the wall, built up a vacuum and clung on to the wall with tenacity. The warriors tested the strength of the ghorpads’ hold by tugging at the

ropes and also by taking wild swings. The ghorpads held on.

The party split into groups. Like monkeys ambling up, the Marathas climbed up the steep wall with the help of the ropes.

Three hundred men, including Tanaji, managed to get on top of the ramparts of the fort. Others were moving up the ropes to join their leader when a Moghul sentry heard the sound of foot-steps. He shouted to his comrades. A few more frightened sentries rushed ahead with lighted torches. Then, they got the shock of their lives. They saw several armed men moving along the rampart of the fort.

One sentry rushed up to Udhan Khan, with the news that the Marathas had launched an attack, that some of them had climbed up the parapet wall of the fort. Udhai Khan was drunk. He was in the midst of his mid-night orgies. Beautiful damsels in all states of dress and undress danced around him, taking sips of wine. Udhai Khan turned to the informer and shouted, “Off with you, fool. It can’t be true. The Marathas could not have climbed up the wall of the fort. No human being has ever done it. Your story lacks sense.”

‘By Allah, I promise. The Marathas are here !

‘You will pay heavily if it is false !

‘It is true, I swear !

Udhai Khan broke himself off from the company of the dames. He rushed to the toilet and washed his face with cold water. This dispelled his grogginess. He felt a bit more alert. He rushed back to his room,

slipped into martial uniform, grabbed his sharp sword and ran out, followed by his men who had been alerted by then.

Udhai Khan heard, in the distance, the clang of steel hitting against steel. He heard now the cries of "HAR HAR MAHADEV" mixed with ALLAH-HO-AKBAR. He turned to his men and said, 'We have been caught napping. The Marathas have attacked us. But, we will teach the Maratha dogs a lesson, which they will never forget. The cheek of the fellows who dare to pit themselves against the might of the Moghul Ruler !

The Moghul forces, now swelling in numbers, fell on the few Marathas who had entered the fort. The war cries of the two parties filled the air. The Marathas had an advantage. They knew the size and strength of the Moghul contingent stationed at the fort. But, the Moghuls did not know the composition and strength of the Maratha party.

Udhai Khan fought like an enraged lion. He was here, there and everywhere. He goaded his men to give of their best. He noted Tanaji Malusare. Then, his eyes gleamed with rage. He decided to isolate Tanaji, to kill him. The death of Tanaji, Udhai Khan felt, would leave the Marathas leaderless, make them surrender.

The two came to close grips. They wielded there swords and shields with exceptional skill. They matched thrust for thrust, parried the opponent's sudden moves, waiting for each other to make a false move, to expose his flanks. Udhai Khan was almost at the end of his tether when Tanaji pressed home his advantage. Finding

himself losing ground. Udhai Khan made a reckless charge which gave him a chance to strike at Tanaji. With a mighty blow, Udhai Khan felled Tanaji.

Suryaji immediately assumed command over the Marathas. He egged them on, saying that they should not retract, that victory was round the corner, that Tanaji's death was not in vain. The Maratha war-cry filled the air.

Suryaji picked out the tired Udhai Khan closed in on him and killed him in combat. The death of Udhai Khan marked the end of Moghul resistance. They surrendered meekly.

On receipt of the news of the capture, Shivaji conveyed the news to his mother and rode to Sinhgad to congratulate his men. On arrival at Sinhgad, he heard of Tanaji's death. Shivaji was caught in conflicting feelings, joy at the capture of the fort, grief at the death of Tanaji.

Shivaji stood at the rampart of the fort, immersed in thoughts. He mumbled, "I have got the fort, but lost the lion," and strode off, a cloud of pain covering his mien.



THE MAGIC LEAD OF SHIVAJI

SALHER lies on the border of Khandesh and Gujarat. It was a post of the utmost strategic importance, for the possession of which a bitter conflict unprecedented in all Shivaji's life ensued, and several bloody battles were fought with heavy losses on both sides, proving thereby that Shivaji and his men never shirked open fights when it was considered necessary. As Shivaji was returning from the plunder of Karanja, he was joined by a column under Moropant and the united division besieged the fort of Salher and captured it on 5th January, 1671 after a short but desperate defence by Fathulla Khan, its Mughal commander. The Mughal Government tried strenuously for a year to retake the place, when several memorable actions took place between the two contending parties.

During the monsoon months of 1671, the Mughals encamped at Parner, where the various commanders held daily entertainments such as music and dancing which they all attended and made merry when their soldiers were dying in numbers through pestilence in the camp. Four hundred dancing girls from the Punjab and Afghanistan lived in the Mughal camp and were patronized by the officers.

Confusion reigned in the Mughal Government of the Deccan and this soon attracted Aurangzeb's attention. The second sack of Surat and the Maratha

conquest of Baglan roused him to a sense of the grave situation.

In November 1670, he sent Mahabat Khan to the supreme command of the Deccan ; another competent general Bahadur Khan was ordered from Gujarat as an additional support. Daud Khan and Diler Khan were already there. The Emperor often talked of proceedings to the Deccan himself, but if his intention was really serious, it did not materialise, possibly owing to a want of nerve to face Shivaji personally. Many renowned Rajput officers were also posted to Deccan. Mahabat Khan Jatwant Singh, Daud Khan and others all assembled at Aurangabad in January 1671, paid their respects to Prince Muajjam, and fully deliberated upon measures for restraining Shivaji. But, as may be imagined, matters are not necessarily improved by many worthy men being brought together. The probability is that such wise heads differ radically and spoil the result, making the confusion worse still. They had mutual jealousies which prevented co-ordination and concerted action.

The Emperor suspecting Mahabat Khan of a secret understanding with Shivaji, recalled him from Deccan and appointed Bahadur Khan and Diler Khan to that Government. They rapidly came from Surat while Mahabat Khan was still in charge and laid siege to Salher which was now in Maratha hands. In order to cripple Shivaji still further, Bahadur Khan and Daud Khan

left the conduct of the siege to Ikhlas Khan and themselves made a detour upon Poona with a view to stopping Maratha succour proceeding to Salher. Bahadur Khan advanced towards Supe and Diler Khan came upon Poona in December 1671. The latter massacred a large number of innocent inhabitants of the place but Shivaji was equal to the occasion. Pratap Rao Gujar, Anand Rao Makaji, Moropant Pingle and other commanders of Shivaji played such havoc in Khandesh upon the small Mughal forces of Ikhlas Khan that Bahadur Khan and Diler Khan had to retreat precipitately from the vicinity of Poona and hurry back to the north. Thereafter, an obstinate and sanguinary battle took place before Salher in the first week of February 1672, in which the Mughals were completely routed. Ikhlas Khan and some thirty principal Mughal officers were wounded and captured and several thousand soldiers were slain. Moropant recaptured both Salher and Mulher, took prompt and ample measures for their future defence and returned to report the success to his master.

Says Sabhasad, "One Surya Rao Kakde, Shivaji's companion in arms from childhood lost his life. More than ten thousand men were slain on the two sides

with countless numbers of horses, elephants and camels. Rivers of blood flowed on the battle ground. The Marathas acquired by way of plunder six thousand horses, as many camels, one hundred and twenty-five elephants, and all the camp baggage of the Mughals with treasure and jewellery." This phenomenal victory was mainly due to the strategy and valour of Shivaji's Peshwa, of whom a contemporary poet sang :

"The valley of Poona echo the name of Shivaji.

There roams his dauntless Peshwa,

He slaughtered the Mughals of Salher

Just as Arjuna slaughtered the Kauravas of yore."

The fight of Salher was an open action by Shivaji's men opposing the best-equipped and most ably-led Mughal armies, by no means partaking of the nature of guerilla warfare. The disaster to the Mughal arms led to the disgrace of Mahabat Khan at the hands of the Emperor, just in the same way as Jai Singh five years before him had suffered. He was transferred to Afghanistan and died on the way thither,

having served the Empire long and faithfully.



Sabhasad paints a glowing picture of the battle of Salher : "Maratha captains and the Mavali troops overcame the most renowned Mughal commanders. The news rejoiced Shivaji's heart. He rewarded the messengers who brought the news with gold bracelets and wristlets. Sweets were widely distributed. Diler Khan saved his life in a fight. A large number of the Mughal wounded and captives fell into Shivaji's hands. They were properly nursed and were released with presents after their wounds had been treated. Some willingly accepted Shivaji's service." Thus Shivaji in a few years not only recovered his former position but became a match for the best generals and administrators of the Mughal Empire. His officers and men were so well trained that they could exhibit skill and initiative in every difficult situation. How one earnest leader can change the character of a whole nation and attain a swift rise to prosperity, is well exemplified in this military organization of Shivaji.

An illustration of this national change was also furnished by the fort of Kanhergad near Chandwad, where Shivaji had appointed one Ramaji Panger as the keeper. The small but select band of 600 men faced terrible odds fighting with all their might, until nearly all the defenders were wounded and disabled, but they succeeded in turning the enemy back with discomfiture. Such a spirit of service and sacrifice quickly permeated the whole Maratha nation at the magic lead of Shivaji. The terrible rout and the consequent debacle of the Mughal forces before Salher drove Aurangaze to an extreme measure of reproach. He thus

vented his wrath in bitterest terms in a letter to Diler Khan and others.

"Why did you not die on the battle-field to avoid this disgrace to your master ? Why do you live and report to me this dismal news ? You very well know how Adil Shah, Kutub Shah, the Portuguese, and the Siddis all court our favour and express an earnest desire to join our standard. If you had made such a common cause with all these and hunted Shivaji down from all sides, he could have been easily brought to his knees." But things are easier said than done !

In reply to these taunts, Bahadur Khan and Diler Khan rendered a piquant reply to the Emperor, saying that : "If the Emperor remembered that this same Shivaji had before so cleverly managed to effect his escape in a strange manner from the strictest Imperial custody at Agra, our own offence would not appear after all so very blame-worthy."

Writes Sabhasad, "The news (of the Mughal defeat before Salher) reached the Emperor and grieved him sorely. He did not make his public appearance for three days, saying, 'It seems God Almighty is pleased to deprive the Muslims of their empire and bestow it upon an infidel. Why ? I should rather die than live to see such results'."



BACK TO BURHANPUR

AURANGAZEB paced up and down. Reports came from Deccan, about the rapid rise of Shivaji's power and influence. He read and re-read the reports and finally called the Grand Vazir, Mohammed Jaffer. "Is there no one among us who can catch this mountain rat?" he demanded.

"If it please your majesty", the Vazir replied, "I think my son Namdar Khan can do the job"

Namdar Khan was called and ordered, "You are to be in the van-guard of the campaign to be launched against Shivaji by Shaista Khan"

The spirited Khan proudly stroked his beard at receiving so important assignment.

With a large force, and with the larger ambition of capturing Shivaji and conquering his kingdom, he crossed the Moghul border near Burhanpur and entered Maratha territory.

When the news reached Shivaji he did not wish to indulge in war and sent an overture for peace. Disdainfully setting aside the peace proposal the young Khan replied : "I am under Emperor's order. At his command I am strolling about in your kingdom. But you, our host, are in hiding. Is it not your duty to receive a guest?" You have so many strong mountain forts and a disciplined army. Yet you avoid

confrontation and sue for peace from a hide-out. Shame!"

"So he is waiting for a hot reception?" Shivaji said with a smile as he read the haughty and biting reply to his peace proposal. Then he called his two famous generals. Sardar Pratap Rao, and Sheikh Ibrahim, and gave them the order "Welcome the Khan with a force of forty thousand."

Meanwhile Namdar Khan made further advance without resistance and reached Pen. From there he wrote a letter to the Mughal Emperor, "By the grace of Allah, I have conquered Shivaji's territory up to Pen. It would not be long before I catch the mountain rat himself."

Resting at Pen, the young Khan reclined in his shamiana, dreaming of the honours that the Emperor would shower on him when he returned a triumphant hero. Suddenly.....

"Hara Hara Maha Dev" echoed through the near-by hills. This was the unexpected war-cry of forty thousand Marathas. Springing up in dismay, Namdar Khan ordered his army to march towards the hills. The two armies met in the mountain of Pen. A fierce battle raged for weeks without respite. Handicapped by the unfamiliar and rugged mountain terrain, the Khan lost thousands of men. Ultimately, Khan shorn of his pride, gave the order "Retreat to Burhampur."

As the camp was being wound up, an unknown person suddenly appeared before the Khan, a sealed letter in hand. As the Khan shared at the stranger, the man delivered the letter and vanished as elusively as he had appeared. The Khan looked at the seal and his eyes opened wide. The letter was from Shivaji !

With unsteady hands the Khan opened the letter and read. "Khan Sahib, you entered my country as a guest and searched for the host. You met the host in the mountains of Pen and, I hope, you received all the hospitality we reserve for guests like you. Do you think you are the first Mughal general to report back that you have conquered Maratha country and are about to capture Shivaji ? For three years well-known Mughal generals coming before you have reported the same thing. I feel sorry for your Emperor. How long is he going to suffer from such false reports? May truth be with you - truth as you saw it at Pen."

In a very small voice the young, once vain Khan repeated his order to his depleted army - "Back to Burhanpur."

A HUNDRED GOLD COINS

IN a Shiva temple in the precincts of Burhanpur, Keshav Shastri, a devout Brahmin, knelt before the idol in tears. His lips moved in a half-audible prayer, in the dimly-lit gloom of night in the temple. The silence of the night was intermittently broken by his sobs.

"Oh God, my God," he sobbed, "are you really nothing more than stone ? Is not my devotion to you worth even a hundred gold pieces ? I've never coveted wealth but is my son to die because I do not have a hundred mohurs ? Only the Hakim has the remedy to save my son but he insists on a fee of a hundred mohurs. Take my life, oh God, but spare my son."

The deep sobs died into a whimper of agony, as through sheer grief the learned and devout Brahmin lapsed into silence.

Suddenly, there was some noise in the darkness and some voices at the outer door of the temple.

"Maharaj, you must rest here for the night."

Somebody was urging somebody else. Then another voice spoke. "Hiroji, do you know that this is Burhanpur, a stronghold of Mughal power in the south ?"

"But, Maharaj, you are burning with fever. We can't proceed, with you in such a condition. The best chance of escape is for you to get some rest and regain strength."



Rooted to the ground like a statue, Keshav Shastri listened to the whispered dialogue. He also heard the groan of a man in agony and in a flash he understood !

Only the other day he had heard a public proclamation by the Subedar - "Shivaji, the Maratha King, has escaped from Agra. Any one tracing his whereabouts and handing him over will receive a handsome prize."

And now Maharaj and Hiroji ! Those names could mean only one thing, that a large prize was now in his hands, that his son would not die for lack of medicine.

Silently the Brahmin got up and stole away without being seen by the new-comers.

At home Keshav Shastri's wife sat by her son's side, who lay in a coma brought on by high fever. At the feet of the sick man sat a girl, his young wife.

With her tear-filled eyes the older woman looked at the girl and thought, "Poor girl ! A mere lass of fifteen, but how devoted to her husband. I don't know what would happen to her if anything happens to my son."

The girl sat still, her sad eyes showering love on the dying man.

The door creaked, and Keshav Shastri came in.

For three days, he had been coming home with the gloom of despair in his eyes, as his son lay dying for lack of medicine. Every day his wife would look into his eyes for an answer to an unspoken question and would find the same answer. No money, no medicine.

But today there was something in the Brahmin's eyes that made the woman look hard.



In a breathless whisper the Brahmin told the story.

At the end the Brahmin said, "I'm going to the Subedar straightway. There is no time to lose, Our son must be saved."

The young girl listened in silence.

She looked at her dying husband and her heart filled with love. This man, who lay on his death bed, was her very life. And now he was going to live. But how ? By means of gold received as a reward

for betraying Shivaji.

Shivaji ! At the thought of that name some wild scenes raced before her mind's eye. The other day the Mughal had destroyed Krishna Mandir. Then her friend Lakshmi had been cruelly abducted in broad daylight. And Shivaji was fighting against such people.

Now he might be caught, tortured or killed.

No ! Shivaji must be saved ! His life was the life of the nation. Her husband's life was of importance only to her.

For a long moment a tempest raged in her heart. Then she jumped up and made for the door. Her father-in-law may be already on the way to the temple with the Subedar's soldiers. There was not a moment to lose if she was to warn Shivaji before it was too late.

Like one possessed, she ran through the dark night towards the temple.

Shivaji's eyes grew moist as he heard the girl-s frantic story. Here was a young girl sacrificing her husband and her father-in-law for his sake, otherwise a good man, he was forced to betray him for a hundred gold coins.

By the time the Brahmin came to the temple it was empty.

"What !" he exclaimed in disbelief. Then overwhelmed with grief, he stuck his head at the foot of the idol and there was a tinkling noise !

He groped and held up something. It was a satchel containing a hundred gold coins.



CHATRASAL BUNDELA

BUNDEL KHAND was as famous for its invaluable diamond mines, as it was for its brilliant warriors, each one of them better than the other. Like the magnificent stones that contributed towards the embellishments of the Moghul court, these brilliant men also excelled in their service to the Moghuls, Indraman Bundela, Shyam Singh Bundela, Shubhakaran Bundela, and many more like them proved their valour on countless occasions.

It was a Bundela, Champat Rai by name, who helped Aurangzeb in his treacherous ascent to the Delhi throne, and as such enjoyed the imperial patronage for quite sometime.

The favours of a king never last long. Champat Rai fell out of favour with Aurangzeb and was subjected to much hardship and humility. He still served the Emperor faithfully and died fighting for him. His wife ended her life when she learnt of her husband's death, leaving their five young sons to fend for themselves. The eldest was about fourteen years old, the next Chatrasal, about eleven and the other three were younger still. Chatrasal was the most intelligent, and shrewd, and it was he who took up the challenge.

After four years, while still an adolescent, young Chatrasal was in search of an opening for his future career. He had in mind Mirza Raja Jai Singh as one who could

help him. Mirza Raja was about to leave on an expedition to Deccan. Chatrasal had heard about Shivaji, who was then struggling against and harassing the Moghuls. Mirza Raja had been deputed to restrain Shivaji's efforts and reinstate all that was lost to him. Chatrasal was also attracted by Shivaji's chivalrous deeds, but decided for the time being to seek service under Mirza Raja Jai Singh. He met Mirza



Raja who was much pleased to welcome him, he being the son of Champat Rai. Mirza Raja absorbed him in his army quite willingly.

The young lad had taken part in the Deccan campaign, and proved his mettle. Raja Jai Singh was pleased and handed him over to Diler Khan.

When Diler Khan, who hated Prince Muazzam, launched an attack on Deogarh, the battle was won mainly due to the valour of this brave lad, then only seventeen.

Diler Khan proudly announced his victory to Aurangzeb. He was given a rousing welcome at Delhi and was richly rewarded. But neither Auragazeb nor Diler Khan had even a single word of praise for Chatrasal, who was the real hero of the whole campaign.

Young Chatrasal felt very bitter. The insult sank deep into his heart. Bitterness and frustration racked his mind. "This Moghul had shown no recognition to my father, who helped him to ascend the throne. MY father died in humiliation and my mother in misery. And now it looks as if it is my turn to serve him and suffer the same treatment. Even if one day I win his favour, what would it amount to ? Shackles of glittering gold ! I, a Hindu Prince, am fighting my own brethren to wear those shackles. What a shame !" Thus he brooded long over the prospect.

His mind turned to Shivaji. He longed to meet him as early as possible, and offer his services in the fight for his motherland. He was determined to fight against Aurangzeb and avenge the death of his father who suffered in the imperial service.

The opportunity came to Chatrasal to escape from the Mughal army and join Shivaji when Diler Khan was camping in the north, still waging war against the Prince. When Shivaji looted Surat, Aurangzeb ordered Diler Khan to rout Shivaji's army, and the Mughal army came to Deccan and camped there ; Chatrasal got out one day on the pretext of hunting, and, in the company of a few trusted friends, he trekked the treacherous jungles and crossed river Bhima which as in full spate

using a shaky wooden raft, and at last reached Poona.

Shivaji gave the young man a warm and friendly welcome. Chatrasal opened his heart to Shivaji, whose constant battles against alien rule guided and shaped his own thoughts and desires. "I no longer wish to be a slave, at the mercy of these alien rulers. You are fighting to shake off these shackles, and I shall feel honoured, if my past is forgotten and forgiven and a chance is offered to me to serve in your army," he concluded.

Shivaji appreciated the sincerity and determination of the young man. He was also very sympathetic towards Chatrasal. But Chatrasal was a Prince in his own right and Shivaji was reluctant to offer him "employment" in his army.

"You go to Bundel Khand and liberate your motherland from the yokes of foreign rule. You ought to have your own kingdom. It is not meet that you, a prince, should serve under me. Serve the motherland by strengthening your province. Defy alien rule whenever an opportunity arises. In carrying out your duty, if you are killed, you shall receive the grace of God. If you survive and win over the enemies, you will have the delight and freedom of ruling over your own territory. You are brave, you are full of valour, you have intelligence. I am sure that you will be enthroned one day. Chatrasal ! if I keep you here for service under me, all the credit will come to me. You will get nothing of it. That is why I ask you to go. Defy and drive out the enemy, and the news of your success shall be music to my ears."

That was Shivaji's reply, a reply worthy of a king and worthy of the ears of a Prince. Chatrasal was at once deeply moved and highly inspired by those words. His own vague notions of his future were now given a definite shape. Accepting his duty as a divine gift, he left the camp to establish his own rule at Bundel Khand.

Before Chatrasal left the camp Shivaji held a Darbar in his honour. Then in the presence of a distinguished gathering Shivaji took out his own sword and presented it to the Bundela prince with the words, "Accept this symbol of our friendship. May you use it for securing freedom....."



"Is there a greater hero, a greater saint, a greater bhakta and a greater king than Shivaji? Shivaji was the very embodiment of a born ruler of men as typified in our great Epics. He was the type of the real son of India representing the true consciousness of the nation. It was he who showed what the future of India is going to be sooner or later, a group of independent units under one umbrella as it were, under one supreme imperial suzerainty."

- Swami Vivekananda

BUSINESS IS BUSINESS

WITH his eyes closed and his hands folded in all humility, Shivaji Maharaj sat still before the idol of Shri Parashurama. Silently he prayed for the welfare of the Kingdom that was extending its borders from day to day by Divine grace.

With the ignominious retreat of Karthalab Khan, Shivaji had himself set out on February 2, 1661 for a lightning strike at the Bijapur territories in Konkan. A force of four thousand mounted Mavalis galloped after him.

A halt on the way was at Dabhol.

"Now my days are numbered," the local Jagirdar, Yeshwant Rao Dalvi thought in panic. He had participated in the Muslim siege of Vishalgarh as an employee of Siddi Johar.

"Give me refuge," he had beseeched Surya Rao Surve, the Jagirdar of Shringarpur.

"We'll together fight him," Surya Rao assured him.

But Shivaji had no time for such small fry. Leaving a force of two thousand in Dabhol, just as a warning, he went on to Chiplun, in Konkan.

And now he was sitting in this holy temple of Chiplun on the banks of the sacred river, Vashishti.

The whole town wore a festive look. For the first time a king and his army had come,

not to defile and destroy a temple but to worship there.

Shivaji had come to this holy place to seek divine grace for his mission but an angry thought kept disturbing the peace of his mind. Looking towards the horizon he softly but grimly said to himself, "Not far from here is Rajapur, the trading post of the Firangi from Vilayat. It was their big gun



that had been used against me in Siddi's siege of Panhalgarh. By the side of the gun had fluttered Firangi's flag."

Now the day of reckoning had come.

Shivaji gave a brief order : "On to Rajapur."

It was enough. Jumping on to their steeds his men sped in the direction of the British post to teach the Firangi a lesson.

The next day, as if out of the blue, a small band of armed Marathas appeared at the gate of the mansion of every local businessman and money-lender in Rajapur.

It was a summons : "Shivaji Maharaj has come. He is camping on the outskirts of

the town, and you are to present yourself before him immediately.

With folded hands the businessmen stood before Shivaji and he said, "You are sons of the soil, and my mission is the welfare of our country. So I expect financial help from you. I won't say how much I want. I leave that to you."

There was no threat and the Sahukars gave willing promises.

Shortly after, huge amounts of gold, precious stones and money were delivered at the camp.

But the more important purpose of the visit to Rajapur was yet to be fulfilled - and Shivaji's eyes grew hard as he thought of it. Calling his officers he gave the order, "Go into the city, arrest every British officer and bring them to me in hand-cuffs. Then loot their godowns. All the wealth belongs to this country, not

to these alien businessmen. After you clean up the godowns, raze the walls to the ground and dig up the floors to the depth of a man's height to make sure that nothing remains hidden, - go."

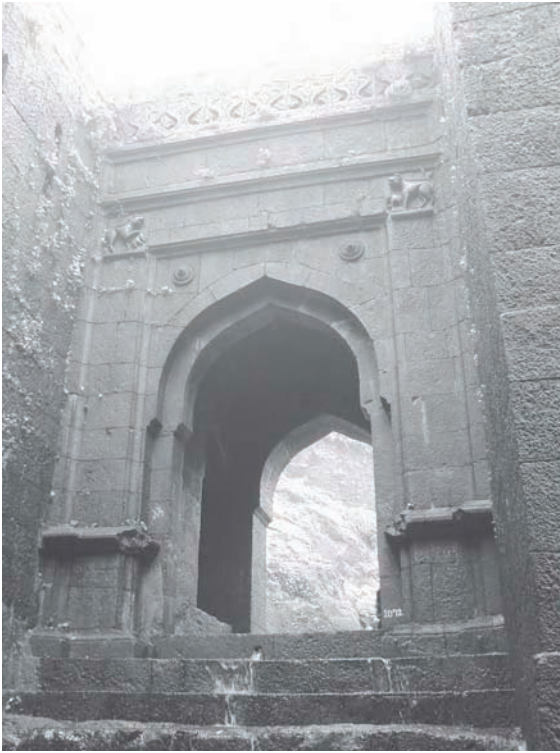
The officers beckoned to their men, and the force entered the city, every man wearing a look of grim determination.

When the soldiers returned, they had accomplished their appointed task so thoroughly that the list of wealth obtained, still available in historical records, is too long even to read at one stretch.

On March 15, 1661, two long caravans of horses and bullocks wended their way out

of Rajapur with their fabulous loads, headed for two different forts under Shivaji's instruction. This was just 24 days after the large-scale surrender of arms and armament by Kartalab Khan in Umbarkhind Pass.

It was also in this expedition that Shivaji found a really precious jewel, a young bright boy by name Balaji Avji Chitre, who later



became famous as Shivaji's letter-writer and a living embodiment of complete dedication to Swarajya.

"Even the Firangi post at Rajapur could not withstand his onslaught," Badi Saheban, the domineering mother of the Bijapur Sultan and the power behind the throne, exclaimed in disbelief. "This is really the end for us."

In resignation, she gave the order, "Prepare for my pilgrimage to Mecca. I might not return."

From the windows of the dungeons of the two forts, Vasota and Sangarh, Shivaji's British prisoners from the raid on Rajapur stared out into the distance, as if trying to find the answer to their fate. When would Andrews, the President of their Company, stationed at Surat, get them released? Will they be released at all?

One of these prisoners was Henry Revington, an officer in charge of the Rajapur trading post who had, on his own responsibility, taken the British gun to Panhalagarh to help Siddi's siege of Shjivaji and had personally given the order to fire it.

Revington sat on a bench in his cell, gloomily thinking of the many letters he had written to his President beseeching him to secure the release of the British prisoners.

On June 10, 1661 he wrote in desperation, "Sir, two of my assistants, Richard Napier and Samuel Bernard, have already died in jail at Rajapur and I too, it seems, may meet my end here behind the bars. So for God's sake do something."

The President folded the letter and opened another. After many letters he had written to Shivaji requesting the release of his countrymen, he had received this curt message from Shivaji's emissary, Somnath:

"The release would depend upon your making up our losses during the siege of Panhalgarh and your completing the talks our emissary Daroji was having with you

before the siege of Panhalgarh, in which we had asked for the help of your big guns and ammunition against Siddi of Janjira."

Again Andrews wrote replies, but there was no word of making up Shivaji's losses or of helping him against Siddi.

Shivaji read the letters and calmly ignored them.

Then one day a guard came in and said, "Maharaj, Henry Revington requests an audience."

"Bring him in."

Revington slowly came in and bowed. Then he said, "Sir, you can see that I am ill. Still, as a last effort to secure my release and the release of my fellow countrymen, I would like to be freed on parole, so that I could go to Surat and try to persuade my officers to agree to your demands. I give you my word of honour that I shall return."

Just a moment's thought and Shivaji said, "Permission granted."

Only a few days later Shivaji received a message, "Revington's efforts proved futile, and now he has died of his illness."

Again the remaining prisoners wrote letter after letter to Andrews, and Andrews wrote letter after letter to Shivaji.

Ultimately, exhausted with the unending correspondence, Andrews wrote to the Prisoners themselves :

"I keep receiving letters from all of you. We too keep writing letters to Shivaji Maharaj, but he does not reply to a single one.

"But, in a way, are you not yourselves responsible for your hardships ? Your duty was to safeguard the goods of the Company, and had you been imprisoned while discharging this duty, the responsibility of the consequences could have been ours.

"But you have been punished by Shivaji for taking our gun to Panhalgarh on your own initiative and firing it on his fort under the Union Jack. Had there been somebody else in Shivaji's place, he too would have done the same thing in revenge.

"Is it the job of a trader to sell ammunition or go and fire the guns himself ? And this was done when Revington knew about the talks we previously had with Shivaji. Clearly you transgressed into his territory and committed an indiscretion and you are suffering for it."

At last, on February 15, 1663, Shivaji ordered the release.

Thankfully, the Englishmen stood before him in a row and bowed low.

Shivaji gave a brief, simple warning for them, "Go and tell your superiors never to forget one thing : we rule here. The Firangi's business is business and he must stick to it !"



SOLDIER PAYS FOR HIS PITY

FOR the last twenty-five years the same story had been repeated monotonously. Fort after fort had fallen. The Adil Shahi Sultanate was on its way out, and of this Khavas Khan was sure. Who was to be blamed for all this ? That wily Maratha called Shivaji ! Khavas Khan fumed at the very thought of him.

Shivaji Maharaj was out to conquer Bijapur. Not only did he wish to put an end to Adil Shah, but it was also his aim to rub out Mughal Shahi, Kutub Shahi, Siddi Shahi and even the Portuguese from the map of India. Shivaji kept on increasing the strength of his army and navy.

Khavas Khan invited all his generals one day and said, "This young Badshah is to rule over you in years to come. Till then I wish to request you to keep the Sultanate from ruin."

The generals were in a quandary that Bhonsle was really on the verge of making Adil Shahi a part of his kingdom. They could sense the inevitable. There were only handful of able men among them. Who could accomplish this impossible feat ? Yes, there was one who could match his strength with the bravest and the hardest. He was Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan, a Pathan. Long ago, he had migrated to India and was absorbed by Adil Shah in his service. At that moment he was a Subedar of Miraj and Panhala. There were two parties in the court of Adil Shah, Pathans,

and men of Deccan. He was the leader of the Pathans, and his loyalty to Adil Shah was well known. Now, he listened to Khavas Khan, the Prime Minister, very patiently. After his speech was over, all the generals looked towards Bahlol Khan and they said with one voice and heart, "Bahlol Khan is the best among us. The Sultanate of Adil Shah continues to exist because of him. Enemies have run away; leaving their weapons at the mere sight of him." Thus they flattered Bahlol Khan. Everyone including the Prime Minister, Pleaded : "We are afraid that Shivaji will wipe us out of existence. So we request you to help us in protecting our land. Kindly undertake an expedition that will check the nefarious activities of this Maratha."

The Khan was now longing to exhibit his might, and without wasting a second he prepared for the assault. He was presented with two elephants, four horses, costumes, and a number of weapons. Bahlol Khan was now equipped to lead an attack against Shivaji's army.

He went about his job swiftly. He collected his army. Renowned generals were his assistants. He commanded an army that was twelve thousand strong when he left for the expedition. He came to Tikota at first and then went to Umrani after two days. He had planned to collect a much larger army.

Shivaji was at Panhala when he came to know that Bahlol Khan was coming with his huge army. He invited top men like Pratap Rao Gujar and Anand Rao, for confidential talks.

Maharaj asked, "How are we to oppose Bahlol Khan who is on his way with his massive army?"

"If Maharaj tells us his plan, we are there to execute it to the best of our ability," all of them obediently replied.

"Bahlol Khan has come with an advance party of a few thousand soldiers. He is not very far from this place. We must tackle him at once so that he is not able to move."

Shivaji's plan was to surround the Khan and catch him unawares. Pratap Rao and others understood what Shivaji had in mind. Maharaj entrusted the attack to Pratap Rao and said, "Bahlol Khan is longing for a fight. Do away with him."

Pratap Rao saluted Maharaj and left. He gathered an army of fifteen thousand Mavalis along with experienced generals like Vithal Pides Atre. Anand Rao Maharaj, Krishnaji Bhaskar, Viso Ballal, Siddi Hilal, Vithoji, Shide Dipaji, Rant Rao, and left for Panhala.

Pratap Rao reached Umrani. Khan knew nothing about Pratap Rao's unexpected move. Before he knew what was happening, he was completely surrounded. Pratap Rao was quite aware of the prowess of the Khan.

It was summer, and there was only one pond in Umrani which supplied water to

the Khan's army. Pratap Rao decided to assume control of the pond and this was not difficult. There were no guards at the pond, and so Hilal surrounded the pond immediately. Though the Khan's water supply was blocked, he was totally ignorant.

Visaji, Baltal, Vithal Pides, were slowly closing in on the camp, from all directions. It was only when the Khan's elephants were taken to the pond that they were aware of their plight. Suddenly there was a cloud of dust and the Khan's men saw a general on horseback rushing towards them, followed by one thousand horsemen. The general was none other than Pratap Rao Gujar. Khan's soldiers were now in panic. Bahlol himself got his Patha regiment ready within a short time. Pathans were tall, strong and disciplined soldiers, and the Khan was prepared for a fight. All of a sudden, the Marathas attacked. Siddi Hilal and his five sons took part in the attack. A fierce battle ensued.

Arrows darted past whistling through the air. The battle continued for three long hours. A huge tusker from the Khan's army became wild. He broke the noose with which he was secured and rushed towards the Pathans. He caught them one by one with his trunk and threw them away like so many logs of wood. Many of them lost their lives before Bahlol Khan's mahouts tried in vain to capture the elephant. Vithoji Shinde, Vithal Pant, and other Maratha generals also rushed to get the elephant. Bhaik Khan Tarin, a Pathan general, mounted an attack on the Marathas. Thus, there was a fierce battle for the elephant. Sidoji Nimbalkar successfully captured the elephant and

brought him to side of the Marathas. The Marathas thus captured the best elephant that Bahlol Khan possessed.

The Khan was bothered with the lack of water. It was summer, the heat was unbearable and the Pathans were in the thick of the battle and they were thirsty. Elephants and horses were dying of thirst. Pratap Rao's strategy had now worked. What could be done ? Bahlol Khan was utterly helpless. He could not run away as his whole army was surrounded on all sides by Maratha army. The Khan himself was dying of thirst. He felt weak and miserable. There was only one way out. That was to surrender to Pratap Rao. The alternative was to get killed.

Finally, the Khan sent his envoy to Pratap Rao. The Khan surrendered. All his pride vanished. The envoy came to Pratap Rao and in a very apologetic tone he said, "We are not your enemies. But, we have to obey the orders of Badshah. Now that we are among you, please do not take us to Shivaji."

The massive Pathan turned into a lamb, in the hold of a wolf. "I shall never fight with Shivaji," he went on repeating. And

Pratap Rao pitied the Khan ! He thought he had proved the might of his sword in such a way that the Khan would not again dare attack any part of Swarajya. His heart was filled with pity and he decided that Bahlol Khan should be freed. Whatever punishment he got was sufficient for him. He could never attempt any more expeditions against Shivaji.

The Khan escaped because of Pratap Rao's generosity. The Pathan army went back.

Bahlol left that place, but the sting of his defeat made him all the more vengeful. Pratap Rao pardoned him, but he had created a vicious enemy who would strike at any moment.

Maharaj was at Panhala then. He was delighted to know that Pratap Rao had defeated Bahlol Khan and captured his elephant. But when he came to know



that he had set Bahlol Khan free when he was so well trapped by Pratap Rao, Shivaji was furious. How could Pratap Rao excuse Khan without consulting him ? Whom did he ask ? Why was the Khan not arrested and brought before him ? Had he been arrested, Pratap Rao would not have lost any prestige. Now Shivaji was sure that Bahlol Khan would nurture revenge like a wounded serpent set free. He would destroy the land, the loot all the wealth ! Pratap Rao had shown unwanted pity and he was the commander-in-chief. Indeed, he was fit only to be a soldier and not a commander !

Just when Pratap Rao was very happy in the thought that he had defeated the Pathas, and made them look small before him, he received the letter from Maharaj. The questions posed by Maharaja jolted him cruelly back to reality. "Why did you entertain a conversation with him ? Why did you not kill the Khan ? Or arrest him ? Who permitted you to release him ? That, surely, was not part of Commander-in-Chief's responsibility."



Pratap Rao saw before him a very angry Maharaj, with eyes red and blood-shot. But it was too late now to repent. A spent arrow could not be re-called.

Whatever Maharaj had written was all true. Bahlol Khan remained in Kolhapur District and did not go back to Bijapur. He collected more men and waited for a better opportunity.

Pratap Rao's mind was full of anguish due to the grave mistake he had committed. He took it very ill that Maharaj had been angered. He kept on listlessly plundering Deccan plateau.

It was to restore his prestige after this setback in Karnatak that next month Pratap Rao was sent against Bahlol Khan, severely censuring him for his neglect in having let that Bijapuri general off instead of crushing his power once for all, when he was at his mercy at Umrani in April last. The Rajah wrote to his general in anger, "Bahlol has come again. Go with your army, destroy him and win a decisive victory. Otherwise, never show your face to me again !"

Stung to the quick by this letter, Pratap Rao sought Bahlol out at Nesari, "in a narrow passage between two hills." Smarting under his master's censure, he threw generalship to the winds, and rushed upon the Bijapuri army, followed by only six horsemen. The rest of his soldiers hung back from the mad charge. The gallant seven were cut down by the swarm of foes, and much havoc was done among the Marathas who were

disheartened by the fall of their leader ; "a river of blood flowed". Shivaji greatly mourned the death of Pratap Rao and repeated for his angry letter. The dead general's relatives and dependents were well provided for, and his daughter was six years later married to Rajaram, the second son of the king.

Anand Rao, a lieutenant of Pratap Rao, relied the disheartened army of his chief. Shiva appointed him to an independent command and ordered him to return alive without defeating the enemy. At this Anand Rao went off with the whole body of his cavalry far into Bijapur territory in

search of Bahlol. Diler Khan, with the Mughal army, advanced promptly to the succour of his brother-Afghan, Bahlol Khan. But Anand Rao, not daring to fight the two such large forces, retreated towards Kanara, making forced marches of 45 miles a day. The two Khans, unable to overtake the mobile Marathas, gave up the pursuit and turned, Bahlol to Kolhapur and Diler Khan to Panhala, whence, after a five-days' halt with the intention of besieging it, he fell back on his base.

Anand Rao, penetrating further into Kanara, robbed the Bazaar (peth) of Sampgaon, about 20 miles from Bankapur, in Bahlol's Jagir, capturing 150,000 hun worth of booty. Thence he set out on return with 3,000 ox-loads of plunder. Bahlol and Khizr Khan, with 2,000 cavalry and many for soldiers, tried to intercept him near Bankapur, but were defeated after a desperate battle and put to flight with the loss of a brother of Khizr Khan. Anand Rao robbed the entire Bijapuri army, capturing 500 horses, 2 elephants, and much other prize.

But the Bijapuris had their revenge immediately afterwards. Bahlol Khan, regarding the loss (of the elephants) as a great disgrace to him, became desperate, attacked the robbers again, and being reinforced, secured such a victory that the Marathas had to abandon 1,000 horses and were pursued for a long distance. It was not the Marathas policy to fight pitched battles during a raid. So, Anand Rao rapidly retreated with his booty to Shiva's dominions and left it there in safety.



THE PRELUDE

THE treatment accorded by the Moghul Emperor to their uncrowned King angered and embittered the Marathas, and any chance of compromise with the Moghuls was now ruled out. It became evident that there was no way out except expulsion of alien rule, and to this end they vowed their services unto death. It was obvious that alien rulers could not be trusted. They were just not in the habit of keeping their promises. So once again started the arduous task of annexing territories and forts. With perseverance Shivaji set upon the task of recovering all the forts and territories he yielded to the Moghuls under the terms of the treaty. With the seizure and possession of vast territories, the idea of now obtaining legal sanction for his possessions started taking shape. By virtue of power and responsibility Shivaji was already the uncrowned King of the newly-conquered Maratha territory. His followers and people already started referring to him as Shivaji Maharaj. Convention demanded that a son, whose duty was to be humble before his parents, should not glorify himself more than his father. It was, therefore, only after Shahji's death in 1664 that the idea could be conceived of Shivaji being crowned as King of Maharashtra.

Ten years had now elapsed since Shahaji's death and in 1674 preparations were made for his coronation. A King must be crowned

by the people, and the coronation must have divine benediction. Therefore, contact was immediately made with Ram Das, the head priest of the Maratha Brahmins of Maharashtra. Ram Das was inclined to approve of the idea and Shivaji's mother also gave him her maternal blessings. But there were difficulties, and doubts began to be expressed about the form the coronation should take.

It was agreed that the coronation should be in accordance with the dictates of Hindu Shastras, and the insignia of Royalty be bestowed on Shivaji at this formal and religious function. But now that orthodoxy and religion had come into a picture of great political importance, difficulties began to present themselves. It was questioned whether the traditional ceremony of a Hindu coronation could at all be held, because the Shastras decreed a preliminary investiture of a sacred thread. It was like putting the cart before the horse. Orthodox opinion was thus a deadlock in the situation.

The matter was finally referred to a scholar of merit, Gaga Bhatt of Benares. He proved to be more progressive than his contemporaries, and held the view that orthodoxy should not come in the way of a man who had himself fought for the protection of Hindu religion. The time-bar rule for the thread ceremony could be waived in Shivaji's case. Shivaji proved his merit and right to ascend the throne so well through his independent achievements, that Shastraic injunctions could be shown to be in his favour.

When this reassuring message reached Shivaji, he invited Gaga Bhatt to visit him

at Raigad. The holy man was received with pomp and splendour, for he had removed the great impediment which stood in the way of a Shastraic coronation.

The astrologers of the court were summoned and asked to fix the time and day most auspicious for the coronation, and accordingly the coronation was fixed for the thirteenth day of the first half of Jesht of the same year. The corresponding English date is given as June 6, 1674.

Preparations for the coronation were now moving fast. They gathered momentum at Raigad, which was to receive recognition as the capital of Shivaji's new Kingdom.

A King, once crowned, must have a palace. He cannot continue to live in a fort like a soldier. Architects and stone-masons from nearby areas were soon invited to come and design a palace for the new King. Around it, eighteen spacious buildings were designed, which were to be out-houses and office premises for those who were to serve the new Monarch.

Shivaji always believed Raigad as his lucky charm. Besides, it symbolised, in its quiet tranquillity, the hopes and aspirations of his followers, their desire for a sanctuary after their many clashes with the dominating foreigners. Raigad had always symbolised freedom for Shivaji. It was now to become the symbol of his sovereignty. Raigad was the place where he also died. Before choosing Raigad as his official residence, he had consulted Pandits and had it confirmed that this was the part of his Empire which would prove auspicious and which would increase his bounty.

As Shivaji was the first King, he was not bound by any precedents. Instead, as his objective was to entertain the people of the soil, he wanted to give them the type of entertainment with which they would be familiar, avoiding the trappings and ornamentation of foreign rule.

So came the fourth day of Jesht, which was the first day of the celebration. One hundred thousand Brahmins gathered on that day to recite verses from the Vedas and to chant appropriate pieces from the Shastras.

For nine days, thereafter, the preliminaries lasted, and, on the thirteenth of Jesht, which was the coronation day of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. That was the day of days for the Marathas and the Mavlis, a day when the blessings of Bhavani came true with the scion of the Bhonsles stepping on to the golden throne, having shaken off the dust of many a battle which he had fought.

Earlier that morning Shivaji had announced the names of the eight Ministers of State he had appointed and confirmed them in their new officers. He also named the two men who would be his principal Secretaries of State, each being allotted his sphere of work or department, for a Monarch could not move with the same elasticity as a supreme commander. Shivaji, while retaining all powers of State in his hands, was now compelled to delegate the routine duties to the men he had selected to serve him.

Shivaji was crowned as the Sovereign of the Maratha Kingdom, with the titles of Chhatrapati and Kshatriya Kulavatansa

bestowed on him. The coronation was celebrated with the pomp and splendour befitting the occasion. The simple soldier, accustomed to hard living now ascended a throne and wore the mantle of a king. All around was the glittering magnificence of a pompous celebration. His throne, his dress and his umbrella glittered in gold and bejewelled ornamentations. From behind all this, his rugged and simple but noble heart beat the same rhythm, which it always did, to the tune of freedom from alien yoke.

Bhavani, who had appeared in the dream to Maloji Bhonsle, had now translated that dream into reality. While hitherto only a sword had hung by the side of Shivaji, there now also shone a crown upon his head.



PERSUASION SUCCEEDS AT LAST

G.N.DANDEKAR

I
 IN the drawing-room Jija Bai sat fully wrapped up in a shawl. An oven, full of burning embers proclaimed the biting cold outside. Annaji Pant, Balaji Aoji and two others were deeply engrossed in some discussion. At that time a messenger rushed in, followed by Niraji Pant.

Niraji Pant paid his respects to Masaheb and offered her a basket of vegetables. Masaheb asked :

"What have you there, Pant ?"

"They are some brinjals from my kitchen garden," replied Niraji.

Annaji Pant looked at them. Masaheb told him, "Look here Annaji, some people remember even minute things. I had casually spoken to Niraji's wife about the monotony of the same type of vegetables available here. And look, the good girl here has immediately sent these brinjals."

Niraji said, "There is nothing commendable in it. There were plenty in the garden and so I brought some."

"Please do not mistake me. I am touched by your concern even over such minute things. There are people who forget even the major issues of life."

"Please forget about it, Masaheb, and don't let it bother you," requested Niraji.

"Why should I not ? You have all done the most impossible things. You have defeated those mighty warriors who attacked you with all their armed might. You have shown your valour. And still there are people who dare to laugh at your deeds ! So much blood has been shed. Is there no value for it, or for the young boys who have staked their lives for freedom ? Were they fools ? Yet some people flatter the Badshah ! What a shame !"

"We have been continuously clamouring for our own King, our Emperor duly sworn !" Balaji promptly expressed his wish.

"What is the use of your telling me, my children ? I know that all of us are very eager to witness this great occasion. But, unless he (Shivaji) takes it into his head what can we do ? It is as good as drawing lines on water" said Jija Bai.

Suddenly, a messenger announced the arrival of Shivaji.

"Let him come ! We are all eagerly waiting for him," said Jija Bai.

Niraji, Annaji, Balaji and the rest stood up, and Masaheb looked on with longing eyes, as Shivaji crossed the threshold. He touched the feet of his mother tenderly and thus paid his respects as Jija Bai held his arm and made him sit beside her. Shivaji said, "Masaheb, nothing can beat your love in this world!"

"Hold your honeyed tongue. I would rather have you come to see me every day than hear those sweet words of yours spoken to allay the pain of your long absence."

"But, mother, it is you who have taught me to work. And, now, you want me to visit you every day?"

"No, my child, I know that I am not a match for you in smart talk, though, you are my son ! Well, be it so ! Tell me from where you are coming ? What news have you brought ?" Jija Bai asked her son.

"Masaheb, let politics and battle fields be left to us. For your part, just be satisfied with seeing us victorious." And turning to Annaji, Shivaji asked, "Annaji, do you remember the medicine prescribed by the Vaidya ?"

"Yes Sir, one or two herbs were not available, and so we got them from Aurangabad. The decoction is being prepared. As soon as it is ready it will be brought here. Normally, the doctor comes and examines Masaheb every day," Annaji replied.

Masaheb then spoke with disgust.

"Shivba, enough of these decoctions and medicines ! Your medicine has no power to cure the disease that ails me." Shivaji sat very close to his mother, took her hands very tenderly in his, and slowly pressing them he said : "Masaheb, nothing is lacking here now. Once you owned only thirty-two villages, now your kingdom has expanded into three hundred and fifty forts and fortresses. Each one of them is strong enough to resist enemy attack at least for one year. Holy rivers like Krishna, Koyna,

Vennya, Savitri, Gandhari all flow perennially through your kingdom. You have under your command some of the most powerful generals of the time. Each one of them can deal with a hundred soldiers single-handed. Anything you wish to have on this earth will be at your command within minutes. My father left me a little jagir, and I have enlarged it into a mighty, vast kingdom. What is it that ails you, now ?"

Tears rolled down her cheeks. Wiping them with her sari she said,

"Shall I tell you why I am pained ?"

"Yes, please tell me," said Shivaji.

"Raje, your word is law. A violation of it spells death. Even as your word is honoured and feared, so should you respect the feelings of others. Otherwise, people will not rely long on your words." Jija Bai explained her pain.

"Yes, I will do anything you bid me do," assured Shivaji.

"I say that the wish of your people to have a sovereign rule over them should be honoured." Jija Bai spoke firmly. Shivaji was silent for a moment. Both Balaji and Annaji stood up with folded hands. Shivaji emerged apparently from his absorption, and said.

"Annaji Pant, I do not like to see you standing with folded hands."

Balaji said, "Our wish is well-known to the master !"

"What do you mean ?" asked Shivaji.

Annaji said, "We can only request you to fulfil the wishes of Masaheb."

"Could you tell me what is lacking in the present regime ? I have been able to prove a deterrent to Adil Shah. I have forgotten an alliance with the Sultan of Golkonda. Your Aurangzeb had to acknowledge my might. I detained some Englishmen, and their people at Surat had no courage to set them free. I have re-built the Sapta Koteeshwara temple before the very eyes of the Portuguese and in their own territory. Our ships carrying the saffron flags sail the high seas fearlessly, while others have to take our permission to move. Siddi has just managed to keep his position. He can't stir out. Tell me, who is there who would not recognise Maratha might ?" went on Shivaji.

But Jija Bai retorted forcefully :

"I know that you have fought the foes outside. Yet, many people in Maharashtra still consider you a dacoit and a burglar."

"Let them think what they like. I am not going to involve myself in any useless quarrel," Shivaji said with determination.

Annaji Pant recognised the urgency of the situation and said in a soft voice :

"Master, nobody doubts your authority. Your gallantry and valour are no secret. Yet, it seems to be all in vain without the sanction of a religious rite, a sacred ceremony."

Shivaji raised his voice and said :

"Do you say the same thing, Annaji Pant ? If you think that you are unable to serve in a kingdom over which a proper king, a duly anointed ruler is not sworn in, you are free to leave the service."

Annaji answered with equal firmness.

"Only one power can dismiss this servant of the Maratha Kingdom Death ! Master, do you understand me well ?"

Shivaji cooled down and said in perfect politeness,

"I am aware of your loyalty, Pant. Don't you know the Sloka about the lion"

Annaji recited it.

Shivaji enthusiastically added,

"See ! Does the lion have to be ceremoniously proclaimed a King by the other animals ? Is he not King by his own right ?"

Jija Bai, who had been listening patiently, broke her silence :

"Where do you stand Shivba ? A lion definitely is not sworn king. If we had been animals, and behaved like animals, there would have been no need for any rites. But do the animals build temples for Maha Dev ? Do they fall at the feet of the Mother Bhavani and offer humble obeisance ? Do they bow down in respect to the Saints and Yogis ? Or are you sure that they eat their food with taste ?"

Shivaji replied,

"I do not under-estimate the importance of ceremonies and rites, mother! What I mean is that the rites to be performed for a brave soldier should be baptism with blood. It is the wounds on his brave chest that matters, and not the application of sandal wood paste or holy ashes, or sprinkling of sanctified water. It is not important whether he wears a diadem.

What matters is whether his hands have been hardened by handling weapons."

"I know, it is useless to argue." He continued smiling at his mother. "It is after all you who have taught me all these things."

Jija Bai Said, "Yes, but I have also taught you that a nugget of pure gold is useless. To fashion it into an ornament fit to be placed around the Lord's neck, it has to pass through a number of tests. Lumps of gold are not given as offerings. Similarly, you must go through the rites, and ceremonies to be recognised. Those who are close to you do recognise your authority. It is essential to show to those that may deny you that you are a sovereign Emperor by authority. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that you go through the whole gamut of form and ceremony."

This long-drawn speech proved too much for her. She started heaving. She looked up at her son, and saw him immersed in thought. And she resumed :

"Raje, whatever you have to decide must be done here and now."

Shivaji turned to his Secretary, Balaji, and said,

"The ceremony would cost quite an amount of money."

Balaji said without any reservation,

"But, Sir, it has to be performed for the sake of the public."

"Just as we spend on construction of forts, maintenance of cavalry, cannons and other equipment, so also do we have to spend

money for the coronation ceremony. It is only fitting that it should be so."

Shivaji Maharaj was bitter as he said, "Annaji Pant, I have not a pie to spend on this ceremony. Construction of forts is altogether a different matter. If our fort is strong we can fight our enemies. That is not the case with pompous pageantry and meaningless ceremonies. People will eat and make merry, and then all will be over."

Annaji was not a bit perturbed and he said,

"You need not release a single coin from the treasury. Only say that you are ready for the ceremony. That would be enough."

"How will you get the money ?" asked Shivaji.

"We shall collect it through a special tax." Annaji.

"That means, you will make the poor people pay. No, Pant, it is not possible. If it means that my subjects have to suffer. I prefer to remain without a crown."

"Please excuse me, Sir ! Without demur, the Marathas in their love and devotion will offer all that may be required for the sake of their Emperor. How can I tell you how deeply all of us feel the urgent necessity for a king. If you will only consent, you will find a flood of wealth and all the paraphernalia flowing into Raigarh."

"I don't want to listen to any complaints later on," said Shivaji.

"Be fully assured, Sir ! We only request you to give us your consent," replied Balaji.

Shivaji kept quiet for sometime. Then he spoke with feeling,

“Annaji Pant, if this coronation is to take place I would have preferred to enthrone myself in the presence of Tanaji Malusare, Baji Prabhu, Murar Baji, Kanhoji Jedhe - my dearest friends. Alas, all of them have gone. I cannot think of enjoying the ceremony without them. You may say whatever you like.”

The conversation came to an abrupt end. Shivaji was not prepared to agree, and no amount of argument would have persuaded him.

II

Gaga Bhatt stayed with Masaheb. He had become the centre of attraction not only for Pachad folks but also for the towns and villages situated around.

By that time, the intention of Masaheb, and the Secretary to have a coronation ceremony, was known to all the people around Pachad. In fact, the whole of Deccan longed for the day. The only difficulty was to obtain the willingness of Shivaji himself. He did not pay heed even to the words of his mother on that count ! People wondered, what would happen !

A ray of hope in the form of Gaga Bhatt illumined their hearts. Gaga Bhatt was the most famous Pandit from Kashi. It was learnt that he had taken a vow, (with the holy water of Ganges in his hand) that he would see a sovereign Emperor sworn in Deccan. If he did not, he would never return to Kashi. All the people, rich and poor, big and small, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, farmers, weavers, blacksmiths, gold-smiths,

tailors, clerks, accountants, all of them visited Pachad. They came from all parts of the country and they came in all sorts of conveyances. The cooks were exhausted because of continuous cooking and serving. The store-keepers were also in a similar plight.

Gaga Bhatt was seated on a high platform and Jija Bai sat in front of him in the courtyard. The place was packed to capacity.

Gaga Bhatt continued his preaching. He cited many examples from different religious books, quoting authorities, and said,

“Janak’s ethics, Vidura’s ethics, Chanakya’s economics all of them were unanimous. There can be no kingdom without a king. Without a king, the affairs of a country will be in chaos. Although, it is possible to rule a kingdom with one’s might, it is better to set the seal of sanction through religious rites. It is imperative and it ought to be done.

Once, long ago there was anarchy in a certain place. No one paid heed to another. There was chaos all around. The Rishis and saints of that land gathered together, and held a meeting. They came to the conclusion that the havoc could not be stopped till the kingdom was duly handed over to an able person. So they agreed to nominate a competent person as the King. It was only then that social life progressed smoothly.

“How can a kingdom exist without a king ? It would be just like the solar system without the Sun. Does anyone take shelter under a fictitious cloud ? So is a Kingdom without a king. The land must be controlled

by a king, a duly sworn king. A religious bath, anointing the chosen ruler with the waters of seven holy rivers is a pre-requisite. There is a profound significance hidden in this ceremony. It means that all these rivers, or the areas surrounding them, accept the king, who got bathed in the waters, as their master. Earth from seven holy mountains should be brought to make a seat for the 'Abhisheka'. That means, all the areas where those mountains are situated also accept the king as their master".

Gaga Bhatt explained the urgency of the ceremony performed. Words came out of his mouth in an eloquent stream and the audience was spell bound. Jija Bai was now more determined than ever. Yet realising her personal helplessness she pleaded.

"But, Guruji, what can we do when Shivba is not willing for the ceremony."

Gaga Bhatt was confident. He said, "Yes, is that the hitch Masaheb ? I shall try to persuade him. He is your illustrious son. I am sure he will not dis-respect the authority of the scriptures that I represent. He has to be sworn in, Masaheb. There is no alternative."

The crowd dispersed. Shivaji arrived home and was extremely pleased to have Pandit Gaga Bhatt as his guest. He touched his feet in reverence. Gaga Bhatt was eager to be with him alone and requested him to accompany him to Raigarh.

Shivaji treated him with great reverence. He took him to Raigarh in an ornate palanquin and with fully decorated

elephants and horses marching ahead of him. Maharaj himself walked bare-footed. Gaga Bhatt requested him a number of times not to go on foot but Shivaji replied, "Please excuse me, I hope you will not go against this wish of mine."

"Would you agree if I requested you to do any other thing ? But that shall be done later" said Gaga Bhatt.

"I am sure, Guruji your order would be well-thought-out one." Shivaji was equally adept in his reply. Now the palanquin slowly came to its destination. The crowd wound its way through forests of teak, pine, Deodhar and Catechu. The leaves rustled in the breeze, cooling the sweltering heat of the afternoon. When Gaga Bhatt set his eyes on the main gate, he was stuck by the impregnable defence that the fort provided. He had seen cities like Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Bikaner, etc. But he appreciated the uniqueness of the defence and the beauty of Raigarh.

The palanquin now entered the main fort. Shivaji gave a fitting reception to Gaga Bhatt and led him to an exquisitely decorated seat. He stood before Gaga Bhatt with hands folded. He said, "Guruji, I have only one request to make. Please stay here at Raigarh for two months and let it be filled with your sanctified presence."

"I too have a favour to ask of you" Gaga Bhatt replied. "I am at your service," answered Shivaji. "I request you to be present during those two months. Otherwise, you will leave me alone and roam about," Gaga Bhatt added laughing

heartily, Shivaji joined in the laughter and said, "I shall do as you wish."

Shivaji had kept a place ready for Gaga Bhatt. He took him to the place and saw that all arrangements were perfect. Then he said,

"Now, please let me take leave of you. I shall be here in the evening."

III

It was a moon-lit night. Supreme serenity reigned everywhere. In the enclosure of Jagadishwar temple two persons sat, close to each other, Gaga Bhatt and Shivaji. They talked in whispers to each other. The guards stood still like statues outside the temple. The main speaker was Gaga Bhatt.

"Therefore, a kingdom must have a king, a plenipotentiary invested with authority. Just because somebody addresses one by the title one does not become a king. It has to be confirmed and sanctified by a religious ceremony. You cited the example of a lion, the king of beasts, and said that a mere ceremony has no meaning. That is true, so far as that goes.

"When you live in a society, its customs have to be followed. Some ceremonies, functions, rituals are to be performed, if not for anything else, at least for the sake of the people. It is true to say that one of the functions of a king is to satisfy the people. You know that Sri Rama abandoned Sita to satisfy his subjects. He must have felt that he was cutting his heart into two pieces and separating one from the other, yet he continued to rule without his wife, all alone. He hid his sorrow. Could you imagine the agony he must have undergone

? Did he not suffer for the sake of the people? However much you dislike it, you have also to undergo all the religious rites for the sake of your people."

Gaga Bhatt was silent. Maharaj remembered something and said,

"You have not answered one of my questions."

"What is that?" questioned Gaga Bhatt.

"All my most beloved friends have gone. They have been slain. How can I" Pleased Shivaji.

"Maharaj, you have lost nothing. The task that you have undertaken is a sacred one. Gain and loss are the obverse and reverse of the coin of life. Take the example of Yudhishtira. After the great war of Mahabharatha, he was to be sworn. He said, 'For whom shall I be sworn? I have lost all my brothers and friends. My Preceptor and revered ones like Bhishma, who would have been happy to witness the present ceremony are no more. Nay, we killed them! Even my sons have been slain. I am not going to be a king. I shall go to the Himalayas and do penance.' On hearing this speech the best of sages, Lord Krishna laughed and said, 'Yudhishtira, it may be easy to leave everything and become a Sannyasin but remember you are running away from the battle field, and you are a Kshatriya. Society is a big chariot, it has to keep on moving. If you become a king, only then can you drive this chariot. Be wise, Yudhishtira, and for the sake of those people, who have survived in spite of the Mahabharatha war, you must be crowned.'

"As Yudhishtira once listened to Lord Krishna, will you also now listen to my word ? You have captured the forts of your mightiest enemies. Emperors and Sultans now acknowledge your might. Now, your subjects need a religiously sworn king. They will raise their heads and declare that they have got a sovereign Emperor of their own, and that they do not care about what others say about it.

"Maharaj, this is the longing of the people. Won't you listen to it ? I request you, urge you, nay, order you in my capacity as heir of the head priest of all the Southern Royal Dynasties, that you must accept the coronation ceremony performed with all the religious rites. I have not thought ill of anyone throughout my life. I have not hurt anyone. I have not disobeyed any religious commands. Now I have only one wish in my mind, that there should be a Hindu Sovereign Empire in the land, and if there is any one most suitable to rule over it, that is Yourself !

"Kavi Bhushan has already stated that had not Shivaji existed, everyone would have been forcibly converted to Islam. All the poor people, all the saints, all the law-abiding people, the women, the handicapped and the old have their hopes centred in you. Therefore, I fold my hands in all earnestness and make this appeal to you, Maharaj." Before Gaga Bhatt could do that, Shivaji got up and touched his feet and said :

"Please do not make me feel more ashamed. I shall abide by your wish."

Gaga Bhatt was overwhelmed as he embraced Shivaji. He said,

"Go to Pachad early in the morning, and convey your decision to Masaheb. She is longing to hear this news."

IV

Jija Bai sat on a cot. Shivaji was beside her. She stroked his back with trembling hands as tears ran down her cheeks. With a choked voice she spoke :

"Once the ceremony is performed, I shall be free to leave this world."

Shivaji remonstrated, "Then I am taking my decision back."

"Don't talk like that, my son. The dream of centuries is to be fulfilled. Please do not say 'No'. This body has become old. It will die within a few days. You know that all our wishes cannot be fulfilled. It is the law of life that one does not live forever. Man likes to possess a thing, and once he gets it, he thinks of another. That is an unending chain. Your case is different. It was the wish of the people for a number of years. Only your consent was not there. Now we have got it and you should not turn back," Jija Bai explained carefully.

"It shall be as you wish," Shivaji consented.

"My blessings are always with you."

The news spread like wild-fire, and the joy of the people all over Maharashtra knew no bounds.



THE CORONATION OF CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ

PROF. M. Y. KHAN

Introduction

CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ was born in 1627 at Shivneri, near Junnar. When he was twelve years old, his father Shahaji bestowed on Shivaji thirty-six villages out of his Poona Jagir. As he grew up, Shivaji defeated the Moghuls and the Adil Shahis and extended his dominions. He became the master of a large crack force of cavalry and infantry which began to be feared for its hurricane-like movements and eagle-like swoops. He also had a big powerful navy which inspired awe and ensured respect. At the same time, he had amassed immense treasure. By the age of forty-four, he had become a de facto independent king of an extensive part of Deccan. He was no more a Jagirdar, or a subordinate chief, or even a feudatory Prince. He was, therefore, in every way fit to be crowned as King.

The Moghul Emperor Aurangazeb became fully alive to the danger posed by Shivaji's activities. So did several other rulers, such as the Sultan of Golkonda. In order to be their equal, Shivaji resolved, properly enough, to have the religious ceremony of coronation (Rajyabhisheka) performed

according to Vedic rites and assume the title of Chhatrapati. (It seems that this title was already intended to be taken when Shivaji



reserved the umbrella – Chhatra - to himself. Again it was intended to emphasise Shivaji's superior position).

Preparations for the coronation

Preparations for the coronation were started. The choice of the place fell on the strong fort of Raigad which Shivaji had always loved. The fort was spacious enough to accommodate the vast

concourse that would be gathering there on the historic occasion. Shivaji held consultations with his advisers, and having formed his decision invited the great Deccan; Pandit of Benares, Gaga Bhatt, to act as the Master of Ceremonies. Bhatt arrived in due course and he convinced his opponents about the necessity of looking upon Shivaji as "a Heaven-sent warrior of undoubted Kshatriya characteristics and attributes as defined in the Smritis and the Bhagavad Gita."

A large number of distinguished guests were invited and brought to Raigad fort in special palanquins. Many pandits, Kings, Nobles, Diplomats, friends and Kinsmen gathered at the capital. Incidentally, Shivaji posted strong guards at every pass in the Konkon so that Bahadur Khan, Aurangzeb's general, could not come to prevent the coronation.

On May 26, 1674, Shivaji's "thread ceremony" was performed. It was necessary to enable him to be crowned with Vedic rites. Before the beginning of the coronation ceremonies, Shivaji visited Pratapgad and worshipped his family deity, Tulja Bhavani. He also visited several other temples and shrines.

The coronation was fixed for Saturday Jyaistha Shuddha Trayodashi, Shaka 1596, corresponding to June 3 (or 5), 1674. The principal function was to take place early in the morning, an hour and twenty minutes before sun-rise at the astrologically auspicious moment. Shivaji spent the eve of the coronation in fasting, prayers and meditation.

The coronation of the Chhatrapati

On the day of the coronation, Shivaji woke up before dawn and had a ritual bath. Soon after this he went to offer his respects to his old mother Jija Bai and the other elders, and sought their blessings.

The coronation was truly gorgeous and imposing. The first important rite on this memorable occasion was the abhisheka. Shivaji was dressed in white clothes for it, and his chief Queen Soyra Bai had her saree knotted to his robe as they do at marriage ceremonies. They sat side by side on two paats (low wooden stools). Sambhaji, Shivaji's eldest son, sat on the step in front. The eight Ministers of the State, led by Moropant Pingale (Peshwa or Chief Minister), with the insignia of Royalty in their hands, stood around the canopy which was bedecked with precious pearls. So did the representatives of the four varnas – namely, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras – holding golden, silver, brass and earthen jugs respectively, filled with the holy waters of the four seas and the seven sacred rivers of Bharat. The presiding priest Gaga Bhatt, amidst the sounding of the Shahnai, nagara and other auspicious musical instruments and the boom of a cannon, sprinkled on Shivaji's head the holy waters and sacred rice, chanting the Vedic mantras prescribed in the Aitareya Brahmana for Mahabhisheka. One of these is the memorable blessing :

May thy subjects love thee ever
May thy kingship slip thee never.

Then for the Chhatradharan or coronation proper, Shivaji was dressed in rich, red robes and costly ornaments. He performed

Shastra Puja by sprinkling gulal (red and yellow powder) on his war weapons. He once again paid his respects to the elders of his family.

The coronation hall was bedecked in rich velvet, brocade and pearls, with its walls covered with sacred Vedic signs and symbols. The gold-covered and diamond-studded throne was a raised stately seat, with four pillars at the four corners in order to hold up the awning made of the cloth of gold. The palace gates and grounds were decorated with green banana and mango leaves. Two ceremonial horses and two richly caparisoned elephants stood guard at the gates. G.S.Sardesai observes : "The coronation ceremony was modelled on the old Aryan traditions. A gold-laced flag accompanying the vermillion-coloured national emblem, the grand royal umbrella (chhatra), the gigantic drum (nagara), were the usual appurtenances of pristine Hindu royalty and were revived on this national occasion."

When Shivaji took his seat on the throne, lotuses and other flowers made of gold, silver and jewels were showered on him and his noble guests. The pancharti with lighted lamps was performed by the suvasinis. Priests chanted prayers while subordinate chiefs and Jagirdars, military captains and civil administrators and thousands of villagers and village officers hailed the Monarch. Right then, cannons were fired from all his forts in salute to the new king. Gaga Bhatt came forward with the chhatra (royal umbrella) and held it over Shivaji's head and the people hailed him as Maharaj Chhatrapati, Lord of the Throne, Head of all the Kshatriyas.

About eight O'clock in the morning, as soon as the Chhatrapati became free from the religious performances, he gave an interview to the assembled nobles and priests. They paid their homage to the newly crowned king and to each he gave gifts of money and rich robes (pashaks). He also granted interviews to the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English envoys. Return presents were given to them and the whole assembly was treated to pan and attar.



Thereafter, the Chhatrapati mounted his charger and went in triumphant procession to the Jagadishwar temple in the capital. From there he mounted his elephant and rode in State through the streets of the fort, to show himself to the thousands of his people who had gathered to greet him, and also to pay a visit to the temples of

Maha Deva and Durga. Small flowers made of gold and silver were showered among the throng, shouting victory to the new king. Ascetics, beggars, hermits and all kinds of poor people who had assembled, received gifts, food and attention in different ways. Having worshipped the two deities, the Chhatrapati returned by another road amidst the "Jaya" acclamations of his happy subjects.

Then he went back to the palace where his eighty-year-old mother and others fondly received him. It was a moment of supreme happiness to Jija Bai, when her crowned son stood before her to bow and receive her blessing. She felt fortunate to have witnessed the coronation and along with it the fulfilment of her dream of an independent kingdom for her son. She had really lived for this day ; for she died only twelve days after the glorious spectacle of the Rajyabhisheka, leaving twenty-five lakhs of hons to the founder of Maratha Swaraj. While dying she might have felt like Mary, Jesus' Mother "

Now lettest thou thy servant depart, O Lord,

According to thy word, in peace ;

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people ;

A light for revelation to the Gentiles,

And the glory of thy people !

The True Significance of the Coronation

The coronation was the grand climax of the Chhatrapati's career. It was at once a

public demonstration of his power and achievements.

It was mainly used to give a final shape to the constitution of the Maratha Kingdom. The Chhatrapati also started a new era (Rajashak or Rajyabhishek). It begins from the date of his coronation. No wonder, therefore, he is known as the Shakakarta, "the maker of an era".

Over and above everything, the Chhatrapati by his coronation dealt a death-blow to the idea that he was a small Jagirdar of Poona and as such the bond servant of Bijapur State, or that he was just an opportunist.

Conclusion

The Chhatrapati's coronation is the most important event in his life and in the history of Maharashtra. It gave him the new position as the crowned king of Hindavi Swarajya. It created a sentiment of patriotic love of country in the hearts of his people. This patriotism was of such intensity that it lasted a hundred years at least. It weathered successfully the Great Moghul's invasion of Maharashtra after the Chhatrapati's death, and even led to the extension of the power of the Marathas when Aurangazeb was no more.



THE DEBT OF HONOUR

PREPARATIONS were afoot in Shivaji's capital. No stone was left unturned to make the occasion a gorgeous one. New palaces and rooms of state were erected, and consecrated by the singing of traditional hymns, the burning of sacrificial fires and libations of holy water. In the audience hall a throne was raised, rounded by figures of tigers, lions and elephants and carved round its base with the thirty points of the compass in symbol of Shivaji's new Imperial claims. In long trains from every part of India eleven thousand priests and one hundred thousand visitors journeyed towards Raigad, where they were entertained as Shivaji's guests for four months. From Benares the greatest of the Brahmins of that sacred town, Gaga Bhatta, travelled southwards in great state to perform the coronation ceremony. He was met by Shivaji and his Ministers, who dismounted at his approach and conducted him by slow stages to Raigad.

First Shivaji visited the temple of the Mother-Goddess at Pratapgad. He presented the shrine with an umbrella of pure gold, forty-two pounds in weight. Then, accompanied by a few followers, he entered the temple and passed many days in vigil and prayer. While prostrate in prayer before the altar he fell into a trance and from his mouth a faint thin voice, which those present declared must have been that of the Mother-Goddess Herself, began to prophesy the future history of the

Maratha State, the final collapse of the Moghul Empire, the entry of the Marathas into Delhi, the twenty-seven generations' rule of Shivaji's descendants.

Shivaji being absent from Raigad, the English envoys were received by one of his Ministers, Narainji Pandit, whom they found to be "a man of prudence and esteem". They presented him with a diamond ring and his eldest son with two mantles. Shivaji had not known of the approach of this embassy when he left Raigad for Pratapgad and had made no arrangement for their reception ; and , the town being crowded, they could not find accommodation, but had to live in a tent.

Henry Oxinden (who was one of the English envoys) was informed, "Two of your staff may come to offer obeisance along with your presents, half an hour after sun-rise tomorrow. One of our men will take you along."

Henry kept himself in readiness. His dress struck a strange contrast to those worn by the Hindu nobles in their white muslin dhotis and togas of yellow or scarlet silk. True to the style of those days the English wore periwigs, feathered hats, lace cuffs and buckled shoes.

Shenvi now waited for the messenger. The latter came at the stipulated time and Henry and Shenvi got ready to go. There were four men to carry the presents. The messenger saw this and suddenly stiffened.

"What has happened ?" asked Shenvi.

"You are permitted to take only two persons with you."

Henry knew the futility of arguing. He told two of them to stay back and left along with Narayan, Shenvi following the messenger.

The main fort and its surroundings were crowded with people clad in robes of various colours and designs. At the foot of the fort there was a huge gathering. People, men, women and children were moving swiftly towards the main fort in thousands. Henry could barely manage to push his way through the throng and reach the market place. He was surprised to see this mammoth gathering from the loft.

Armed guards marched to the tune of martial music. They wore pantaloons and coats peculiar to Mavalis, and from their waists hung the swords they used so often. Their heads were covered with colourful turbans. Marksmen stood on one side pointing their rifles upwards. There were hundreds of gallant horsemen who stood armed to the teeth. Swords gleamed in sun-shine. Men with bulging biceps and scarred chests stood exhibiting their battle-wounds in heroic pride. Mounted camels stood in front with drummers ready; for the signal to start. Yonder stood two stallions, with their trappings of rich embroidery. Two elephants stood at the entrance, their foreheads gaily painted, silver chains hanging around their necks with a gold lump in the centre. Rich brocade covered their backs. One of them carried a profusely decorated canopy and on the other a mounted soldier held a

saffron flag aloft. It was such an array that met Henry Oxiden's eyes that day. The details of the celebrations were well worked out. The whole procession moved on in perfect order.

The messenger ushered Henry and his associates inside through the entrance. Pomp and splendour such as this was unknown and unheard of in an inaccessible and hilly tract. He saw streams of people pouring in from all sides forming a vast ocean. An assistant of Noroji Pandi approached Sir Henry and took him to a vantage point and explained to him everything about the pageant.

"Maharaj will be arriving any time now. That peculiar instrument that you see there is meant to measure time. The auspicious moment will be known as soon as it is filled completely.

"This shamiana (large tent) has been specifically prepared for the occasion. It is our custom to decorate it with leaves and flowers.

"That square is a permanent one, and it is meant for the throne. The throne itself is made of thirty-two maunds of gold. They are real pearls, with which you see it encrusted.

"That canopy around is made of wood.

"That vacant place on either side of the throne is meant for the queens and royal guests. They have just started coming in.

"Look, there comes Jija Bai Sahib, the mother of our King. She looks very tired now.

"There – those persons standing with golden plates in their hands are the Ministers. Moro Trimbak is the Prime Minister, and Ramachandra Neelakanth the Finance Minister. There stands Ravji Pandit Rao, Hambir Rao Mohite is the commander-in-chief. The other one over there is his private secretary, and that the chief secretary. At the end stands our Chief Justice."

A group of Brahmins were chanting Mantras. The chieftains were all standing in a line on either side of the throne. Close by were Shetty Desh Mukh, Deshpande, Watandar, Patel, and Kulkarni. There were others, Marathas hailing from different parts of the country.

"Here come the ushers and mace-bearers.

"That is Gaga Bhatta, who has a shawl tied around his head. And here, he comes ! Shivaji Maharaj himself !

Clad in white robe, crowned and garlanded with flowers, Shivaji entered the great hall of his palace, his queen-consort Soyra beside him, their robes being knotted together in token of their union. Behind Shivaji came his mother and his son Sambhaji. Then followed his eight Ministers, each carrying a gold vessel filled with holy water. He approached his throne, which was covered with a canopy of cloth of gold from which pearls hung in festoons, lotus blossoms of gold and emerald being thrown among the crowds during his slow progress across the hall. He mounted the throne and every gun in the city boomed homage ; from fort to fort along all the ghats Maratha guns answered the guns of the capital ; from the plains guns in every

Maratha outpost took up the loud salute, so that over every mile of country where Shivaji's writ ran people were aware of their ruler's coronation. Henry watched everything with great interest. Maharaj stood in front of the throne. He saluted his mother Jija Bai Saheb by bending forward. Then he saluted Gaga Bhatta and Balam Bhatta in the same manner.

The time-measure indicated that the auspicious moment so eagerly awaited had arrived. That was the moment for which the country had long been waiting, - waiting for centuries.

Marathi, the mother tongue of the people, Maratha customs, Maratha culture that had been so long under the iron heels of suppression were waiting for this hour of liberation. The souls of those martyrs, those men and women who died due to unimaginable tortures were all awaiting this hour of deliverance. Saints had performed penances longing for this occasions. All the resolutions, promises, cries and mournings of sufferings millions, vows, pilgrimages, penances and fasts, heard or unheard by the deities, were waiting for just this moment. All the merits of the good had just fructified at this supreme hour. Devas, angels would have descended to watch this great event as it was their man of choice that was now to ascend the throne. Look at Shivaji, the sovereign Emperor of the Marathas, full of gratitude beaming from his subdued countenance. Can one fathom the stormy thoughts that are thronging his mind ?

Outwardly, the stoic calm, the regal poise and bowed head could not reveal the

feelings hidden within. At this moment the memory of all those dear friends, who could not be present would have smitten him, of those martyrs on account of whose supreme sacrifice, and the dream that they had cherished, this day has been transformed into a reality.

Sixteen Brahmin women now advanced towards Shivaji seated on his throne and flashed ceremonial lamps before his eyes and swayed them over his head to ensure good fortune. The Shivaji rose and put over his simple white dress, a heavy robe of purple, embroidered with gold, and in place of the chaplet of flowers he put on a turban hung with tassels of jewels. The pontiff, Gaga Bhatta raised above his head the pearl-studded gold umbrella of Imperial Sovereignty, the soldiers clashed shield on spear and the crowds shouted and cheered.

Gaga Bhatta then started reciting hymns, in a deep resonant voice. Finally, he articulated the proclamation, "Kshatriya Kulawantas Maharaj Simhasanadheeswara Raja Shiva Chhatrapati Ki Jai."

The crowds took up and there was a chorus of voices that rent the air : "Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Ki Jai."

People did not really know what to do. So much were they overcome with joy ! They embraced one another, while tears of joy streamed down their cheeks. They waved their towels and clapped their hands in glee.

"Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Ki Jai."

The spectators showered flowers of gold and silver, popped rice, and vermillion powder on Maharaj. The darbar was a riot

of colours with flowers of all types arranged in banks and banks of beauty. Bards sang songs of praise celebrating the valour of the great ones who had departed leaving the fulfillment of their dream to this most auspicious moment ! The thunder of voices that boomed was deafening. Moropant Pingle and Pandit Rao now showered Maharaj with gold coins. Then, there was a stampede for offering presents to Maharaj. Some brought muslin cloth, brocade, costly turbans, others shawls. All these were carried in plates, which Maharaj gracefully touched with his fingers in token of acceptance.

Henry chose this occasion to signal to Narayan Shenvi, who raised the golden ring Henry had brought as a present. When Maharaj saw him, he beckoned to Henry to come close to the throne. Shivaji Maharaj seated Henry under the canopy on the back of decorated elephant. The commander-in-chief stood on one side with a goad in his hand. The victory parade moved on. The infantry marched on in front as well as at the back of the royal elephant. An orchestra followed the infantry. Behind them, a sea of heads surged and swelled as in a storm. They were all immersed in happiness.

Today, all those who had sacrificed their dear ones considered themselves the most fortunate people on earth. They forgot all that they had suffered. Their pains were washed away by the waters that anointed Maharaj during coronation. Shivaji was the King who ruled their hearts. The heavy load that weighed on them seemed to have lightened. They would soon be on their way to the temple. Vermillion powder,

flowers, parched rice, were to be showered from the house-tops, buildings, shops, as Maharaj was to pass in all his rich regalia. All the doors and windows were packed to capacity just to get a glimpse of their beloved Emperor. Women, who usually confined themselves to their houses, were out to see Shivaji. Roads were crowded. The guards found it difficult to make way for the royal elephant. The boom of crackers filled the whole atmosphere.

Descending from his throne Shivaji walked across the hall, and mounted an elephant of state hung on either side with gold tasselled carpets and went in procession through his capital. From every window there were showers of flowers and coloured rice on his head, lamps were waved over the procession, waved again and again through the sudden breeze that blew over the town.

At last, the procession reached Jagadeeshwar temple. Maharaj descended from the elephant, went inside the temple, fell flat on his face in prostration to the Lord as his lips moved silently articulating, "I had taken a vow at Raireshwar and I toiled as far as it was possible for me. It is Thy grace that has made all this possible. What shall I say now ? Only this, that I have tried to fulfill Thy command."

Maharaj entered all the temples and worshipped at every shrine. The procession came to the last temple. There remained only one more Deity to be worshipped.

That was his own mother ! The mother, that was father, friend, guide, and all, was the last to claim his supreme worship.

Chhatrapati walked towards the palace of Kashi Bai Sahib. Maid-servants were all running about. Jija Bai Sahib stood trembling in anticipation.

Maharaj crossed the threshold and came inside. He moved forward, but was taken aback at what he witnessed. Mother Jija Bai was bending to pay him her obeisance, her body all al-shiver like an aspen leaf. Maharaj held her shoulders and asked : "What are you doing, Ma Sahib ?"

She replied softly : "Raje, you are no more Shivba. You are a sovereign Emperor. All are your subjects. So let me do that which every subject is expected to do."

Shivaji asked in wonder : "What ! Does not an emperor have a mother ?"

"I don't know, because I am not an emperor. But I know it well that, when a son becomes an emperor, he does not remain a son. He lives as an emperor."

"Mother," said Shivaba.

"Raje, I have a loving child, one who was conferred on me as a gift of the Gods in answer to my prayers. I wanted him always to be with me. But this land was in greater need of him and the land demanded him from me. I gave him. My cup of joy is full."

And before Jija Bai bent down to pay obeisance, Shivaji held her by the waist and affectionately said, "Ma Sahib."



THE COIN WITH A SUPERIOR RING

IT was the morning of an important day – the coronation of Shivaji as Chhatrapati. The date that history records is the 6th June June, 1674. Among the dignitaries invited for this great occasion were the English representatives of the East India Company. The British ambassador was also there with a gift for Chhatrapati, accompanied by his interpreter. The Englishman who was to represent East India Company on the occasion, set out for Raigarh from Bombay in a palanquin on the 10th of May, 1674. His name was Henry Oxinden.

He reached Choul at about seven p.m. on the 13th of May. He observed how extremely watchful Shivaji's administration was, during the whole course of his journey.

There was a small out-post of the Portuguese at Choul. Henry reached there in the evening. Day had already passed and night was slowly setting in. The Portuguese had locked all the gates of the fortress at the approach of the night. Henry was astonished at the dead silence that ruled the place even before night had set in. Of course, there was a gate open for him. Henry entered the fortress and met the Deputy Governor. He was welcomed by the Portuguese Deputy Governor, and talking casually asked the Deputy Governor, "Why do you close all the gates of the fortress even before nightfall?"

The Portuguese Deputy Governor replies, "Yes, we close them because that dangerous Maratha, Shivaji, is expected at any moment and he can annex our fortress in no time."

Such was their dread of Shivaji. But Henry himself had a taste of Shivaji's alert government. He was at Pachad, a village at the foot-hills of Raigarh, on the 19th of May, 1674. He went to Raigarh later on. The coronation ceremony was colossal in its splendour.

Henry, of course, had his eye more on political advantages than on the ceremony itself. His main aim was to point out the superiority of English trade, economics and politics whenever he got any opportunity. Henry had seen the coins that Shivaji had minted for circulation after the coronation ceremony. They had the words, "Shreeraja Shivchhatrapati" written on them, but they looked very crude. There was nothing of beauty or finesse about the minting of coin, and its sound was harsh, - they had a hollow ring. Henry got a bright idea on seeing the "Shivrai" coin. He had with him a coin with the figure of the British King etched on it, and it was much more beautiful to look at. It was really very impressive. Its ring was musical. The letters and picture printed on it were symmetrical and orderly. He placed "Shivrai" on one palm and his coin on the other and lost himself in imagination. He was delighted at his own plan. It was a

tricky one and he was thinking of the means by which he could get Shivaji into a commitment. He kept staring at both the coins while sitting at the accomodation provided for him at Raigarh.

As the idea flashed in his mind, he got up and went towards the fort. His interpreter accompanied him. He desired to see the Finance Minister. All the Ministers were residing within the main fort of Raigarh. The residence of Ramachandra Pant was also there. Henry reached the bungalow of the Finance Minister. The latter was there at home. He welcomed Henry, who broached the subject for which he had come. He said, "Look, this is our coin. That is your coin. See the difference ! How beautiful ours is and listen to its ring!"

The interpreter conveyed his message. Ramachandra Pant took both the coins ; looked at them carefully and was convinced of the superiority of the English coin.

Henry continued, "You may give the contract for minting your coins to our East India Company ! We shall prepare the superior type of coins of the same type for you," he suggested.

"Is that so ?" Pant asked raising his eyebrows.

"We impose only one condition ! You may call it a condition or a request or our own expectation !" Said Henry.

"What is it ?" asked the Finance Minister.

"Our coins should be made legal tender in your country along with your coins !" said Henry. Ramachandra Pant immediately understood the game. He understood that

the English wanted to extend their tentacles over the Maratha Kingdom. He quietly told Henry what he thought of the whole matter.

"It would be better if we meet Maharaj. I shall explain your request to him. Come along."

Both of them went to the palace immediately. Maharaj was in his antechamber dictating a draft to the secretary when Henry and Ramachandra Pant arrived with coins in their hands. Maharaj asked, "What is your plan, Pant?"

"Maharaj, this Englishman has come with a request. He says" Ramachandra Pant explained the plan handing over both the coins to Shivaji. Shivaji listened to him very patiently. While looking at both the coins in his palm, he said to his Finance Minister :

"I see ! This Englishman is worried about our coins which he says should look beautiful ! And he says that his coins should be accepted in our Kingdom as legal tender along with our coins ! This is his request."

Shivaji raised his eyebrows. He balanced the coins in both his palms. Then he told the Finance Minister :

"Pant, tell these Englishmen," he raised his voice and continued, "Tell them, when our goldsmiths put their skill into it, we shall have much better coins than they have. We do not need their skill !"

Maharaj threw the coins towards Pant. Henry understood that Raigarh was alert.



THE HAND THAT ROCKED THE CRADLE

Aai.....i.....i (Mother) Aai..... broke the sombre stillness of the surrounding scene. The slight frame shook and his entire being was racked by sobs. There he stood, the grown man from whose depths rang out this anguished cry of a boy. All that he was – he owed to the one whose mortal remains he had now confined to the flames. The sobs, the deep sigh, the silent but anguished look were terrains too sacred for strangers to tread. None dare enter that sanctum sanctorium. The vitalising, life-giving spirit had left its moral abode – the aching void was his.

Yes, “Aai” was gone. No more would he see her dear face ; for Shivaji her face was animated by something more than life. It was this face that inspired him and launched him out on his victorious campaigns. It was the same face which he sought out at the end of a hard day’s work, yes this was his (Shivaji’s) mother, known to the world as Jija Bai.

Today the spark was out. The deity in the temple that he worshipped had winged forth into the unknown void. The gentle voice was hushed and an unearthly silence hung like a pall around. Far out Shivaji could hear the sound of music and celebration that marked his coronation – the

culmination of his ascent up the thorny path of power, cushioned for him by the outstretched, welcoming arms of his mother, Jija Bai.

To Shivaji, Jija Bai was the very embodiment of the universal Mother. The respect that Shivaji always accorded to women reflected the nobility and sublimity of Jija Bai’s nature as no woman lacking in herself the qualities of nobility, magnanimity, gentleness and



grace could succeed in infusing nobility of nature or character to her children.

The development of Shivaji into a noble person can only be traced to this great lady. So great and beautiful was her character and personality, power of endurance and patience, her individuality and sublimity that Shivaji saw Bhavani in Jija Bai and Jija Bai in all the women he met. Shivaji saw her in the captive Moghul

Princesses, saw the same reflection in the poor milk-maid who clambered down the Rairi fort to reach her hungry child. He saw Jija Bai in all.

No more would he hear the wise counsel that guided and urged him on in his mission. The hours he spent talking to his mother gave him a true understanding of his crusade and the ability to correct any loop-holes in his campaigns. She was associated with the most important phases of his life. She was the lone audience for the expression of his innermost thoughts. She was both his follower and leader. Whatever his schemes were, she never failed to understand or to applaud him. Where, oh, where was that voice gone ? The warrior in him longed to wrest her back from the hands that had taken her away from him. Alas ! That was not within his power.

The supreme moment of her life when the flame of her life leapt up in one bound of joy was the coronation of her Shivba. Yes, that was how she had fondly called him. It was she Jija Bai, who had nurtured him from his childhood, and seen him reach the peak of his career. She found supreme satisfaction and pleasure at his coronation. Alas, even before all the festivities were over, she passed out in the evening of her life in the quiet of her Raigad home ! No illness marked her end. She just left him and disappeared.

Standing there beside the dying embers, the sobs stopped and a faraway look possessed him. Was it a flashback into the past ? Did he see her as the young mother whose word was law, whose wish his guiding star ? Had he failed her ? NO,

not if he could help it. She was his only companion in the long years that separated him from his father. The riches of Bijapur could be thrown aside at one pitch and toss for the abiding love of his Aaii. Yes, he remembered how his father wanted to groom him into a loyal subject of the Bijapur Nawab. How could he ? Could he forget the long evening when he sat beside her and heard the sordid tale of slavery and subjection to which his people were subjected ?

Could he forget what she expected of him ? Had he failed her ?

His father was never near her. Yet the loyalty she cherished for him was phenomenal. Would it not have been easier for her to swing her allegiance over to his father ? But no. The true Hindu wife that she was – she preferred to be in exile from the family of her birth rather than desert the man she had married. Shivaji had often wondered in later years at this aspect of his mother ! Now the events followed in quick succession. He remembered his uncertain childhood. Now at one place, then at another, his life swung like a pendulum from uncertainty of capture and death to the dubious safety of a fort. All this was bearable because of the warmth of her love and protection.

A rule shock brought him back to the stark realities of life. Yes, he had to go on. That was her wish. The ochre banner had no replace the crescent and star.



THE GREAT ROUT

THE coronation ceremony was concluded. It had been the most important and the most necessary event of the era. The memories of that scintillating event lingered even after the ceremony itself was over. Everyone, man or woman, young or old, soldier or farmer, rich or poor, without any exception, talked about it continuously. Such was the enthusiasm of the people who took part in it. Those who were able to attend and witness this historic event, considered themselves very fortunate. Those who were not able to attend, gathered the account from their relatives and friends who attended the ceremony. They all felt, however, that they were fortunate to have belonged to this great era.

It seemed as if the golden age of Ayodhya had repeated itself in Maharashtra. An empire based on equity, equality, justice and culture was established. The humility of slavery to an alien rule of three centuries and a half had been erased. Merriment, joy and mirth prevailed everywhere, in cities and towns, in villages and hamlets, in jungles and valleys, in forts and homes, in fact in every nook and corner of the new independent empire. Doubts and fears had vanished totally. New life coursed through the sinews of all creatures, human beings, animals, birds, and even trees and plants. A sovereign empire of the very people, had come into existence. Here they could demand protection ; claim justice, equality and affection, from their ruler. A sense of security prevailed everywhere. All, young

and old, helpless or sick, crippled or maimed, found a patron who would take personal interest in their welfare. Orphans rejoiced, as they could claim the emperor as their father. Nature blossomed, Sahyadri was overwhelmed with joy, as a tide of happiness swept over the land.

Alas ! providence is not king and merciful at all times. The mirth, the merriment and the joy of the people of Maharashtra could not last even for two weeks ! Dark clouds of gloom enveloped the Kingdom and a thunderbolt shook the Empire ! Not only Shivaji, but the whole of Maharashtra lost the Mother Jija Bai, who spread comfort to one and all through her courageous smile, at all times, now smiled her last, weary smile and left on her journey to join her departed husband. It was the unkindest blow for Shivaji. The man who faced uncompromising situations with a care-free smile was now weighed down by the blow and sank into despair. She had transformed Shvaji into a sovereign Emperor ! It was her dream fulfilled. But for her guidance and insistence Shivaji would have remained an ordinary person, and history would not have taken any note of his name ! The blow was totally unbearable for her darling Shivba. Shivaji constantly recollected memories of his childhood.

She was the mother who gave birth to this illustrious son. He came to her as a 'gift' from the Goddess Bhavani, in return for her deep devotion and penance. She was the mother, who nurtured in her womb

the passion for an independent kingdom, and who brought up the boy, moulding him in the cast already conceived in her mind, rearing him in the best of the traditions of all the heroes of our ancient culture, fusing into him the ethics of Rama, the political genius of Krishna, the skill and prowess of Arjuna, the strength and valour of Bhima, and above all the undaunted effort of Bhagirath. She was the mother who



caressed, coaxed and cajoled him, defied him at times and gave him the moral strength when he needed it most. She was the mother, who looked after the welfare of Shvaji's beloved colleagues, and their dear ones when they went away on duty. She was the mother who praised their efforts, their valour, and bravery and took part in their functions and ceremonies wholeheartedly and sympathised with them in their day of the sorrow and hardship, and even upbraided them if they failed in their duty. In fact, she was not only a mother to all of them, but she was also a friend, philosopher and guide. And such a mother had been cruelly taken away from them never come back! Shivaji was

extremely sad and so was the whole of Maharashtra.

To Shivaji came the experiences of both superlative happiness and extreme sadness within a short span of fifteen days. But could he go on rejoicing or could he go on brooding? He was an Emperor then, and had the highest responsibility towards his subjects. His stoic nature did not allow him to indulge in happiness or sorrow. He

was a philosopher in his own right. He was the person who could very well fit into the description of a Yogin as stated in the Gita, neither forgetful of duties in the intoxication of joy nor sunk in the misery of mishaps. He had no time to brood over his great personal loss. He realised that the treasury had been impoverished by lakhs of rupees due to the colossal expenditure on the occasion of the coronation ceremony. He

realised the need for acquiring funds, although Jija Bai had left a handsome saving of nearly one crore of rupees at his disposal at the time of her death. How long could the amount last?

With this thought in his mind, he sat in his apartment alone, fixing his gaze on the ceiling above. Could it be Surat! Of course, Surat was on his list, but he preferred to wait for sometime. In fact, he had written a letter to the Subedar of Surat to send him a tribute of nine lakhs of rupees (for the past three years) before the end of the monsoon. Or else, he warned him to be prepared for the consequences. But, the end of the

monsoon season was too far and what would he do till then ? Shivaji did not have to think more on that subject. His problem was temporarily solved in a very interesting way.

Aurangzeb lost all faith in Diler Khan Pathan owing to his quarrels with Prince Muajjam. He recalled Khan to Delhi. In his place, he sent one Bahadur Khan Kokaltash as the Subedar of Deccan. Bahadur Khan was an intelligent man, and an efficient administrator. As soon as he took over his duties, the first thing that he did was to study the whole situation through his perspective. He decided to change the strategy completely. He studied the shortcomings of the Mughals ; he also considered the points on his own side. In fact, in his own way, he planned a completely new strategy for his area. It was a sort of rejuvenation of the Mughal army, a renewed strategy !

As a first step in his plan, he changed the place of his permanent camp. He shifted it to a place called Pedgaon, about forty-eight miles east of Poona, on the banks of Bhima river. He constructed a fortress at Pedgaon and named it Bahadurgarh. It was a very strong and sturdy structure. He hoped that slowly he would be able to recover all the forts annexed from the Moghuls by Shivaji, or at least those which were in the vicinity. With this plan, he stationed his huge army in the fortress of Bahadurgarh. He was very much pleased and felt very confident. Very little was known at this time, of Haibat Rao Mankar, a commander of Maratha army. He had no opportunity to have his name mentioned in the records. He was in charge of the Maratha army of about nine thousand men.

Shivaji ordered him to attack the fort at Pedgaon and collect all the wealth. It was entirely left to Haibat Rao, the whole strategy and plan of attack and the specific deployment of his army. Haibat Rao considered it as a challenge, because he knew that Khan'' army was much larger than his own. But, he studied closely the situation and planned his attack accordingly.

As was the usual practice, Haibat Rao sent his spies to ascertain the position in enemy camp. His spies penetrated deep into the fortress and found out that the entire army was accommodated within. They also gathered vital information about hiding places, jungles nearby, routes to the fortress and loop-holes in the administration. They did not forget to gauge public opinion about Bahadur Khan. Haibat Rao was now satisfied. He chalked out a marvellous plan and took two of his generals into confidence to execute it. One of them was given the responsibility of manning a regiment of two thousand soldiers. Of the remaining, the other general was instructed to take a regiment of another two thousand along a different route, and launch an attack at an appropriate moment.

Early in the morning, when the Mughal army in the fortress was still in slumber's chains, the guards at the gates saw a huge cloud of dust in the distance. They guessed at once that the Marathas were launching an attack. The cloud of dust gave them the illusion of a much larger army approaching. The guards immediately reported to Bahadur Khan of the attack and told him that a mighty army was approaching the fort. Bahadur Khan gave orders to mobilise his entire force at once and to be prepared

for the attack. He donned his uniform and casually looked out from the bastion. The Marathas were still approaching and the cloud of dust raised by the hoofs of their horses suggested their large numbers. Bahadur Khan ordered all the soldiers to follow him and marched out of the fort to ward off the attack. Only a handful of soldiers remained in the fortress. He led the assault with his countless soldiers. The Marathas, having seen from a distance the approaching enemy suddenly turned back. Bahadur Khan was determined to rout the Marathas and he followed them, with his entire army. The Maratha soldiers entered into the forests nearby to dodge the Khan's army. They allowed the Khan's army to come close to them and as the army came nearer, the Marathas vanished ! They kept on appearing and disappearing from the thick forest, eluding the Khan's army, and luring them deeper and deeper into the forest.

Meanwhile, the remaining seven thousand soldiers hid in the jungles close to the fortress. Haibat Rao made sure that the Khan's army had gone at least twenty-five miles away from the fort as planned earlier, before he signalled to his other general. The latter took his regiment launched his attack from the back of the fortress, while Haibat Rao himself directed his assault from the front. There were hardly any soldiers in the fortress, as the Khan had taken most of the army with him. The Marathas raided the fortress, collecting diamonds, gold, jewellery, swords, and other ammunition and weapons very swiftly. The best part of loot was a herd of two hundred Arabian stallions which were kept ready by Bahadur Khan to be presented to Aurangzeb. Needless to say, the

Marathas raided every tent, recovered all valuables, practically before the batting of an eye-lid. They set fire to all the tents in the camp. They vanished as speedily as they came to attack. When the loot was counted, it was worth one crore of rupees !

In the evening, Bahadur Khan returned with his army, tired and spent out. The Marathas dodged him the forest by playing a game of hide and seek with his army. He was fretting and fuming and cursing them under his breath. He swore that he would plunder all the fortresses of Shivaji and finally returned to his fortress. And lo ! He was stunned to see his camp reduced to shambles. Most of tents were still burning whilst others had been reduced to ashes. And where were the stallions ? "Oh my God ! Ya Allah ! The treachery of it all ! What a humiliation !" cried the Khan. Who could console him? His dream of routing the Marathas had turned back on him. Leave alone his defeating them, they now held the trump card of victory!

Haibat Rao Mankar proudly exhibited the proceeds of the raid to Shivaji. They were so vitally needed. Shivaji's happiness knew no bounds ! He glanced at the stallions and patted Haibat Rao on his back. Haibat explained. Maharaj laughed heartily and said, "Haibat Rao, you have even excelled me ! I am proud of you." He was appropriately rewarded on the spot.



THE SOUVENIR



THE army was on the move. It was an expedition at which Chhatrapati Shivaji advanced as far as Kanya Kumari. On the advanced as far as Kanya Kumari. ON the way, the pious Shivaji issued a declaration to his army – “It is our desire to visit the many sacred shrines that line the western coast. So the army may march ahead and camp at Goa, where we shall join it. On our pilgrimage we shall be accompanied by only three or four bodyguards. The army must not give trouble to the civilian population. These are our instructions.”

The army headed for Goa while Shivaji, accompanied by his bodyguards visited Udipi, Shringeri, Gokarna and many other holy places. On the way from Gokarna to Majali, Shivaji’s horse suddenly ran wild.

“Easy, boy, easy !” Shivaji said, trying to control his fleet-footed steed. But the horse galloped at full speed into a forest, leaving the bodyguards far behind.

By the time the horse was brought under control and came back to the route, there was no sign of the bodyguards. Now Shivaji was alone. On the way to Medangere, Shivaji looked about him and a puzzled look came into his eyes. For, many villages that he passed were deserted.

“Strange,” he murmured. “Some houses are locked but some have their doors open as if the occupants left in a great hurry...”

And then his eyes narrowed. These were tell-tale signs that his army had marched that way. “Is this desolation caused by my soldiers ? Has my order, not to give trouble to the civilians, been ignored ?”

On and on Shivaji travelled, immersed in deep thought. But the horse and the rider were exhausted, thirsty and hungry.

There was a thatched hut in front and somebody in it !

Leading his weary mount to the hut, Shivaji looked in and saw an old lady.

“Yes, my man ?” the lady inquired as she saw him. “Where have you come from and what do you want ?”

After a slight pause Shivaji said, “I’ve come from Gokarna and have had nothing to eat for a whole day.”

“Dear Man,” the old lady exclaimed. “Let me see if those looters have left anything.”

“Looters, madam ?” Shivaji repeated.

“Yes,” the woman said bitterly. “The other day Shivaji’s army went this way and looted the villages. Didn’t you see the deserted houses of villagers who ran away in fright?”

Shivaji was silent.

“I’ve heard he is a good man,” the old woman continued. “I wonder how he allows his army to do such things.”

Shivaji was still silent. The woman scraped up some rice and gave him a hot meal. He ate the food with gratitude, thanked the woman and resumed the last lap of his journey to his army's camp in Goa.

A couple of days later, as the old woman came out in the morning to sweep her courtyard, she saw a couple of Maratha soldiers approaching her.

The aged eyes flamed up in anger.

"Yes, is there anything left to loot now?" She asked sarcastically.

But the soldiers hung their heads in shame.

"We're sorry, mother," they replied. "Whatever we did was against the Chhatrapati's orders. We ask for your forgiveness and that of all villagers. He has sent you golden bangles as a gift, in a gratefulness for the one meal he had at your house."

"Meal?" the woman's eyes opened wide. "Then, was that young man Chhatrapati Shivaji himself?"

"Yes," and he has also asked for a memento of his visit to your hospitable home.

"A memento? A memento from a poor woman to the Chhatrapati?" the woman mustered in amazement. Then she looked about her empty dwelling. Suddenly her eyes turned to her hands. In them she

held the broom with which she was about to sweep her courtyard.

She held it out and said in all simplicity, "This is all that I now possess to give to him."

The broom was taken to Chhatrapati. He looked at it thoughtfully and said, "A good gift. It will remind us always to sweep away impurities from our mind and those of our followers."

The lowly broom was decorated with a silver handle and from then it was taken wherever Chhatrapati went, as a message of cleanliness and purity.



THE CONCESSION AND THE LOSS

CHINCHWAD is a village situated south-west of Poona. It is on the banks of river Pavna. Moraya Gosavi was a devotee of Lord Ganapati and a famous yogin. Tukaram, Ramdas Swami and Moraya Gosavi were contemporaries. It is believed that Moraya Gosavi attained Jiva Samadhi. His son, Chintamani Maharaj Dev, also a devotee of Ganapati, had his Samadhi situated to the east of the one dedicated to Moraya Gosavi. Chintamani's son, Narayan Maharaj Dev also rose to fame by the grace of the Lord Ganapati. It only indicates that Chinchwad had been a seat of devotion for three generations. There also stand samadhis of some yogis and a beautiful idol of Lord Ganesh received by Moraya Gosavi while in penance at one place, Chinchwad. Narayan Maharaj had been revered by many a general of his time. It is said that some generals of Adilshahi and Mughalshahi also had a respect for him. Shivaji Maharaj's devotion to Narayan Maharaj was well known and Narayan Maharaj had great liking for Shivaji. For these reasons Chinchwad had become a place of worship as well as pilgrimage.

A huge religious fare was held at Chinchwad on the 4th, 5th and 6th day;s of Aagrahayan every year. This fair was considered to be a gathering in holy commemoration of the Mahasamadhi of Moraya Gasavi. The fair used to be a great occasion. Thousands and thousands of devotees were given food, and Mahaprasad was served on the

fourth day of waxing half of the lunar month (known as Sankashti Chathurthi) to all. The fair also provided opportunity for rejoicing and merriment.

Grain, ghee, jaggery, salt, coconuts etc. were used in large quantities. The generals serving in Adilshahi had provided all the facilities for this fair. There was a special concession, shown to Narayan Maharaj for the purchase of the required material.

He was allowed to purchase rice, salt, coconuts and other things from Pen, Panvel, Nagothana and such market centres, at extraordinarily low rates. It was a "right" , a privilege given to devotees. The real meaning of this concession was that Narayan Maharaj could purchase all the required material at just a "nominal", Price, irrespective of the ruling current market rate. It was a special "right" vesting with that place of pilgrimage. Narayan Maharaj's clerk visited these market places in season and purchased innumerablebags full of these items. The bags were mounted on the bullocks. The bullocks climbed the ghat from Konkan and came to Chinchwad.

Later on, the boundaries of Shivaji's territory extended upto the sea. The rules and regulations of Swarajya were applicable to all alike. Maharaj had appointed his own officers in these areas, as well. Maharaj had already amended the rules that affected the average farmers

adversely and cancelled all the special titles. However, the question of the concession of "low rates" of purchase granted to Narayan Maharaj was still not settled. No doubt, the farmers who had to sell their produce at such specially "low rates" suffered a loss. There was some injustice in it, and it did not fit in with the regulations in Shivaji's administration. Of course, Narayan Maharaj did not carry the goods for his personal use. He carried it only for religious and philanthropic purposes. But, that could not help prevent in any way the loss incurred by the farmers and retailers. It was a continuing practice carried on every year. Heaps of goods had to be sold at phenomenally low price !

It was again the annual occasion. Narayan Maharaj's clerk turned up as usual for shopping. A huge gathering of servants and bullocks accompanied the clerk. Officers and guards of Swarajya were on duty. They stopped the huge procession. Then the clerk asked, "Why do you stop us ? We are the people Shree Narayan Deo Maharaj and have come for the purchases, as we do every year."

"You cannot purchase the goods at any specially 'low rates'. You will have to purchase at market price," said the officer.

"Oh ! We have been purchasing our requirements at 'low rates' year after year. Even Badshah did not oppose this practice. In fact, he offered additional concessions to Shree Narayan Maharaj." Explained the clerk.

"That was the rule of Badshah then. Now, we are in Swarajya – our own rule," the officer insisted.

"It is really strange ! Even under foreign rule we got all the concessions and facilities for religious purposes. But now, this is the rule of our own Shivaji Maharaj ! And you are denying us our rights. Is it justice ? Does it conform to the ideas of Maharaj's religion ?" asked the clerk.

"Yes, This is justice ! You never knew and never gave a thought to the poor farmers who suffered due to concessions granted to you," replied the officer.

"Sir, you know pretty well that the goods that we take from here are not utilised in marriages of the sons and daughters of the temple staff ! We do it in the interests of the festival, to propitiate the Gods !" explained the clerk.

"I do agree ! But does that factor prevent the harm being done to the poor farmer ? Shivaji Maharaj does not appreciate this practice ! You had better obtain a letter of authority from Maharaj. Then, and only then will you be allowed to purchase goods at special rate !" said the officer with all the firmness he could muster.

"But, Sir, your Shivaji Maharaj is a well-known devotee of our Narayan Maharaj. How do you think he will stop the concession ? Be reasonable !" pleaded the clerk.

"Yes, but you know that we are obeying Shivaji Maharaj now. It will be in your interest to obtain the letter of authority. And then we shall allow you." The officer coolly replied.

"Now that we are helpless, the only course open to us is to obtain the letter of authority," said the clerk in all helplessness.

The clerk narrated the whole incident to Shree Narayan Maharaj. The latter was, of course, surprised. He sent his men to Shivaji Maharaj at Raigarh and requested him that he should be allowed the usual concession.

Narayan Deo's men brought the letter to Raigarh. Shivaji Maharaj touched his forehead with it reverently, as it came from a great devotee of the lord. Pant (Moropant) read out the letter to Maharaj. Maharaj understood the whole case. Here was a problem ; on the one hand, the purchases were being made for a religious purpose, on the other, the farmers suffered due to the extremely low price at which they were forced to sell their goods ! This happened every year in the same manner ! Was there a solution ? What would be his decision ?

Maharaj paused for a minute, and then told Moropant, "Pant, send a Government order to Shree Narayan Maharaj that his usual 'right' for the concessional purchased is cancelled with immediate effect. There

cannot be any purchase in this way any more!"

Moropant simply stared at him ! Before he could utter a word, Maharaj continued, "Pant, yes, this must be stopped ! It is

irreligious to make the poor farmer suffer ! Issue the orders and forward it to Narayan Maharaj !"

The orders were issued and was duly received by Narayan Maharaj. Narayan Maharaj never expected such a shocking letter, from Shivaji Maharaj of all the persons !

"This is a different Maharaja," he said : "let us purchase the requirements at the

prevailing rates !"

The very next day, Maharaj sent a letter to Narayan Maharaj. It was written with all respect, love and humility. It indicated that all the goods that would be required by Narayan Maharaj for religious purposes, and for feeding the devotees, would be sent to him at Maharaj's own expenses and that he need not worry about payment !



THE RETURN

KHUDA has offered a kingdom to that wily Maratha ! This is really too much !" Aurangzeb said to himself. He had pitched his might against Shivaji for more than sixteen years now. Lakhs and lakhs of soldiers were sent to his area to capture him alive or dead. Countless cannons and rifles had been wasted. Having tried all sorts of methods to annihilate him this strange Shivaji was still alive. An unaccountable amount of wealth was being wasted on Deccan from Delhim, Burhanpur and Aurangabad, yet it was Shivaji who proved successful always. Shaista Khan, Diler Khan, Jaswant Singh, Daud Khan and Mahabat Khan were all miserably humiliated by him. He made a fool of Bahadur Khan. Only Mirza Raja could keep check on him and sent to Agra. But what was the use? He had slipped away from under his very nose. He was at his wit's end. Who was there to oppose his steady progress?

Thus did Aurangzeb think. To his knowledge all had been tried and proved useless. Some of them had finished their turn. Now it was necessary to recall Bahadur Khan as he was totally fooled by Shivaji, and he was getting defeated by Adil Shah generals, as well.

Thus did his thoughts run on when suddenly Aurangzeb remembered the name of a very powerful warrior, one of the most brilliant, most valiant and intelligent generals. He would be a match for Shivaji

in every respect. Aurangzeb decided to send him to Deccan to tackle Shivaji. He thought that the general in his mind was the only one who could defeat Shivaji and that was Muhammed Kuli Khan.

Muhammed Kuli Khan! Would it be possible to recognise him now ? He had left Maharashtra nine years ago ! He was not a Hindu any more. He passed the last nine years of his life in unknown areas of Kabul Kandahar where he fought the Pathans on behalf of the Mughal Empire. Aurangzeb had converted him to Islam by force. He was not taking any chances. The shrewd Aurangzeb had sent him to the northern regions instead of sending him to fight against Shivaji, immediately after his conversion. This same Kuli Khan was once the commander-in-chief of Shivaji's army. The same Maratha warrior, commander-in-chief of Maharaj, became Muhammed Kuli Khan now. Formerly he was known as Netaji Palkar. He was arrested by Aurangzeb by treacherous means and later converted to Islam.

He had never reconciled to this conversion. It was at the point of the sword that he had been persuaded to accept Islam. Aurangzeb was not too kind, nor was he stupid. He took all care to see that Netaji would go to Kabul to fight the Afghans and remain there for an indefinite period, so that he could forget his earlier years. Years rolled on in apparently endless succession. It seemed that he had

forgotten Maharashtra. One other thought that painfully possessed him was "Who will accept me in Maharashtra now? Who would own me now?" However, what probably awaited his return was humiliation and dishonour.

Then the bolt fell. Muhammed Kuli Khan received an order from Aurangzeb. It said, "Go to Deccan". One can only imagine how he must have felt on receiving that



order. Memories of the past would have fitted past his mental vision. Those familiar mountains, rivers, temples, Maharaj, and Jija Bai Sahib all stood etched in his mind one after another. And, these scenes moved past fort Panhala, anger of Maharaj, his own disagreement with Maharaj and service with Adil Shah, and then his arrest, Kabul Kandahar, and those nine years, all them. And, now he was detailed to fight Maharaj ! Should he fight against his own Motherland ? Should he fight against

Maharaj !" Netaji Palkar put these questions to himself. Then a tornado of thoughts shot through his mind. He was obliged to go to Deccan, because it was an order of Aurangzeb Badshah.

Aurangzeb selected one more general to accompany him. He had already remained in Deccan for a long time. It was Diler Khan, the general who tried his level best to defeat the Marathas ; but unfortunately he could not even create a dent. The only things he was successful in was to restrain the swift movements of the Marathas. This time, Diler Khan was to command with Kuli Khan as his assistant. That was what Aurangzeb had planned.

Mughal soldiers started on their march. Muhammed Kuli Khan accompanied them. As he approached Maharashtra after a lapse of nine years a storm raged within him. One thought nagged him continuously ... go back..... go back.

Then he thought "How would Maharaj receive him ?" What would he say ? What would he think of me, of my conversion, of one who had left the Swarajya fold ? Would I be the target of his temper ? Would he send me back ? This was not time. "I must go back to Maharaj", he said to himself. "I must go back."

Aurangzeb thought that Netaji would now have become a confirmed Muslim. That was why he was assigned the Deccan campaign. Netaji, on the contrary, was waiting for an opportunity to leap out. The Mughal army advanced step by step. On a certain day Netaji stalked stealthily out of the camp. The how and where of his escape is lost to history. It is certain that

he escaped from the Mughal camp. Maharaj was at Raigarh. Every brick and stone of Raigarh was known to him. He was very eager to see Maharaj.

After a long march he reached Raigarh. The one time commander-in-chief now returned to same fort, an unknown man. Then Maharaj and Netaji met. That which transpired then can hardly be put into words. Feelings mingled and hearts sang One who had been given up for lost was now back.

Maharaj decided to forget everything. Netaji was after all his bosom friend. He could not afford to treat him like a stranger. He should return to the religion of his fathers. Was there no means by which this could be done ? There must be! Muhammed Kuli Khan should once again become 'Shri Netaji Palkar'.

Maharaj decided to perform a Shuddhi ceremony for him and received him back into the Hindu fold with due religious rites.

Finally, on the 19th of June, 1676 Netaji re-entered the religion of his fathers, as sanctioned by rituals. It was a virtual re-birth to him. What is conversion ? And what is 'Shuddhi'? Is it just like donning a new dress ? If enlightened faith is deepest, revived faith is strongest !

AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE TUSKER

SHIVAJI Maharaj entered Bhaga Nagar. The cavalry elephant was walking leisurely ahead. Theochre flag of Maharaj was fluttering in all its glory. Royal bugles sounded. The strains of martial music heralded the Maratha cavalry that was approaching. In the midst of them the royal elephant, decked in a colourful cloth of embroidered gold was walking at a dignified pace. Shivaji Maharaj sat canopied upon the elephant. Two servants fanned the Maharaj with chowries, while a third held a colourful umbrella over his head. Two musketeers with golden staffs in their hands marched ahead of that royal elephant and shouted, "Maharaj, Kshatriya Kulavatansa, Maharajadhiraj, Simhasanadhiswar Shivaji Maharaj."

Immediately the royal bugles responded. All the streets, houses, court-yards, terraces and manors in Bhag Nagar were full of men, women and children.

Shivaji Maharaj was leisurely watching the crowds in the capital of Abul Hassan Kutub Shah. Thousand and thousands of people flocked to see this Maratha King.

Slowly Shivaji went towards Dad Mahal. Hazrat Kutub Shah was well prepared to welcome the royal guest. Although Kutub Shah would have welcomed him directly it was the wish of the Maharaj that he should go to him instead, as he considered Kutub Shah as his elder brother. Such was the



respect shown by Shivaji to Kutub Shah. The Badshah (Kutub Shah) sent his ambassador and commander-in-chief to receive the Royal guest who was arriving at the palace steadily to the accompaniment of musical instruments.

In fact, the Badshah was growing nervous. He knew what Shivaji had done to Afzal Khan, Shaista Khan, Baji Ghorpade, Namdar Khan, and others. The same Shivaji was coming to see the Badshah.

Shivaji reached the gate of Dad Mahal. A hearty welcome was accorded to him. Maharaj descended. Important chieftains of Badshah accompanied him and they proceeded towards the palace.

Shivaji entered Dad Mahal. It was richly decorated. Kutub Shah got up from his seat and came forward, smiling, to greet Shivaji. Though he wore a smile on his face, the Badshah was plagued by doubts. Shivaji extended his hands to embrace Badshah. The latter, too, made a similar move. They embraced each other. At that moment, Kutub Shah realised that his suspicious were baseless.

They exchanged gifts. Their conversation was very cordial and friendly, revealing mutual regard. Kutub Shah was immensely pleased and greatly impressed by the dignified demeanour of Shivaji. He was a cultured person himself. He came to know the Maratha way of hospitality.

Then Maharaj went to stay at the place of residence reserved for him in Bhag Nagar. Kutub Shah made every effort to see that Shivaji felt comfortable. Shivaji stayed on for a number of days. There were reciprocal demonstrations. Days passed in friendly exchange of views and ideas.

Kutub Shah took personal care of Shivaji, and attended to his needs.

One day Kutub Shah got up an elephant fight, which was then in vogue as part of royal sports. Shivaji was invited to witness it as an honoured guest and he readily responded.

The arena for the elephant fight was got ready. The galleries were decorated with silken fringes. Special arrangements had been made for the seating of the chieftains and other dignitaries. All the important personalities at the Darbar were invited and were present in response to the invitation.

The field was packed with spectators. Elephants, Mahouts, servants, all were ready. Kutub Shah and Shivaji Maharaj sat close to each other.

At a given signal the elephant fight started. Shrill trumpeting filled the air. The champion elephants charged at each other. Mahouts were shouting, enthusing and guiding the elephants in their attack. Spectators, too, joined in the cheering. Shivaji appeared mightily pleased, enjoying the sport thoroughly. The Badshah was very glad to observe and watch Shivaji's appreciation of the whole course of the sport. He felt proud of his great beasts. He turned to Shivaji : "Maharaj, how did you like my elephant ?" "Incomparable, indeed, excellent !" exclaimed Shivaji. Highly pleased at the remark, Kutub Shah queried, "Have you any elephant of this kind in your treasure ?" "Yes ! Why one ? There are so many elephants of this sort with us !" Maharaj replied.

"Really ?" Badshah's wonder was mounting.

"Yes, in fact I have many of them," said Shivaji.

Kutub Shah's curiosity was roused, "Have you brought anyone of them with you?" Shah questioned.

"Yes, quite a few" replied Shivaji.

"Is that so ? Will you let one of them come up to the arena to fight an elephant of ours ?" asked Badshah.

"Why not ? certainly !" Shivaji assented.

Kutub Shah's curiosity reached new heights. Immediately, he ordered for the strongest elephant to be brought in. A huge tusker appeared on the field. He was loud in trumpeting his strength, raising dust as he moved furiously across the field. The spectators were eagerly awaiting the arrival of his rival ! Kutub Shah himself was eager to see Shivaji's elephant that would match this mighty tusker of his. Suddenly, Maharaj flanked towards the right and raised his eye-brows, and he signalled with a nod and his brave commander Yesaji Kunk, straightway stepped forward and saluted Maharaj. Kutub Shah thought that he was going to fetch an elephant. But, to the surprise of all, Yesaji removed his golden coloured sword, held it in his right hand and himself entered the field. All the spectators gasped in wonder as they realised that it was this man, not an elephant, that was going to fight the tusker at Kutub Shah's court. Yesaji was a man of ordinary stature, but it was a sight to see him fight the mightiest of elephants.

Yesaji raised his sword and gave a lion's roar challenging the tusker. The elephant charged towards him, trumpeting, raising a cloud of dust. As soon as the elephant

came close, Yesaji quickly dodged him. The elephant turned about the charged again and Yesaji evaded the elephant adroitly again. The elephant now becoming furious was charging with terrific force, but Yesaji, nimble on his feet, was dodging him every time. The more angry the elephant grew the more Yesaji dodged him. Every time the elephant charged, he got his head beaten against the wall, for Yesaji every time managed to evade the blow and step aside. And at every such move he struck the tusker hard with his sword. That made the elephant more and more furious. He was trying to seize Yesaji in his trunk and smash him to the ground, but all his attempts proved unsuccessful. The spectators, including Kutub Shah, watched this deadly sport holding their breath ; one could clearly see what the fate of Yesaji would have been, if only the tusker could succeed once.

Suddenly, Yesaji took the offensive and himself attacked the elephant. The latter was also seen advancing towards Yesaji. It looked as if the tide had turned now, and Yesaji was to be smashed. The elephant came closer and closer ! And there was a shrill cry, - how terrific ! Blood sprayed as from a fountain and soaked the earth. It happened within the fraction of a second, confusion reigned as the spectators thought that Yesaji was smashed by the powerful tusker. Then they heaved a sigh of relief, when they saw that Yesaji had cut the trunk of the elephant with his sword. The elephant fell down, and Yesaji walked up to Kutub Shah and Shivaji with a smile of triumph.



THE KNIGHT

IN the scorching heat of the mid-day sun, two riders were galloping along a road leading from Golkonda to Bijapur. Only two months back it had teemed with life, with throngs of people on their way to Raigarh to watch the coronation of Chhatrapati Shivaji. But now it was desolate. The two riders passed through village after village and all were deserted. Then one of the riders asked the other : "Why isn't anybody living in these villages ? Are they not within the Swaraj?" The question came from Netaji palker.

"Alas, Yes," answered his companion, none other than Shivaji, "but they are so far out on the border that we cannot effectively protect them from Mughal marauders"

With the sun high overhead, the profusely perspiring riders halted under the shade of a tree and looked about for a pond or stream to slake their thirst.

"There, by the side of a lovely hut, is a pool" Shivaji pointed, and the two led their mounts in that direction.

The hut stood almost on the bank of the pool, and looked deserted.

Netaji led the two horses to the edge of the water – and stiffened somewhat, as a muffled sob came from within the hut. Shivaji also heard it and motioned to his companion. Swiftly, Netaji went to the

door and Shivaji went to the only window of the hut.

As they stood listening, the sobs became louder and then were heard half-whispered words "Forgive me, Goddess Bhavani, but now there is no other way to save my honour but to kill myself"

At a signal from Shivaji, Netaji burst into the house – and stood still.

A young woman was preparing to hand herself before an idol of Bhavani. With a sudden stroke of his sword, Netaji cut the noose. Then in a kindly tone he asked, "my good lady, what has befallen you that you should want to end your life in such a ghastly manner?"

"My honour, Sir," – the woman replied amidst sobs.

"Your honour is safe now, lady" – Netaji replied softly. "You are now in the Swaraj of Chhatrapati Shivaji And with Raghoji as his general, no one dare dishonour a woman. Don't you know that tomorrow Shivaji is going to honour him in public and make him Commande-in-chief of the Maratha army?"

At the mention of Raghoji's name the woman started – and then broke down. Then her story was told It was general Raghoji himself who wanted to dishonour her ! Her husband had been a soldier under Raghoji, and he had been killed in action.... Raghoji had once come with him to his house and

had seen her..... And now that she was left alone he wanted to take advantage of her situation..... She had often resisted him, but this had made him all the more avaricious.... And he was coming over the next day, to-to- Then what course was there for her but to put an end to her life.....?

In deep silence Netaji listened to the whole story, - so did Shivaji who stood on the other side of the window.

As Netaji turned to the door, he said with quiet assurance, "Lady, there is no need to kill yourself..... There will now be no danger to your honour - I promise that !"

He closed the door behind him and joined Shivaji. As the two men rode away into the distance, not a word was exchanged. Shivaji's eyes looked into the distance, as if searching for something.

On reaching Raigarh, Shivaji made a brief announcement : "Tomorrow's function to honour Raghoji has been postponed."

Everybody was surprised. Raghoji wondered. But Shivaji said nothing. The next day, in the gathering darkness of night, a horseman stealthily stepped out of the fort. He was unaware of two other horsemen who were watching him and that they were on his trail.

About an hour later there was a knock at the door of the lonely hut by the pond. The door was opened - and the woman stepped back with a gasp of despair. It was Raghoji, came to dishonour. Then what about the promise of yesterday's stranger ?

Advancing into the room, Raghoji seemed to be leering at the woman as his eyes took on a wolfish look. He gruffly said : "Tonight I won't go back without Now there is no one to save you."

"There is" - the two calm words cut in like a knife across the room. Raghoji spun around - and then stood rooted to the spot. Before him stood Shivaji, his eyes smouldering like live coals. By his side stood Netaji, his sword drawn.

"Raghoji," Shivaji said sternly, "had I not heard this from the lady herself, I would not have believed that a brave general of mine would stoop to such evil deeds"

Raghoji stood still, his head bowed.

"Raghoji," Shivaji continued slowly, "you are dismissed from my service - and I banish you from Swaraj."

"But, Maharaj Netaji whispered, " you'd be losing a very able general !"

"I know," Shivaji firmly replied, "but I do not mind. If I lose a general, I can get another - but once a lady loses her honour, she can never get it back."



HER DEFIANCE

O keep thou her glory unsullied,
unshorn,

And guard the invincible hope of our nation."

AS Queen Savitribai entered the court, everybody stood up in respectful attention. The Queen cast a benign glance all round, smiled and took her royal seat. As a matter of routine, she began listening to reports from various parts of her small kingdom of Bellary Taluqa.

Suddenly, the chief guard from the border came in. He appeared very much perturbed. Something seemed to have gone wrong.

"Your Majest !" the guard bowed low and said, "our borders, nay the very kingdom, is in danger."

"What !" the noblemen exclaimed. Their hands instinctively reached for the hilts of their swords.

"Give us the full report," commanded the Queen calmly.

"Your Majest ! After their victorious expedition in Karnatak, Shivaji forces are marching towards our borders."

"But Shivaji would never attack us. Never. We have done nothing against him. And his declared goal is equally cherished by

us. Why should he attack us ?" asked the Queen.

"But Your Majesty, our intelligence report states that the marching force's intentions are hostile. They may force an entry into our territory any time."

The Queen was lost in thought. After a long moment of silence, she spoke with calm and confidence : "I shall think that they cannot be our enemies. But if they behave like foes, force will be met with force."

The court rose.

The Marathas did not heed the warning of the Bellary Queen.

After all, they were a victorious people. At that time, none of their neighbours dared face their might. So they marched into Bellary territory also. But the victory-intoxicated and care-free Marathas could not face the sharp onslaught of the Queen's force. They were pushed back and warned not to enter Bellary territory again.

The Maratha Senapati Sakuji Gaikawad stood arrogantly in Bellary's royal court. He had sought an interview with Queen Savitribai.

"Yes ?" the Queen asked.

"So, Your Majesty has given a nice reception to the Marathas !" Sakuji said sarcastically.

"We are very particular about visitors. To give them appropriate reception has been our proud tradition. Any complaint ?"

"Hm ! And you intend to repeat it ?"

"Of course ; if you intend to repeat your forced entry."

"I think the Queen should have a greater awareness of Maratha might. Nobody likes to incur their displeasure. It will be good for you if you consider the consequences of your attitude."

"Consequences ? Anything more than death ? We do not fear death, but we resent humiliation. You can go."

Senapati Sakuji Gaikwad's forces encircled Bellary. A fierce battle ensued. Savitribai's forces put up a gallant defence for 26 days. But they knew well that they could not hold out for long against the more powerful Maratha force. At last, they tried with all their might on the 27th day to repel the Marathas. But they failed. Queen Savitribai was herself wounded and taken captive. Little Bellary's tough resistance had filled Sakuji with rage. Savitribai must be taught a lesson. She was severely whipped.

Chhatrapati Shivaji's court was full. Senapati Sakuji was reporting his victorious expedition to Karnatak. In the end, he added : "And, sir, now I have to present to you, quite an unusual gift. It is Bellary's Queen Savitribai – now our captive. She dared to defy the Maratha might. I have taught her a fine lesson. She"

"I have got the report," Shivaji cut him short and ordered, "the Queen may be brought in with all due respect."

Savitribai entered Shivaji's court. She was defeated but defiant. Her eyes were afire with rage.

"I hear that you have suffered much," Shivaji said softly, almost apologetically.

"I am not sorry for that," said Savitribai.

"I am determined to offer compensation."

"I am not interested in your compensations. Do as you like."

Now Shivaji turned towards Sakuji. IN a solemn voice he said, "Sakuji, listen ! Ours is not a band of robbers. Each one of us is dedicated to one goal – the goal of Swaraj. And Swaraj does not mean Maratha tyranny imposed upon our own compatriots. How could you dare attack Bellary ? So many precious lives are lost. I ask, for what ? And, you whipped the Queen ? How could you insult a woman ? Sakuji ! You have insulted my mother. What a shame ! You are dismissed in disgrace, here and now !"

And now Shivaji turned towards Savitribai : "Mother, a horrible crime has been committed by my man. I earnestly beg your pardon. Won't you pardon your own son?"

Tears gathered in Savitribai's eyes. She looked towards Shivaji with motherly affection. And Shivaji saw in her the form of Jija Bai. He rose, touched her feet and stood shining in his victory. And Savitribai ? There she, too, stood, the victorious mother of a victorious son ! !



THE BLANK PAPER

SHIVAJI MAHARAJ knew no rest or respite. He was always engaged in enhancing the prosperity of the territories he had acquired by hard struggle. He had no time to wait, to halt or to feel tired. He handled all matters of administration personally and the Secretary had to aid him in all of them. His Secretary remained with him always. To be a secretary to Shivaji Maharaj was as good as becoming a Charioteer to the sun ! But, Balaji Aoji Chitre held this difficult responsibility with remarkable skill.

Whatever Maharaj undertook, be it a plan of attack, or writing letters, or conversation with strangers, the secretary had to be beside him. Repairs to the forts, careful attention to the eighteen factories and twelve Mahals was all part of his responsibility. All the secret plans were to be executed by him. He had to accompany Maharaj wherever he went. Even the family quarrels, ceremonies, in-coming and out-going relatives of Shivaji's had to be attended to by his secretary. This continuous grind left him completely exhausted.

On one occasion, Shivaji told Balaji orally about some details of a letter to be written. The letter was important and it was to be sent to the Subedar of Southern Konkan. Maharaj was in a hurry and told Balaji to keep the letter ready by night. Since the messenger was to go next morning he said

he would read the letter at night on that day.

Balaji confirmed and turned to other matters. On that day there was more work than usual. There was a heavy rush of clerks, officers and lieutenants, whose problems had to be attended to. There was not a minute to spare. Bags and bags of mail poured in and the secretary was reading them one by one. At the same time Maharaj was dictating the reply to each letter.

The whole day passed like this. Balaji had to run from place to place. It was night. The secretary presented himself in front of Shivaji. Maharaj was sitting on a mattress, leaning against a cushion. A torch-bearer was standing a little farther away with a burning torch in his hand. All of a sudden, Maharaj remembered the letter which he had told Balaji to write. He asked Balaji, "Balaji, have you written the letter?"

The secretary was struck dumb. He had no time to write it as he was busy. But Maharaj had not forgotten it. He asked Balaji again : "Have you written the letter?"

Now Balaji was in a dilemma. If he said "Yes," it would not be true. If he said "No," then the consequences would be worse. He thought for a moment and chose to say, "Yes, sir, I have written it." Thinking that he could write it the next morning

and keep it ready for the mail bag, he replied in the affirmative.

"Read it then," ordered Maharaj. Now, Balaji was really in a fix. What should he read? He had written nothing. He managed to keep calm. He took out a piece of blank paper and held it in front of himself. As he was about to read the letter, the torch-bearer came closer. The bright light illumined the paper and Balaji started : "Shree Tulja Bhavani....." Without a single pause, he continued to read. Maharaj was listening to it attentively. The torch-bearer looked at the "letter" . To his surprise, he noted that it was totally blank. He was astonished. He raised his neck slightly and found that Balaji was reading the blank paper without hesitation or pause. A broad smile lit up his face. Balaji was alarmed. Nevertheless, he continued to read. The restrained laughter attracted the attention of Shivaji Maharaj. He turned to the torch-bearer and asked him the cause of his amusement.

The torch-bearer was frightened, but held his peace. "Nothing, Sir." And he became very serious. Balaji, however, did not give in. Maharaj told him to continue reading and Balaji proceeded as if he had not stopped at all. There was fluency in the reading, and apparently Maharaj felt satisfied. The letter ended.

Balaji was sweating all over. But Shivaji Maharaj was very, very happy. He said, "Oh, how nicely you have written the letter. Your text is better than what I dictated to you." Balaji was happy not because of the compliments from Maharaj, but because of the relief. But then, Maharaj

asked him to show the well-written letter ! And he raised his hands to take it from Balaji. There was no escape now. The torch-bearer was also perturbed. Maharaj once again said, "A letter should be written like this. Give me that letter."

At last Balaji handed over the paper to him. Maharaj saw that the paper was blank, and smiled. Balaji felt that his very life was ebbing out. Shivaji Maharaj smiled all the more, seeing the man's confusion.

Balaji spoke apologetically : "Sir, please excuse me. I was busy throughout the day. I did not have time even for a single moment. That is why I could not write the letter. I was going to write it at night."

"But you are very clever in reading from a blank paper," said Maharaj, and laughed heartily. The torch-bearer also joined him. "Bravo Balaji ! I am proud of having a brilliant secretary like you. I am really fortunate," said Shivaji. Balaji's eyes were moist with gratitude.



ON THE TOP OF SHRI SHAILA

ON the auspicious morning of Vijaya Dasami the gates of Raigad were thrown open. The drums began to beat. The trumpet gave a beckoning call and twenty-five thousand veterans rushed out on war-hungry studs.

Raigad was used to this experience. On the auspicious morn of Vijaya Dasami, the Marathas crossed the frontiers every year, to carry on their standard to new provinces.

What was the plan of His Majesty this time ? Who would dare ask ? Nay, not even Hambir Rao, the Commander-in-Chief, dared to ask King Shivaji about the expand the Kingdom (Swaraj) and mount the horses on order – this was the rule – chalked out by none – but understood by all. Not even the queen-mother Jija Bai would question his Majesty as to the expedition, for that would mean a bad omen; the queen-mother knew in her heart of hearts that a new dream of the Hindu Empire would blossom forth when her blessed son marched out of his Kingdom. Her son was spilling his precious blood to establish a godly kingdom, on this earth – a kingdom where nobody would be subjected to any atrocities, nor the soul to any compulsions; this was the divine desire. It was in obedience to the divine desire that King Shivaji carried his standard to the different corners of the nation. Goddess Bhavani had blessed him. He was bound to be victorious. Where was the need to question him about his

plans? If necessary, His Majesty would himself inform his mother about the expedition.

But the people started guessing whenever the Maratha forces followed King Shivaji on his expeditions.

What was the expedition planned by His Majesty this time?

‘King Shivaji wants to terrorise the navy of the enemy He wants to conquer Honavar’

‘Nay – His Majesty is very pious He wants to visit the great Saint Maunibaba.....!’

‘No – the king wants his share of patrimony He wants, therefore, to reach a settlement with his step brother Vyankoji.....’

Thus the guess work went on. His Majesty kept the people guessing. His soldiers never bothered Whatever the expedition..... they were bound to get a chance to prove their mettle.

The troops crossed village after village..... The thundering hoofs of the horses awakened the villagers The children clung to their mothers..... but they abandoned fear at the sight of the Maratha troops. The Maratha troops never harassed the people of their own kingdom or a friendly kingdom. Hard cash must be given for anything the troops wanted....

The trees must be cared for like children..... no damage was to be done to the farms of the citizens if necessary, compensation must be given – these were the strict orders of His Majesty; and the Marathas, who pillaged the enemy territory, obeyed these orders with strict discipline, because the penalty was death. The rich, therefore, were not forced to conceal their gifts.....

The troops marched towards Kolhapur. They camped at Pargaon. His Majesty visited the great saint Maunibaba.

With the blessing of the saint the king decided to start upon his expedition. Hambirrao, the Commander-in-Chief was summoned.

"General, we won't spend from our treasure for this expedition. Whatever we require, we must secure on our way to the south....." said His Majesty, deeply engrossed with his plans.

"Yes, Sir..... Your Majesty may just order me.... And I will bring all the necessary funds" said Hambirrao with confidence.

"Sure. But you know General, we never harass friendly neighbours. How many troops would you require for an expedition to the territory of Bijapur ?"

"My ten thousand veterans would do the job....."

"Nay..... General you take along with you half of the army you are to rush to Dharwad via Torgal, march through Raichur, cross Krishna and meet us near Bhagyanagari (Hyderabad)....."

"Yes, Sir....." Hambir Rao bowed deeply.

The General took orders ; didn't question about the target of the expedition ; and rushed out to do the behests.

The drums began to beat again when the general left with his troops. The soldiers mounted their steeds. A rumour spread that revenge was to be taken upon the commander of the Fort of Belgaum. But the troops marched towards Atapadai, crossed Sangole, Jat.... And after long marches through forests reached Bhagyanagari.

Hambirrao executed the orders of His Majesty, pillaged the territory of Bijapur and reached Bhagyanagari.

When the General presented the booty to his majesty, a deep brooding look spread over his face, and he softly queried, "General, have we got any ornaments in the booty ?"

Hambirrao was surprised. His Majesty had never so far bothered about the ornaments in the booty. What was the object of this query ? Perhaps the Queen.

Hambirrao was embarrassed. "We have ornaments in thousands Sir..... Her Majesty would very much appreciate....."

"General don't you know that the whole of the booty is directly credited to the treasury with full accounts ?"

His Majesty curtly said, "We wanted to know whether we have some ornaments for gentlemen."

Hambirrao was ashamed of himself. He replied in low tone, "Sir..... we have fine pearl necklaces....."

His Majesty ordered that all the necklaces should be brought to him, chose a fine one and presented it to Hambirrao.

"What is this, Sir ?" exclaimed the General, "This rustic servant of Your Majesty does not require these soft ornaments. Look – Sir.... there are so many marks of wounds caused in the service of the nation.... What more decorations do I need ?"

His Majesty's face was flooded with a bright and happy smile.

"We understand General..... Our generals don't require any ornaments to adorn themselves..... but there are some who only value the ornaments and not the man who wears the ornaments, to impress such people we have to make use of even ornaments. We are out to establish an independent state.... A rule based on morality, equality, justice, it is divine desire..... and we don't discard any means till the Hindu empire has been established..... The citizens of Kutubshahi must also be impressed with this fact..... and so we have decided that our nobles shall be luxuriously dressed like the nobles of any other empire..... We shall enter Bhagyanagari in all pomp.... Prahladpant see to it that our nobles are presented with rich ornaments....."

"Yes..... Sir....." said Prahladpant.

"Present them also with the rich dresses that we have ordered."

"Yes..... Sir....."

"Did you fix our meeting with Tana Shah Prahladpant ?" asked His Majesty.

"I personally tried to convince Tana Shah," replied Prahladpant, "but at first he was not ready to meet Your Majesty."

"Why ?" A cloud passed over His Majesty's brow.

"Perhaps the Shah (Emperor) was reminded of Shahistakhan and Afzal Khan. For a long time he obstinately refused to consent to a meeting. He said that he would give full authority to Madanna... where was the need for a royal meeting with your Majesty."

His Majesty's eyes twinkled.



A loud laughter broke out....

"At last Madanna and Akanna gave a personal guarantee, and the Shah consented..... The Shah was personally going to receive your Majesty..... He was prepared to advance a few miles according to custom. But I gave him Your Majesty's message. "Your Majesty need not advance. You are the elder brother.... I am the younger one This modest message pleased the Shah so much that he ordered the whole capital to be

luxuriously decorated to receive your Majesty."

But there was no need for such orders. The whole capital richly decorated itself. Saffron was sprayed in front of the houses and flags waved over them. Festoons went up every gate. When king Shivaji entered Bhagyanagari, the citizens showered golden flowers on him.

Tanashah started from the fort ; but His Majesty requested him not to come down. He ordered the troops to camp at the foot of the fort, selected only five nobles and with them started for the royal meeting.

"Sir, Only five nobles ?" questioned Hombirrao with the audacious disapprobation of a loyal servant.

"Hambirrao ! Blessing of the goddess Bhavani are with us.... What else do we want ?" quietly replied the king.

The loyal general did not like that His Majesty should stake his precious life in this way ; but how otherwise can history be shaped ?

His Majesty wanted to win the confidence of Tana Shah. The alliance of the Shah was necessary for the success of the southern expedition.

Tana Shah was taken aback. No Mohammedan ruler had placed so much faith in any other ruler of his same creed ; and this dare devil of a king who constantly waged war against the Mohammedan tyrants had placed such an absolute faith in a ruler of that creed kept his troops at the foot of the fort... and had come to meet Tana Shah as a friend would meet a

friend ; True.... Tana Shah was his ally ; but have not friends betrayed ? The treachery of Aurangazeb was fresh in his memory ... and yet.

All doubts of Tana Shah were dissolved at the noble sight of King Shivaji. And Shivaji returned with the promise of aid.

His Majesty marched with the artillery of the Shah on the southern expedition. The troops reached Kurnool and camped for rest.

His Majesty was relaxing before his royal tent and suddenly his eye was caught by the blue green peaks of a mountain in the north east.

"Which is that mountain, Janardanpant ?" asked His Majesty.

"That is the Shri Shaila Sir." Answered Janardanpant, "There is the sacred temple of Shri Mallikarjuna.... It is the famous temple of Shiva....."

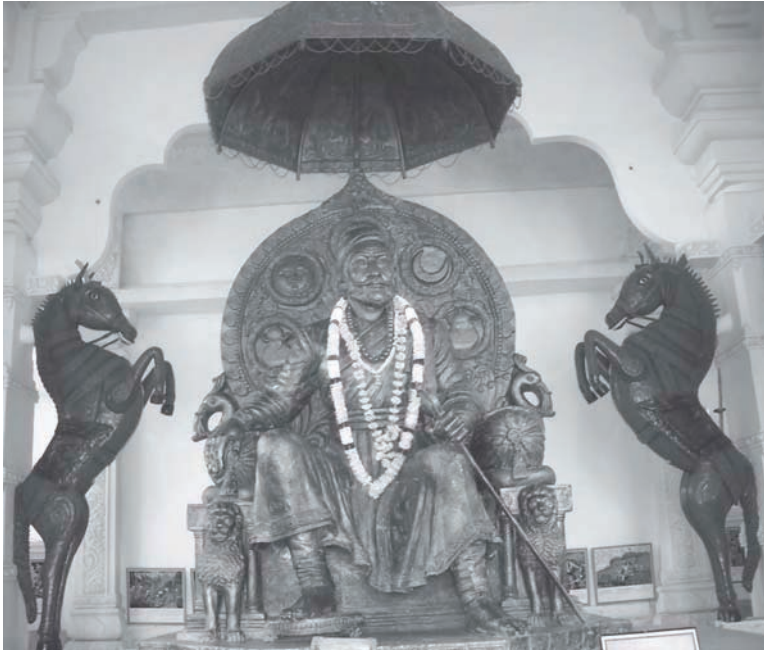
"The eyes of His Majesty glowed. In the month's stay at Bhagyanagari, His Majesty was sunk in material pleasures. The Shah, Madanna, Akkanna, and other nobles arranged parties in his honour. Presents of gold and pearls were showered upon him. Arrogant wealth had bowed to him with humility. But wealth could never daze this saintly king. His noble soul was indifferent to the royal pleasures.

The king felt an urge to worship the sacred Shri Shaila Mallikarjuna. His real self was awakened and he ordered, "General Send all the troops to Atmakuta.... We shall visit the Mallikarjuna temple with some select few"

"Yes... Sir..." Hambirrao modestly said, "but let me accompany your Majesty ... this is the land of the Bhilla bandits.:"

His Majesty smiled, "Hambirrao.... God has blessed us Well..... if you wish to accompany us... come along with us...."

Hambirrao was relieved when His Majesty accepted his suggestion. The royal retinue started on its journey to Shri Shaila. It



was noon time when they reached Nagalotu. The upward climb, started. The stones looked as if they were polished. The hoofs of the horses began to slip. On both sides of the climb the bamboo jungles were thickly set. Here and there the big ant-hills caught his eye.

"We never find such big ant-hills in Maharashtra..." said Janardanpant pointing to an ant-hill that reached up to a man's height.

His Majesty suddenly pulled up and bowed to the ant-hill. Others were surprised and confused. His Majesty smiled and said, "Perhaps a Valmiki might be doing his penance in the ant-hill."

The royal modesty added to the reverence that the royal retinue owed its master.

"Your Majesty is right..." said Janardanpant, "it was at this place that the great Narad advised Valmiki. It was here that the great Saint started his penance. Even today the descendants of Valmiki or rather Valya, the bandit, stay in this part of the region. They are wayfarers. The passers-by are required to pay taxes to them.

"Is that so?" asked His Majesty smilingly, "then why didn't they tax us ?"

"The tyrants and the bandits belong to the same category Sir they are the enemies of the weak," a caustic remark from

Janardanpant.

The royal company reached Bhimantole in a gay mood. The steep climb started there onwards. Down below was the deep valley : and the peak of Shri Shaila, kissing the blue skies, challenged the human breath.

"That highest peak is known as Kailas" ; Janardanpant pointed to the peak and said, "To see Mallikarjuna from the peak is a very sacred experience...."

His Majesty piously made a deep bow to the Kailas peak and began to climb with such a quick foot that Janardanpant was exhausted. But all got their reward when they reached the top of the peak. It was an experience to be on the top of the peak. The fresh air, the cool exhilarating breeze and the absolute quiet.... So far away from the world stretched down below.... One felt moved to a totally different plane; a strange feeling went through all – a feeling which could not be expressed in words; and yet it was so real, so powerful that everybody felt what the other felt. What was it? An awareness.... That what was so far experienced was untrue, unreal, flimsy, and deceptive; then what was the truth? What was everlasting? Where was it? Here, Here? On this Kailas peak? Or still higher? At the feet of Mallikarjuna?

His Majesty's face changed. His sparkling eyes were glowing with a pious, quiet, inner light. The lines of worry and caution on his brow were dissolved, and his demeanour was illuminated.

"That is the temple of Mallikarjuna" Said Janardanpant pointing to the old temple on the mountain: There is a popular legend about this temple. Once Kartikeya got annoyed with his parents, and went to the Krounch Mountain. Both Shiva and Parvati tried to soothe him; other gods also mediated but with no avail. So his parents became unhappy and came to Shri Shaila to see their son. But when Kartikeya saw them, he went farther to Lohachala and cursed that any woman who would climb the mountain would be a widow for seven births. Shiva and Parvati, therefore, felt

helpless and stayed at Shri Shaila looking at Kartikeya from there with warmth and love."

The mythical legend reminded His Majesty of his son Sambhaji – but just for a moment No worries..... No memories could last here in his mind for more than a few moments. He felt a strange urge – as though some one was beckoning him – He retired into his own shell.

His Majesty rushed to the temple without speaking a word to anybody. Others quietly followed. When they reached the temple, they were taken by surprise. How was such a magnificent temple built on the top of the mountain? The gates were so wide....that even an elephant could easily cross.....the pinnacles smoothly tapering to their highest point were studded with fascinating sculpture... the fort-like stout walls of the temple, and the builders of the temple had not forgotten water tanks....

His Majesty was dazed at the sight of the temple.

"Sir.... The Krishna river is at a distance of three miles from here," Janardanpant said. "People call it Neelanganga or Patalganga. We can go and have a bath in the sacred waters of Neela Ganga...."

The royal company headed towards the river.

His Majesty was excited at the sight of Krishna. On both sides of the river, the steep cliffs threateningly rose to the sky. The bosom of Krishna was so large that it reminded him of the sacred Ganges. The waves were dancing and the dark green waters were fascinating.

The magnificence of nature – whether of the sea, or of the mountain, or of the river, makes man realise his utter insignificance. Why should it be so ? Why should one feel that one is so near to God ?

His Majesty's mind turned inwards. And when he saw the Shivalinga, he was lost in a trancethe world of desire, anger, wealth, poverty, revenge, affection faded away.....all bonds of earthly affection snapped.....the frustration of life was not more.....a new fulfillment of life was in sight.....the soul tuned itself to the Supreme Being.

The royal companions were waiting for His Majesty....but there was no sign of his coming out of his meditation, and who would dare disturb him ?

At last, Prahladpant collected all his courage and said, "Sir.....what religious rites should be performed before we return ?"

His Majesty opened his eyes. There was a lost look in his eyes. He quietly said, "No.....Pant.....don't talk of returning.....we shall stay here...."

"We shall stay here ? What about the army ? What about the Hindu empire ?"

All were stunned. The saint in the king was awakened.....he wanted to give up the kingdom.....give up everything....the turning point had come....this was the most critical momenta moment which might have been an eternal moment in the life of an individualbut which might devastate the cause of the nation.

What should be done ? How to rouse His Majesty to his royal duties ? How to bring

him back to the world which needed him so much ?

There was no other way but to wait and hopehope that this spiritual absorption would exhaust itself.

The night passedthe new morn dawned. Prahladpant again tried, "Sir.....we must return at the earliest.....Your Majesty is here.....the General is here...."

"All of you must go back," His Majesty quietly replied.

"Without Your Majesty?"

"Sometime or other you will have to leave your king...."

"But, Sir..... What about the State ?" Janardanpant persisted.

"How long can we serve the State ? The State can do without us ; Ayodhya didn't come to an end when Ramachandra withdrew, nor did Dwaraka when Sri Krishna made his exitif one Shivaji is dead...."

"No, sir....." Hambirrao sharply cut him short, "we can't stand these inauspicious words even from your lips...."

His Majesty quietly smiled; "Hambirrao you have seen so many wars..... and yet you feel that death is inauspicious ? Auspicious inauspiciousall this is due to the imagination of man....If life is so flimsy that it can be destroyed with one stroke of the sword.....why should we weep over it ?"

All were stunned at these words. But the king could not be allowed to be carried away by his own spiritual upsurge. So Janardanpant made a last effort :

"Sir.....What would Her Majesty feel if you don't return?"

"Nothing.....If she knows that we are not going to return, she will hasten to place Ramraja on the throne.....superseding the claims of Shambhu"His Majesty retorted sarcastically.

"At least for the sake of Shamburaja...."

"No.....Janardanpant.....Man knows how to live without his dear ones.....No one is lost.....We felt that we couldn't live without our mother. Jijabaisaheb passed away.....Shahaji Raja passed away.....Tanaji died.....Baji died. The dear ones die....and yet the world continues to laugh and joke ; why should one love such a world ? Today at the feet of Shri Mallikarjuna we are relieved of all miseries.....no temptation of life.....no fear of death.....no.....Pant, we don't feel like giving up this divine ecstasy. We don't want to return.....Place Shambhuraja on the throne and rule the State."

This great spiritual awakening of this great man left his followers helpless. Nothing could be done. The only thing one could do was to wait and pray....

The royal company refused to return without its master. One week passed; and on the ninth day; the king frightened all by his novel idea :

"Pant....you won't be required to wait for long," said His Majesty, "We are going to have the supreme worship of Shiva tomorrow."

"And we shall return afterwards, isn't it so ?" asked Pant happily, in the hope that His Majesty must have changed his mind.

"We shall offer lotuses to Shiva..."

"Shall I order our soldiers to bring lotuses ?" asked Janardanpant.

It was necessary to finish the worship at the earliest and to take His Majesty out of this trance.

"No.....Janardanpant," His Majesty said, "The lotus that we are going to offer to Shiva is with us..... the best lotus is our head itself, isn't it, Janardanpant ?"

All lost their breath.....the earth quakedPrahladpant....Janardanpant....Yesaji.....all turned pale. Hambirrao couldn't control himself. He threw himself forward and exclaimed :

"If that is your will.... Sir.....then the worship will be of hundred lotuses..... First offer the heads of your General and his hundred soldiers to Shiva and then touch the royal lotus."

"No.....HambirraoYou are to take care of the State....then only can we march on the path of salvation....don't block our path....it is a great event....tomorrow at the early hour of dawn shall be the great offering presented to Shiva.. Now don't disturb us...."

His Majesty again lost himself in a deep spiritual reverie. He became unconscious of his existence.....His body surrendered to the soul.....he felt he was one with Lord Shivathe light of a thousand flames dazed his closed eye-lids.....and suddenly

out of that whirlpool of light emerged the image of goddess Bhavani.

"Mother....you are here ?" the King's heart questioned.

"Are you embarrassed, my son ? Do you know of any place where you can't find me ? And do you think that I am different from Lord Shiva ?" These precious words echoed through the light.

"Then why are you here in this form Mother ?"



"You are used to this image of myself.....hence I came in this form.... You forced me to....when my own devotee betrays me...."

"Ah ! of what betrayal do you talk, Mother ? I have prepared to offer my head to Shiva...."

"What will you achieve thereby ?"

"Salvation....."

"For only yourself....my son. I never knew that you would be so selfish....."

"Selfish..." the king asked in confusion.

"The black powers had waged a war against the white powers, and instead of championing the good against the bad.... You leave the battle-ground like a coward...."

"Coward ?"

"My son, whenever 'Dharma' is tarnished by frustration.....by suppression.....God is born on this earth, God Shiva Himself has stepped on this globe in your flesh to protect and save justice, equality, morality...but you forgot why you were born....you forgot your duty.... It was your duty to keep the path of millions to salvation free and undisturbed ; but you selfishly looked for your own salvation ; worship of God is not different from service of the nation."

The king kept his silence.

Suddenly he heard the blasts of gunsthe sounds of the hammer cracking the temple stones....the agonising cries of women.

The king was startled.

"Why are you alarmed.....sonny ?" asked Bhavani, "Don't you know the sounds of the guns ? Look.....the walls of the Hindu empire are cracking downsee....the hammers are devastating my images.....the Durgathe Rakhana.....the Parvatiand look to that side.....the innocent women are dishonoured.....their children are massacred....."

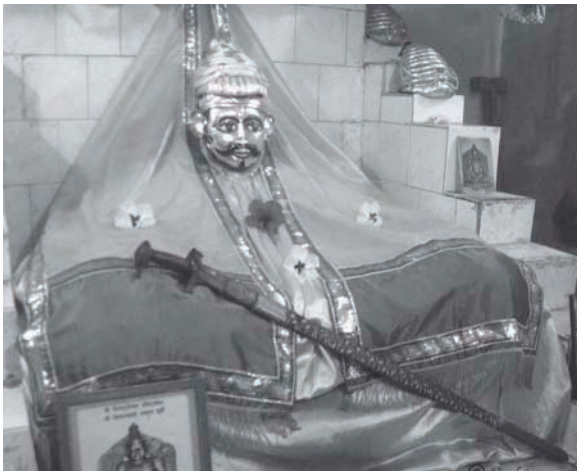
"Oh no ! I won't allow it any more....."

"You are here today.....tomorrow you will be no more...."

"I don't care for tomorrowbut I won't allow this atrocitytill I breathe my last; it is the divine desire that the godly kingdom should be established."

The face of Goddess Bhavani was flooded with satisfaction and her image dissolved in the light.....

His Majesty burst out of his trance.



"Hambirrao....." His Majesty called the General.

"Yes, Sir,....." Hambirrao bowed. Anxiety was writ large upon his face....

"Tomorrow we order...."

"No, Sir, we won't allow that...." Hambirrao broke with emotion.

"We have decided to cancel the worship.....Don't you like the idea ?" His Majesty asked with a sly twinkle in his eyes.

"Has Your Majesty really decided to cancel the worship ?" asked Hambirrao. He was still suspicious.

"Yes,and we proceed to Karnataka....."

"Forgive me, Sir,....." Hambirrao spoke with happiness. "We are willing to start this moment."

"God has listened to our prayer," Janardanpant said piously. "Sir, permit me to stay here a day longer...."

"Why ?"

Janardanpant didn't utter a word.

"Don't fight shy....Janardanpant,"..... Said His Majesty.

"I wish to offer a hundred lotuses to God Shiva....."

"In return for one ?" asked His Majesty with amusement. "Why then we shall all stay here for a day...."

"No.....no....Sir.....all of you must start at the earliest....."

"Are you afraid that we shall again think of the great worship ?" asked His Majesty with a laughter. "No.....that is not to beGoddess Bhavani does not want thatIt is the divine desire that the rule of God should be established on this earth."



'DEFEATED ! NAY, GUILTY !'

THE surroundings were extremely beautiful. The scenery, the garden, the palace – everything was perfect. It was the palace of Shivaji Maharaj. Shivaji, the beloved king of the Marathas, was seated in the council room. His Chief Minister Moropant and Commander-in-Chief Hambirrao were also with him in the council room. There was silence in the room. One could hardly believe that there was anybody in the room. Excepting for the sound made by the robin red-breast, there was complete silence in the room. Breaking the silence, Shivaji called out :

"Hambirrao !"

Hambirrao started looking at Moropant. They understood what the king wanted. Hambirrao went towards the door. Moropant suddenly addressing Shivaji Said, "Maharaj, shall we postpone the meeting to some other day, if Your Highness is not at ease."

In response to this Shivaji said "

"Pant, now there is no relevance for tomorrow in my life. Whatever I can do today, I can't say with confidence whether I shall be able to do the same tomorrow. Who has seen tomorrow ? One doesn't know what will happen the next moment. There's many a slip between the cup and the lip. Though the mind can be controlled, who knows what the body will do ? I can't

trust it, Pant. I can't trust it. It may deceive me at any moment."

In a sorrowful tone Pant said :

"Maharaj, how can you be so meek and lose your confidence ? You must be brave, You are the king."

At this very moment, Hambirrao along with Firangoji, intervened.

Firangoji, with folded hands, head bowed down, appeared to be a guilty person. Maharaj kept on staring at Firangoji. However, Firangoji, recognising the anger in Maharaj's eyes, kept his head bowed down. In the old traditional manner, he greeted the king and said :

"Your Highness, please accept the best wishes of this defeated soldier."

"Defeated soldier ! Nay, guilty, Firangoji," said the Maharaj.

This remark was a bolt from the blue to Firangoji and to the others.

"Guilty ?" Firangoji questioned.

"Yes, guilty. You are guilty, Firangoji. None of us can boast of a victory at all times. But while working for the cause of Swaraj everyone must move heaven and earth. And you, you have run away like a coward. You are a traitor. You have committed an act of treason. How can I say anything else, but call you a coward ?"

Due to the wrath, Maharaj's voice as well as his whole frame was trembling.

Seeing this Pant tried to pacify Mahraj. The remaining moments were silent.

It was a terrible blow to see Sambhaji, the son of Shivaji, the Prince of Swaraj, join hands with the Moghuls.

Diler Khan, the Moghul Sardar, was thrilled to see Sambhaji join hands with him. Without wasting a single moment, Diler Khan sent the news to Delhi. Aurangazeb also sent laurels for Sambhaji.

Aurangazeb had given full rights to Diler Khan to take the maximum advantage of Sambhaji and use him as a weapon to crush the Marathas.

Taking personal interest, Aurangazeb gave all honours and special treatment to Sambhaji. Aurangazeb was also trying to use Sambhaji as a weapon against the Marathas, Swaraj and Shivaji himself. However, Sambhaji failed to understand this. Now he had become like the fabled bird in the golden cage eating guavas and mocking the free birds seated on the trees.

Diler Khan had already started having dreams. He was building castles in the air. He was dreaming of a wonderful tomorrow. He thought that he would now succeed in creating a commotion among the Marathas. But this dream was to remain a mere dream. It never came true. Diler Khan thought that other warriors would also join Sambhaji in the Mughal regime. As this dream didn't come true he decided to launch an attack on the Marathas.

The first target that he chose was Bhoopalgarh. Bhoopalgarh, a fort in the east of Satara, was of great importance. Shivaji, knowing the importance of the fort, had appointed Firangoji as its fort-keeper. Firangoji, the right hand man of Shivaji, was a very honest and trust-worthy warrior. His outstanding skill in battle was seen when he fought with Shaishta Khan at Chakan. As far as Bhoopalgarh was concerned, Shivaji had the fullest faith that Firangoji would be able to protect it well.

Diler Khan attacked Bhoopalgarh. He started shelling the walls of Bhoopalgarh. Firangoji, in response, also sent shells into Diler Khan's camp. Firangoji and his troops were, however, competent enough to reciprocate the attack of Diler Khan and defend the fort.

Though the shelling lasted a long time, Firangoji was not to give away the fort into the hands of the Moghuls. Now Diler Khan thought of a very cunning plan. He told all the Moghul soldiers to retreat, while Sambhaji was to make a personal attack.

Was Firangoji going to fight against Sambhaji ? His mind started wavering. Firangoji had taken Sambhaji on his own lap as a child. He had taught everything to Sambhaji including the wielding of the sword. The same Sambhaji was now before him as an enemy – an enemy of the king, an enemy of Swaraj – Firangoji was lost in deep thought. He didn't know what to do !

Faith clashed with prior relationships, courage with love, and warriorship with affection and sentiments. Weighing these

considerations, Firangoji decided not to fight.

The next day, he left the fort early and moved towards Raigad, the capital of Swaraj. He wanted to explain the whole situation to Shivaji. Long before Firangoji could go and inform Shivaji, the news had already reached him. Shivaji said, "Sambhaji, my son, - the prince of Swaraj – has now become my enemy."

Shivaji considered Firangoji guilty for not having fought with Sambhaji, now their enemy.

With full determination, Maharaj began to explain his views. He said, "Pant, all of us are bound by an oath that we will sacrifice anything and everything for the cause of Swaraj. We are hopefully striving day and night to build this holy Swaraj. And if one pillar after another gives way, how on earth are we going to build it up ? The unholy foot-prints have been imprinted on the floor of this sacred temple of Bhoopalgarh. How do you expect me to remain quiet ? Never ! How can I ?

Firangoji pleaded, "Excuse me, Maharaj, I want to tell you something. Not in self-defence but to remind you that I have never retreated from the enemy. Only God is my witness. But this time the situation was quite different. Prince Sambhaji Raje....."

Interrupting, Maharaj said harshly, "Stop it, Stop it. I don't want to hear your explanation. You are guilty. And that's all. You are guilty." Maharaj continued, "What ? Do you think my conscience will be affected by hearing the name of Sambhaji

? The relationship between me and Sambhaji should not be taken into account as we are now dealing with Swaraj. Swaraj is more important to us. We have to fight to achieve it. And whoever goes against it, is certainly our enemy."

However, those that were present in the room could read sorrow underlying these words.

There was a visible change in the King's looks. Pant and others were quick to observe this change. Pant told one of the attendants to get a glass of water for the Maharaj.

Offering the glass of water to Maharaj, Pant tried to plead for Firangoji. He started, "Your Highness, how could we change our loyalties to Sambhaji, a Prince...."

Pant's pleading was cut short by Maharaj who said : "Pant, what are you trying to say ? Our trustworthy fort-keeper Firangoji becomes a traitor and allows one of the commanders of the enemy on the fort, and still you people want to plead for him. The case of a traitor ?"

"Traitor ?" echoed the others.

Shivaji said, "Of Course, he is a traitor. One commander named Sambhaji Bhonsle invades Bhoopalgarh and our fort-keeper, leaving the fort in his hands, runs away. What do you call this ? Loyalty or an act of treason ?"

Maharaj took a sip of water and again shouted at Firangoji : "Firangoji, you should have forgotten that Sambhaji was my son. You should have fought with him as an enemy of Swaraj. If you had been killed

while attacking Sambhaji, then your services would have been accepted by Goddess Bhavani. If you had killed the enemy, you would have rescued Swaraj from danger, Mata Bhavani would have showered her blessings on you."

Firangoji said, "Your Highness, these are the hands which have taken care of Sambhaji from his cradle. How could you expect me to use the same hands to kill him?"

"Of course, you should, why not?"

Pant tried to intervene saying, "Maharaj, how could Firangoji commit treason? Would you have accepted Firangoji as your honest Sardar? Could your eyes see Firangoji with a sword dripping with blood in his hands – the blood of Sambhaji?"

"Yes, Pant. I again say, yes! I would have honoured Firangoji at a special Darbar for his act of loyalty for killing Sambhaji. After the felicitation programme was over, I would have taken him to my private room and resting my head on his shoulders I would have cried for the loss of my son."

This remark moved everybody. They all were stunned to see the firm, determined and dutiful mind of their king. Nobody spoke for a while. All on a sudden Firangoji broke the silence as he gave way to his emotions. He sobbed out, "I am guilty, O

Lord, I am guilty," He fell at the feet of the Maharaj, and began to weep. Seeing this, the Maharaj also broke down. His tears were shed on Firangoji's head.

Shivaji then called Pant and told him :
"When Sambhaji comes and attacks a fort

and our loyal fort-keeper, like Firangoji, should leave the fort and run away – the enemy will certainly dance in joy. If this continues, Swaraj and all that it means will be destroyed. So go and tell all the fort-keepers to fight against Sambhaji as the enemy of Swaraj. The fort must be protected and Sambhaji must not be allowed to enter."

Seeing this attitude on the part of the Maharaj, Firangoji was stunned. He spoke out, "Maharaj, I am

guilty. I am guilty. Punish me so that all the others will earn a lesson. I am prepared to accept a death sentence."

"Bravo, Firangoji," the Maharaj said. Here again he lost control over himself. His eyes were full of tears. Not being able to control himself, the Maharaj left the council chamber.



THE PRODIGAL IS BACK HOME

SAMBHAJI RAJE, son of Shivaji, lost his mother when he was barely two. It was his grandmother, Jija Bai, who reared him with all the care, love and affection of a mother. The boy grew up with a feeling of loneliness. Who could fill the vacuum created by the death of one's mother ? Soyra Bai, his step mother, had no love for the poor motherless mite. She hated him. She was very anxious to see her own son Rajaram enthroned after Shivaji's death, and she saw Sambhaji, who was the elder brother, as the main obstacle in the way. She could not openly express her desire but her designs often became obvious in the treatment she meted out to Sambhaji. When Jija Bai left the scene, there was none to love him except his own father, who was always busy with his campaigns and imperial responsibilities.

As Sambhaji grew up, he started resenting his step-mother's attitude more and more. His father engaged reputed scholars to educate Sambhaji. He too was interested in learning, and also displayed proficiency in martial skill. But, unfortunately, he was led astray. His bitterness, born out of a love-starved existence and Shivaji's inability to take personal interest in him and guide him, resulted in making Sambhaji a wayward character.

When Shivaji left for the south on a lengthy expedition, Sambhaji left Raigarh and went to Shringarpur along with his wife Yesu Bai. He remained there for quite sometime.

Yesu Bai gave birth to a daughter at Shringarpur. When Maharaj returned from the expedition he called them back and sent them to Sajjangarh to come under the care and influence of Ramadas Swamy. Although Sambhaji appreciated the peaceful, pious atmosphere of the Ashram, he could not fit into the rigorous routine there – japa, bhajans, austerities and discipline were not to his liking. He was happy at Shringarpur but he could not pull on at Sajjangarh for long. He also resented his being treated as an offender and sent to be advised and corrected. He disliked staying at Sajjangarh, and did not wish to return to Rajgarh, where he would have to face Soyra Bai. Where could he go ? What was the way out ? Frustrated, outraged and distraught, he left Sajjangarh on 13th December, 1678. Sometime later, news reached Shivaji that Sambhaji had joined Diler Khan, the general of Aurangazeb and the enemy of Shivaji Maharaj. Aurangazeb was only too glad to accept him and ordered him to work under Diler Khan with an army of five thousand men under him.

The lack of a careful upbringing and proper guidance caused the young man to act in an immature and peevish manner.

In the meantime, Diler Khan decided to take advantage of Sambhaji's position in the Imperial army. He sent him to capture Bhoopalgargh, a fort which was exclusively constructed by Shivaji at a tremendous cost, and reputed to be very strong and

impregnable. Sambhaji attacked Bhoopalgarh with the aid of a strong army. Firangoji Narsala was the general in charge and Sambhaji sent a messenger to him and asked for the fort gates to be thrown open to him.

Firangoji was in a dilemma. If he obeyed the order of Sambhaji, he would lose the fort. If he disobeyed it would amount to disobeying his own master. He decided to leave the fort along with Vithal Pant Bhale Rao and report the matter to Shivaji. Then both of them left the Raigarh, leaving the fort unmanned.

On the next day the fort was opened. Sambhaji and Diler Khan entered it. There was no resistance. All the Marathas surrendered to Sambhaji with folded hands. Diler Khan did not let go the opportunity. He ordered the amputation of the right hand of each of the seven hundred Maratha soldiers in the fort.

Meanwhile, Firangoji and Vithal Pant Bhale Rao came to Maharaj and related the whole story. Shivaji was stunned. "He (Sambhaji) came to the fort as an enemy and not a Prince. Why did you not kill him ? It was your mistake. Hereafter, do not yield to such sentiments."

He immediately passed orders to all his generals that Sambhaji should be resisted, wherever he launched an attack.

Realisation dawned on Sambhaji as he witnessed the atrocities of Diler Khan. He had captured and enslaved hundreds of men and women. Many women put an end to their lives in order to escape the humiliations inflicted by his men.

Sambhaji was filled with rage at the sight. He told Diler Khan to stop the outrage. Diler Khan replied : "Who are you to interfere in my affairs ? I will do as I please."

Sambhaji realised the truth. He realised that he had no standing in the Mughal army. He was a mere servant. But in Swarajya, he was a Prince and the son of the Emperor of Maharashtra.

"Oh Lord ! What have I done ? Why did I choose to become the enemy of my own father ?" he exclaimed in dismay.

At first, Aurangzeb's motive in taking Sambhaji into his fold was that the loyalty to their Prince would induce a section of the Maratha generals to come over to his side. But not one of the Maratha generals, nay, not even a soldier, deflected towards him. Disappointed and frustrated, he resorted to treachery. Sambhaji was well caught in his hands. He planned to get him to Delhi to torture him to death, unless he agreed to become a Muslim. "Arrest Sambhaji immediately and send him to Delhi," went instructions to Diler Khan.

By a sheer stroke of luck Sambhaji came to know of it. His eyes were now wide open to the Mughal plans of deceit. But Sambhaji was not alone, Yesu Bai and their daughter also stayed with him. It was risky to travel with a family. Yesu Bai dressed herself as a soldier and both of them escaped through the darkness of the night. Shivaji anticipated that sooner or later he would come to his senses, and so Sambhaji was well received at Bijapur and speeded on to the Chhatrapati's abode. Diler Khan's anger knew no bounds, when he knew that the prey had escaped.

The prodigal son returned home. Shivaji met him at Panhala.

It was a deeply repentant son who walked towards his father.

He was prepared for the wrath of his father. But what he got were gentle words from an understanding parent.

"MY son, do not leave me hereafter. You know Aurangazeb's treacherous nature, yet you trusted him. It was God's grace that saved you from his clutches. You are my elder son and it is your duty to look after the kingdom. I want you and your brother Rajaram to share and rule this kingdom amicably. You shall have the entire territory of Karnataka under your control. That part which is north of it shall fall to Rajaram. And each will rule over his territory. I shall then devote myself to the Lord."

The tempest of internal strife seemed to have subsided temporarily.

WAR WITH THE ENGLISH

JANJIRA set Shiva thinking of some other island in the neighbourhood which would provide him with a naval base. His choice fell on Khanderi (Kennery), a small rocky island situated 11 miles south of Bombay and 30 miles north of Janjira. As early as April 1672 the people of Surat learnt of his intention to build a fort on the island. The English President at once decided to prevent it, arguing that it affected the interests of Bombay even more than those of Surat, because no ship could enter or issue from Bombay harbour without being seen from Khanderi.

The progress of the Maratha engineers was very slow, and in September following, their fortifications were still incomplete. The English and Siddi fleets came there in concert and warned the Marathas to stop their work. Shivaji's admirals, Daulat Khan and Mai Nayak, finding themselves opposed by very superior forces, withdrew from the island.

At the end of August 1679, Shiva again took up the project of fortifying Khanderi, and collected men and materials for the purpose at Chaul. He allocated one lakh of hun from the revenues of Kalikan and Chaul to be spent on the work. On 15th September we find that 150 men of Shiva with four small guns under command of Mai Nayak are already on the island and have



run up breastworks of earth and stone all around it. A request from the Deputy Governor of Bombay "to quit the place as it belonged to the island of Bombay" was declined by the Marathas in the absence of orders from Shivaji to that effect. The English, therefore, resolved that if the occupation of the island was persisted in and the Maratha fleet under Daulat Khan came there to protect the fortifications, they would "repel them with force as an open and public enemy."

The first encounter between the English and the Marathas at sea took place on the 19th September and ended in a reverse for the sons of the Ocean Queen. The larger English ships were still outside the Bay of Khanderi, because the soundings had not been taken and they could not be brought closer to the island. Lieutenant Francis Thorpe, with some shibars made a rash attempt to land on the island, "positively against order". The Englishmen were assailed with great and small shots from the shore works. The rash, young, drunken officer was killed with two other men (John Bradbury and Henry Welch), several others were wounded, and George Cole and many other Englishmen were left prisoners on the island. The lieutenant's shear was captured by the enemy, while two other shibars escaped to the fleet in the open sea. Next day, the Marathas carried off another English shear, Sergeant Giles timidly offering little resistance.

Early in October, the Maratha fleet was got ready to go to the succour of Khanderi. The second battle with the English was fought on 18th October, 1679. At day break, the entire Maratha fleet of more

than 60 vessels under Daulat Khan, suddenly bore down upon the small English squadron consisting of the Revenge frigate, 2 Ghurabs of two mastas each, 3 shibars and 2 manchwas, - eight vessels in all, with 200 European soldiers on board, in addition to the lascars and white sailors. The Marathas advanced from the shore a little north of Chaul, firing from their prows and moving so fast the English vessels at anchor near Khanderi had scarcely time to get under weigh. In less than half an hour, the Dover, one of the English ghurabs, having some English soldiers on board, stuck its colours and was carried off by the Marathas. The ghurab kept aloof, and the five smaller vessels ran away, leaving the Revenge alone in the midst of the enemy, but she fought gallantly and sank five of the Maratha Gallivats, at which their whole fleet fled to the bar of Negoethna, pursued by the Revenge. Two days afterwards, the Maratha fleet issued from the creek, but on the English vessels advancing, they fled back. Such is the inefficiency of "mosquito craft " in naval battles fought with artillery that even fifty slender and open Indian ships were no match for a single, large and strongly built English vessel. AT the end of November, the Siddi fleet of 345 ships joined the English off Khanderi and kept up a daily battery against the island.

But the cost of these operations was heavily felt by the English merchants, who also realised that they could not recruit white soldiers to replace any lost in fight, and therefore could not "long oppose Shivaji, lest they should imprudently so weaken themselves as not to be able to defend Bombay itself, if he should be

exasperated to draws down his army that way". Moreover, during the monsoon storms, the English would be forced to withdraw their naval patrol from Khanderi, and then Shiva would "take his opportunity to fortify and store the island, meagre all our designs". So, the Surat Council wisely resolved, that the English should "honourably withdraw themselves in time", and either settle this differences with Shivaji by means of a friendly mediator, or else throw the burden of opposing him on the Portuguese Governor of Bassein or on Siddi, and thus "ease the Hon'ble Company of this great charge." The Surat factory itself was in danger and could spare no European soldier for succouring Bombay.

The dreaded reprisal by Shivani against Bombay almost came to pass. "Highly exasperated by the defeat of his fleet before Khanderi." He sent 4,000 men to Kalyan Bhivandi with the intention to land in Bombay by way of Thane. The Portuguese Governor of Bassering having refused to allow them to pass through his country, the invaders marched to Panvel (a port in their own territory) opposite Trombay island, intending to embark there on seven shibars. The inhabitants of Bombay were terribly alarmed. The Deputy Governor breathed fire, but the President and Council of Surat decided to climb down. On receiving a courteous letter from Shivaji, sent by way of Rajapur, they wrote : "a civil answer, demonstrating our trouble for the occasion his people have given the English at Bombay to quarrel with him about his fortifying so insignificant a rock as Khanderi, which is not in the least becoming a prince of his eminence and qualifications

; and though we have a right to that place, yet to show the candour of our proceedings, we are willing to forget what is past, and therefore have given instructions to the Deputy Governor of Bombay to deal with such persons as he shall appoint about the present differences." The Deputy Governor was very much dissatisfied with this pacific tone and held that a vigorous policy of aggression against Shiva's country and fleet would give a speedy conclusion to this dispute, to the Hon'ble Company's advantage." But the higher authorities at Surat only repeated their former order that Bombay should avoid a war with Shiva and frustrate his designs of fortifying Khanderi either by treaty or by Siddi's fleet assisting us to oppose him thereon." The two English captains consulted and took the same view. At the end of December the Marathas dragged several large guns to Thal (on the main land) and began to fire them at the small English craft lying under Underi for stress of weather.

But the hope of hindering the Marathas fortification of island without fighting proved futile, and the English ships were withdrawn from Khanderi, which, after "holding out (against the Siddi and the English) to the admiration of all, was freed from enemy vessels by the coming of the monsoons, and remained in Shiva's hands.



THE EPISTLE

NOTHING emphasises Shivaji's role as a nation-builder of India more than this letter which he, as the champion of the subjects of the Empire, wrote to Aurangazeb at this time. Its tone and dignity, the admonitions administered in it, the appeal to a higher sense of humanity and finally the warning conveyed to the Emperor to desist from his ruinous steps make the letter one of the important documents of Indian history. Here are extracts from the letter.

"To the Emperor Alamgir. This firm well wisher Shivaji, deeply grateful for divine favour and your kindness as clear as daylight, begs to inform Your Majesty as follow :

"I returned from your presence without seeking your permission. It is my misfortune. May your kindness be felt by everybody. As a well-wisher I am placing some matters before you.

"Recently it has come to my notice that owing to your war against me, your treasury has become empty. You have decided to meet the expenditure through the imposition of Jaziya on the Hindus.

"Your Majesty ! Akbar, the founder of your Empire ruled the land for fifty-two years. He had adopted the excellent policy of treating all on a footing of equality –



Christians, Jews, Muslims, Dadupanthis, Stargazers, Malakis, Atheists, Brahmins, Jains, in fact all the communities. His aim was to ensure the welfare and protection of all. The result was that to whatever direction he turned, success and glory attended him. He brought most of the country under his sway.

"After him, Nuruddin Jahangir ruled for twenty-two years. He led a life full of good deeds and he has become immortal. Shah-jahan ruled for thirty-two years. He too made his life fruitful through good deeds. That is why these rulers were successful in whatever direction they turned. During their rule, a number of

provinces and forts came under their sway. They have passed away, but their name endures. Their greatness is difficult to describe. We have a measure of their greatness in what Alamgir tried to imitate them but without success. Why should this be so ?

"The previous rulers had they so desired, had undoubtedly the authority to impose Jaziya. But they felt that all men, high or low, were the children of God, and all religions were but means to the worship of the One Almighty. They never allowed the feeling of religious hatred even to touch them. The memory of the kindness of their disposition and the goodness of their deeds is ever fresh in the world. All men, great and small, praise and bless them. During their rule, the people enjoyed peace, and as a result, their glory was on the ascendant.

"But during your regime many provinces and forts have gone out of your hands. The remaining ones, too, will be lost to you. I for my part will not spare any effort to ruin the provinces. Your subjects are being crushed under cruel conditions. The income from your Paraganas and Mahals is going down day by day. It is difficult to realise even a sum of one thousand from places whereof the income was one lakh previously. Poverty is striking the kings and princes. The plight of noblemen and mansabdars is apparent to everybody. At present your soldiers are discontented, the Moslems are in anguish and the Hindus are scorched. Everyone is hungry and pining for bread.

"They are in such deep distress, and on top of it all, you have imposed Jaziya on them. With what justification could you do this ? This news will soon spread east and west. People would say, ' The Emperor of Hindustan has taken a begging bowl and is out to realise Jasiya from Brahmins, Jains, Sadhus, Yogis, Sanyasis, Bairagis, all the poor and the starving. He takes pride in doing so. He is bringing the Taimur dynasty to the dust.' That will be their feeling.

"Your Majesty, in the Quran God has been described as the Rabbul Alameen, the Lord of the entire universe, and not as Rabbul Musalmin, the Lord of the Mussalmans. In fact, Islam and Hinduism are both beautiful manifestations of the Divine Spirit. As the call for prayers goes out from the mosques, so do the bells in the temples proclaim the Divine glory. Any one who is fanatical and nurtures religious hatred must be declared to be acting against the command of God. To draw new lines on a picture is equivalent to finding fault with the painter (the Divine Artist – God).

"It is to point out blemishes in God's creation, which only means that you are blaming the Creator.

"To be just, Jaziya cannot be justified on any grounds. It is an innovation in India. It is unjust. If you feel that on grounds of religion and in the interests of justice the imposition of this tax is essential, you should first realise it from Raja Rajsingh. For, he is the leader of the Hindus. Then it would not be difficult to realise it from this well-wisher."



THE CLOSING STRAINS

(Marking the *finale* from the *Refrain* through the Crescendo)

Surat's Second Sack

IN 1670 Shivaji the Great raided Surat a second time at the head of 15,000 men. For three days the luckless city was pillaged at ease and the Marathas carried off a rich harvest of booty safely to Raigad. An attempt on the part of the Muslim cavalry to intercept the returning convoy in the pass near Nasik was a miserable failure, the Muslims being driven back by the detachment of the king with great slaughter.

In open Combat at Salher

In 1672 Moro Pingale fought one brilliant cavalry action at Salher and literally cut the Mughal division under Ikhlas Khan to pieces. "This was the first complete victory of a Maratha force over an equal number of Mughals in the open field and it greatly enhanced their prestige." Behold ! the despised Bargirs of yesterday now became not only the equals of the best Mughal troops, but their superiors. The Marathas became a terror to their enemies.

Up to the Very Walls of Aurangabad

They swooped upon Khandesh and demanded Chowth from that Mughal city ; they raided Ahmednagar, Aurangabad and even Golkonda and Raigad – the capital of the Marathas – grew rich with the spoils of many a successful campaign.

In 1672 Ali Adil Shah died and the Kingdom was plunged once again into a state of anarchy and that was exactly what the vigilant Maratha wanted. He at once took Panhala, plundered the foreign settlement at Hubli and ordered his fleet to raid the coast. Within two years, the Bijapur troops were driven back to the walls of their capital and the Marathas occupied the territory as far as Miraj.

Thus by this time Shivaji the Great had reconquered all his ceded territory from the Mughals, and had defeated all his enemies in the open field. Bijapur was knocked out of the race ; Golconda was paralysed ; the viceroy of Deccan was forced to look on helplessly as fort after fort was re-taken from the Mughals and the Marathas plundered their country up to the very walls of Aurangabad. Verily had the great captain now established himself as an independent ruler of Deccan ; he attained his goal. Shivaji the Great, therefore, felt the need of legitimizing his conquests and get himself crowned lawful monarch of the Kingdom.

The Legal Sanction

The principle of legitimacy has always held a powerful sway over the minds of the people. In the absence of legal sanction a conqueror, however mighty, at once partakes of the character of a parvenu. Napoleon himself at a future date could have got rid of this principle ; so engrained was it in medieval society both here and in

Europe. The permanence and continuity of the political creation of Shivaji the Great, therefore, required that it should be set on a regular footing, as the valid act of a sovereign.

It was necessary to give a decent burial to the jealousy, which the rapid rise of the Bhonsles had created among the other Maratha families once their equals in social status or in certain cases even their superiors. These selfish men, the Ghorpades, the Manes, the Mores, the Sawants, the Dalvis, the Surves, the Shirkes, the Nimbalkars and the Ghadges, were content to remain vassals of Aurangazeb or Adil Shah and shamelessly took pride in calling themselves their loyal subjects. That Shivaji the Great was, like Washington, "the first win war, the first in peace and the first in the hearts of his countrymen" ; that in championing the cause of the oppressed fellow Marathas, he had not counted on any sacrifice as too great ; that in point of virtue, ability or morals he was definitely superior to these degenerate jagirdars and far in advance of his times – these considerations were nothing in their eyes. Neither the superb beauty of his private character, nor the originality and loftiness of his ideal , neither the brilliant success his armies had met with nor the resourcefulness, the daring, the diplomatic skill, which he had shown in facing the several crises of his life, softened the rancour of hatred of these dregs of human species. The perversity of their minds was only equalled by the depravity of their souls. A formal coronation alone was calculated to shut their mouths effectively.

The coronation of Shivaji the Great was a scene of the greatest splendour. Nothing like it had been witnessed in Maharashtra for several generations. The grand ceremony was performed strictly in accordance with the orthodox ritual by the greatest Sanskrit theologian then alive, Gaga Bhatta.

The Storm Brews

For the next two years, no military operations of importance were undertaken. The crowned head of the Maratha nation wisely busied himself with measures intended to secure his conquests. The great king's last expedition was undertaken in 1676 when he set out with the largest Maratha army which had ever yet taken the field at one time, ostensibly to assert his legitimate claims to his father's jagir in Karnataka but really to bring his stupid brother Venkoji under his own control and influence. Since the death of Shahaji, his younger son Venkoji had been in undisturbed enjoyment of the extensive Karnataka Jagir. If he had managed the estate wisely with the help of his father's veteran Ministers and particularly of Raghunath Narayan Hanumante, if he had transferred his allegiance as a vassal jagirdar to his illustrious brother who was now the recognised head of the Marathas, perhaps Shivaji the Great would not have undertaken this campaign at all. But instead, he began to drive his own coach with the advice of his vulgar and unworthy friends, and Hanumante, who was constantly treated with insults and whose influence in the government was systematically undermined, saw that Venkoji's mismanagement would soon bring

ruin to the jagir and disgrace to Shahaji's memory. Venkoji, under these circumstances, became insolent and openly defied his brother.

One day there was a stormy scene at the court ; Hanumante extolled Shivaji the Great as a model king and taunted his master as a spiritless and an incapable man : Venkoji, not liking the Minister's frankness, retorted by calling his brother a traitor and a rebel against his lawful sovereign. The disgusted Minister left Tanjore and went to Satara to interview Shivaji the Great. The latter, for his own reasons, was maturing a plan for the invasion of Karnataka during his illness at Satara and hence Hanumante found in the Raja a willing listener to his scheme.

Aurangazeb's Eye on Deccan

Aurangazeb, though up to now busy with putting down revolts in the north and establishing his authority in that quarter, had never forgotten his scheme of annexing the whole of Deccan to his Empire.

He , therefore, followed the policy of weakening the Deccan powers so that he should be in a position at a later date to sweep them off the political board himself with an overwhelming force.

Bahadur Khan, the Mughal Viceroy, lacked both the ability and the army for reducing Deccan and there was every likelihood of all Deccan powers, including the Marathas, making common cause against the Mughals. So Aurangazeb always fomented internal dissensions by bribing everyone in power, by exciting jealousy between the Muslim States. So long as Shivaji the Great had

not become a menace in the Emperor's eye, he considered Shivaji's raids into Bijapur and Golkonda territory as favourable to him.

At Bijapur on the death of Ali Adil Shah two factions, the Afghans and the Deccanis, were struggling for power. Khavas Khan was the head of the Deccani party while Abdul Kharim headed the Afghans.

Bahadur Khan now received orders to attack Bijapur and punish Abdul Karim for his treachery. When the war was proceeding Diler Khan who as an Afghan was favourably disposed towards Abdul Karim, joined Bahadur Khan's army and a truce was called for. Both the parties, the Mughals and the Bijapuris entered into an alliance for the subjugation of the Golkonda state.

Bednore to Tanjore

Golkonda too was torn by internal strife. The new Abu Hussein was hostile to the Mughals and the two Brahmin brothers Madanna and Akkanna guided his policy. The able Minister Madanna saw the danger of the alliance between Diler Khan, Shivaji the Great, and the Bijapur Regent, and thus an alliance between Golkonda and the Marathas was inevitable. On his part Shivaji the Great had no illusions but that he was holding his kingdom on sufferance and that as soon as Golkonda was conquered Aurangazeb was sure to mobilise all his military resources against himself. At such a crisis he could hope to save himself only if he could fall back upon some strong positions in Southern India. His plan was therefore to create a new kingdom in the South from Bednore to Tanjore. He

would guard its northern frontier from Mughal attack by a line of forts, and extend his dominions to the south as far as possible. From this base he thought he would be able to take the offensive at a favourable opportunity and roll back the Mughal tide. The king's scheme was far-sighted and its wisdom was to be realised shortly when Rajaram could go to Jinji and defy the Mughal armies for a long time.

The Born Strategist's Strategy

Shivaji's object was only to save himself from the Mughal menace for the time being. The Shahi Government was in a position to trouble Shivaji at this time. Golconda was admittedly friendly to him. Both the States were far from being "powerful" and if anything, they could not be "potentially hostile" in the face of the well-known Mughal designs on their very existence. Potentially, they were going to be the great Raja's subordinates allies. This was the "born strategist's" strategy.

Shivaji's motive in this distant campaign was not mere plunder but extension of his territory. Some idea of this motive can also be gathered from his remarkable letter to Maloji Rai Ghorpade written from Hyderabad in March 1677 wherein he urges his countrymen to bury the past and combine against the Adil Shahis. There he lays down the principle that the land belonged to the natives and no foreigner and had any right to encroach. When the plan was finally formed, Shivaji the Great who left nothing to chance, made his diplomatic and other preparations and as usual his diplomacy completely triumphed against the Mughl Viceroy of Deccan.

Bahadur Khan had no stomach for any more war with Shivaji the Great. The neutrality of the Deccan Viceroy was purchased "by giving him a large sum of money, part of which would appear publicly and a part privately. That which was publicly received was styled tribute by the Mughals – an appellation to which Shivaji reconciled himself, even at this stage of his independence, by comparing it to "the oil cake to his milch cow".

Having thus arranged for the security of his kingdom the Great Shivaji made adequate arrangements for the security of his Kingdom during his long absence to Karnatic. Moro Trimbak Pingle (Peshwa) was entrusted with the general care of the kingdom as Regent and Annaji Datto was specially to look after the Konkan districts from Kalyan to Phonda, "strong garrisons and a large body of disposable infantry" being placed in his charge. He was also directed to assist the Peshwa.

The Deal

Finally, an alliance was made with Golkonda and the close friendship and cooperation of Outub-shah was secured. Golconda had already promised Shivaji an annual tribute of one lakh of hun for the defence of the realm. A shrewd diplomat, Prahlad Niraji, had been posted at Hyderabad as Maratha envoy. Shivaji the Great expected to get from Golkonda the expenses of the campaign and wrote to his envoy to arrange for a friendly interview between him and Outub Shah who was at first afraid of such a personal meeting, but on Prahlad Niraji's solemn oath in support of Shivaji's honesty of purpose he agreed to receive him.

Shivaji the Great then started from Raigad in January 1677 at the head of 30,000 horses and 40,000 infantry carefully abstaining from plunder and maintaining perfect discipline among his vast horde proceeded on his march with utmost regularity.

Madanna Pandit came out some distance to receive his distinguished guest and the day after his arrival Shivaji the Great had an interview with Qutub Shah. The two monarchs held a friendly consultation for three hours and Abdul Hasan was so favourably impressed by the Maratha King's personal magnetism, character, ability, and the strength and discipline of his army that he readily granted whatever the latter wanted. A secret offensive and defensive alliance was concluded. The Sultan agreed to pay a subsidy of 3,000 hun a day and to send an army of 5,000 men to cooperate in the conquest of Karnataka. A train of artillery with its equipments was also supplied and probably a large sum of money as advance payment of the stipulated subsidy. In return for this Shivaji the Great seems to have promised the Sultan a share "of such parts of his conquests in Karnataka as had not belonged to his father Shahaji".

The Patrimony

After a month spent at Hyderabad in making his arrangements, Shivaji the Great marched due south, towards Krishna. The fortress of Jinji, which afterwards became famous as the seat of the Maratha Government under Rajaram, was taken together with the Kolar and Bangalore districts. These districts formed a part of the ancestral territory and Venkoji in great

despondency was forced to agree to the surrender of half of his possessions to his masterful brother. The only opposition that Shivaji the Great met with was from Sher Khan but he was enveloped and was captured with his entire army. Thus this campaign was a complete success. The boldness of its design and neatness of its execution place the Great Maratha captain, remark Kincaid and Parasnis, in the front rank of the World's greatest generals. Like Caesar, in Spain "he came, he saw, he conquered". "With two enemies, one on either flank, and a doubtful ally on his line of communications, he had crossed India from west to east and back again from east to west. In the course of 18 months at a distance of 700 miles from his base he had conquered a territory as large as his former kingdom. While a single reverse would have been fatal, he had not suffered even a single check. Victory had succeeded victory ; town had fallen after town. As he sent he organised two conquests ; and when he returned to Raigad, as he now did, his new possessions were securely bound together, from sea to sea by a line of fortified strongholds held by garrisons brave to the death and devoted to his cause."

A Friend in Need

Bahadur Khan, the Viceroy of Deccan, was recalled as his truce with Shivaji the Great was not approved of by Aurangzeb and Diler Khan was ordered to carry out the combined attack on Golkonda, true to the Emperor's policy of exhausting Deccan States. But the invaders were met by an overwhelming force and were compelled soon to retreat. Diler Khan then quarrelled

with his Bijapur allies and Siddi Masaud Khan, the new regent, sent an urgent message to Shivaji the Great piteously begging him to come to the rescue of Bijapur in its dire need. Shivaji therefore, returned to Deccan by way of Bellary, which he took enroute. He had no wish to see his ancient foe fall a victim to the Mughals, particularly because the Mughals at Bijapur would be troublesome and powerful neighbours. He therefore, made a diversion in their favour and sending forces to ravage Mughal territory, eventually forced Diler Khan to retreat. As usual Shivaji the Great was carrying all before him, when suddenly at Raigad a disease of the knee brought on a violent attack of fever. Worn out by constant exertion in the cause of his country and religion, the great warrior succumbed to his illness and passed away on the 5th April 1680.

"Kshatriya Kulawantas Maharaj
Simhasanadheeswara Raja Shiva
Chhatrapati Ki Jai."

*(From The Rise and Fall of the Maratha
Empire by R. V. NADKARNI)*



ADVICE TO VENKOJI

WELL over six months had passed since Shivaji started his southern campaign. But no contact had been established between the two brothers and though it was a matter of courtesy on Venkoji's part to extend an invitation and a welcome to his illustrious brother, he chose to ignore it completely.

Shivaji waited for sometime before he made the first move. He then sent word to Venkoji, asking him to send some of his courtiers as envoys, to open negotiations regarding their father's properties. Govind Bhat, Kakaji Pant, Nilaba Naik, Rangoba Naik and few others came over, upon receipt of the letter, to meet Shivaji. To these men Shivaji said, "I deserve a share of the property that was enjoyed by my father. It is going to be thirteen years since my father's death, and so far Venkoji made no bid to share the jagir with me. I think I had been patient long enough and since the first move towards a legitimate discussion of the patrimony had not been taken by Venkoji, I feel I am justified in suggesting the division now. I want you people to report my views to my brother and advice him to act accordingly".

Venkoji's aides found nothing objectionable in the proposal. Maharaj wrote a letter to be handed over to Venkoji, asking him to come and meet him in person to discuss



matters in detail and sent his own envoy with Venkoji's men.

The party went back to Tanjore and reported to Venkoji, and Shivaji's men presented him with the letter Shivaji wrote, inviting him for a talk. Though he disliked the idea of parting with his territories, Venkoji agreed to meet Shivaji and negotiate regarding the property. He set out along with Kakkaji Pant, Jagannath Pant, Kanher Pant, and two of his half-brothers, Pratapji Raje and Bhivji Raje, and proceeded to meet Shivaji, followed by a two thousand strong cavalry. When Maharaj came to know of the arrival of Venkoji he came from his camp and the brothers met in a Shiva temple at a place called Tirupatora, six miles from Shivaji's camp and they cameback together to Thirumal Wadi camp. Shivaji extended a warm welcome to the party and gave them generous gifts. Venkoji stayed with Shivaji for eight days.

Giving them time to settle down, Shivaji opened the negotiations after sometime. Addressing Venkoji, he said "Look, both of

us have equal right to share the property that was left to us by our father. So far you have enjoyed it all by yourself, while I waited for you to make the first move and offer me my share. But you do not seem inclined to do so. Hence I had to make this unpleasant demand on you. From your own properties, and from territories you might have captured, I ask for no share. But the jagir of our father must be shared by us equally." Venkoji did not wish openly to defy Shivaji, and left the camp without Shivaji's knowledge.

Shivaji's efforts to settle matters amicably were in vain, and he now had to adopt an aggressive attitude. He decided to take by force the area north of river Koleran as his share of the patrimony. His half-brother, Santaji Raje too joined him, and Shivaji gave him command of a regiment of one thousand strong cavalry.

When Shivaji came up to Torgal, he heard the eventful news that Venkoji had attacked Santaji Raje near Ahiri and was defeated by Santaji. Maharaj went further and captured all the property that Venkoji acquired from Adil Shah. Venkoji reinforced his army and came back to Ahiri with a huge battalion of four thousand strong cavalry and ten thousand strong infantry. Santaji Raje, Hambirrao Mohite and Raghunath Pant had already been stationed there. Venkoji attacked them with his reinforced army and himself faced Santaji Raje and defeated him and Raghunath Pant and Hambirrao also had been forced to retreat. The three commanders realised the effect these defeats would have on

the morale of their army and decided to attack at night suddenly. Venkoji's army, tired and resting after the great battle, was caught unawares by the sudden attack from all sides. A furious battle ensued in which Venkoji's army was badly mauled, but Venkoji managed to escape and reach Tanjore.

Shivaji was much pained by the unnecessary bloodshed and loss of precious lives caused by Venkoji's fool-hardiness and hostility and sent him yet another message, beseeching him to come to his senses and agree to the partition of the patrimony.

A truce between Shivaji and Venkoji was brought about by Raghunath Pant, and the brothers came to an agreement regarding the division of property, after which Shivaji returned from Karnataka to his kingdom.

Thereafter, however, Venkoji's disposition totally changed. He lost all interest in state affairs, and started spending long periods in meditation and deep thought. He neglected the administration of his estate and left it almost completely in the hands of his officials, who started taking advantage of the situation for their personal ends. Shivaji learnt of this situation for the first time and immediately wrote a letter to Venkoji. Having taken a share of the patrimony it now became imperative for him to accept the responsibilities of an elder brother. He wrote a long and affectionate letter to Venkoji, reminding him of his duties as a ruler. It ran thus : "I am much depressed to learn that of late you are not taking any interest in the affairs of your state and that you are spending most of your time in meditation. For us, who

have taken the mantle of kingship, the protection of our subjects is the only form of asceticism acceptable. In fulfilling our duties to our subjects, we shall be progressing towards salvation. If you leave all affairs in the hands of your officials, they might misuse their powers and harass the innocent public. As their ruler it is your duty to protect them from harassment, and not contribute to it. Come out of this depression and discharge your duties as a ruler, and conquer further territories and free our people from alien rule. Therein lies your dharma, and I hope you will realise it."

The letter seemed to have had some effect on Venkoji, for he emerged from his dejection and state of inaction, and once again applied himself to the administration of his estate.



CHATTRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ

THE FOUNDER OF FREE BHARATH

By YOGACHARYA S. SUNDARAM

FREEDOM was his breath and Tyranny his enemy. What mattered to him if the enemy was a Moghallai or a Deccani ! Was he only the son of a vassal of Bijapur bent upon carving out a petty Kingdom ? Was he only a Visionary dreaming of the impossible ? Could he be simply called an Adventurer labouring on the ladder of chance ? Diminutive in form and destructive, terrible in action, his spirit ! Was he not the embodiment of the Spirit of the Gita ? Quail not, fail not and fight for the Freedom of Bharath and its ideals of Vedic Karma and Dharma. This summed up the excellence of this immortal Son of Bharath, Chattrapati Shivaji Maharaj, who laid the foundation for a Free Bharath ! Are you moaning for resources ? Man – made resources, - resources never made Man – that was Shivaji. Brain or Brawn ? - Brain made Brawn and moved it – that was Shivaji ! Rama killed Ravana in Lanka. But the Mahratta bearded the Terrors, worse than Ravana's, of North and South – with Rama's name on his lips and heart ! Was he not the pet chela of Samarth, the incarnation of Hanuman – Samarth Ramadas ? Did he not sit under the feet of this great Guru and imbibe the spirit of the Ramayana ? Was he not chosen by this great Siddha Purusha to lay the foundation for sweeping out the hyenas that ate and gnawed at the vitals of Vedic Dharma ?

What a Time, the critical psychological time, was the advent of this great one, Shivaji ! Marauders had come through Khyber and Bholan. Did they come with culture of nobility ? They came with sword moved by brutality, moved by the lust for blood, loot and women ! Had they any stake in the country they invaded and burnt ? These alien marauders gave their successive onslaughts in waves and they returned to tell stories of the richness and beauty of the Indo-Gangetic valley, the wealth rolling on the plains for the picking, and of the disunited, emasculated and vain Rajahs and Chieftains. This inflamed fresh hordes of barbarians, until at last the marauders failed to return to their lands but settled down like swarms of locusts – and alas the green verdure of Vedic Dharma and Vedic living were no more ! Here and there were some dried roots of the ancient culture and civilisation with nobody to water, and which nobody dared to water !

The sons of the soil became second class citizens, if not political and social Pariahs. These Kafirs became fit to be looked upon – when their heads were shaved and converted at the point of the sword. Security or insecurity of life ! Life and property; of their women, kith and kin, were the security ! True some of these Hindu slaves were gilted and embroidered as marks of their slavery, in positions in the Service of the Invader-Settler. The marauders

came not to be considered as such – they attained the respectability of natives. They forgot their barren hilly tracts and parching homes, west and farther west. They became Emperors. Their Empire extended all over. Some rulers were, however, really great and sought a synthesis, which was demoted and defeated in privacy.

Shah-in-Shah Aurangzeb came to the Imperial Throne. He thought his ancestor's rule was soft and stupid. They did not reach the harvest big for the Faithful, because they gave room to pusillanimity. But did he take advantage of the talents and loyalty of the Kafirs ? Had he not famous and trusted Generals and Administrators, from this class ? Did he not send a famous General to subdue rebellious Deccani Chieftains, who had become Sultans in their own right and claimed Kingdoms ?

Shivaji was born in these times in Karnataka. His father Shahaji administered a Jagir here. He was a soldier of fortune for the Sultan of Bijapur. What a wonderful mother Shivaji had in Jija Bai ! Did she not mould her son in the Vedic way of thought and living ? Shivaji drank not only mother's milk flowing from her bosom, but the milk that was surcharged with all that was great and sustaining to the soul. She was religious and cultured, an ideal of Vedic womanhood. She told him stories of the Rishis and the Yogis. She talked to him of the Puranas and all that was great in Vedic Civilisation that was gone, murdered. He became fit to listen to the great Samarthas and imbibe valour, religion and the great exploits of the incarnations of the Vedic Pantheon. This intake went deep. It went

to form his Brawn and Brain. Teenage came and he looked about. The Fire of Freedom sparked and blazed to destroy those that held the sons of the soil as their slaves annihilating their religion and their very spirit and culture, making them serve with grass in their mouths. His hatred and disgust spread to the humbled chieftains, with no guts to fight for their religion or for their tyrannised fellow beings. They served the rulers with their sword and cunning to enslave, burn and loot their fellow sons of the Vedic soil. They had apparently no moral courage and faith of conviction to resign and fight those that built mosques out of the destroyed temples. They did not rebel when their idols were broken. Their chicken hearts acquiesced. Their lullaby was 'what if Rama ruled or Ravana ruled' !

What about Shivaji's own father, who had pledged his sword and loyalty to these alien rulers who talked the language of the sword, fire and rape ? Shivaji attained teenage. Did he dedicate thereafter his life for the faithful following of his father in his footsteps ? His answer is there very plain and bold for anyone but the blind to read. Mother was there with him. The rising Blaze of Freedom, freedom to drive out the invaders to establish the Magna Carta of Vedic religion and living, substituted itself in the place of a father.

He rose in secret revolt. He gathered about him petty chieftains of like mind, and began attacking the far-flung limbs of the Adil Shahi Kingdom, of the Sultan of Bijapur, the biggest of the Deccani rulers and the most severe headache to the Moghul Tiger. He gnawed away small villages, smaller forts

and formed the nucleus of the Freedom Force with swords raised for the protection of the Vedic Dharma. He became the pet of the Mavalis, the hardened, the spirited, the clever and the valiant Mahrattas, and their Hero, a boy Hero. Shivaji gnawed at the toes and toe-nails of the Kingdom of Bijapur with the irrepressible and incorrigible tenacity of the Rat. Cats were afraid to go near and have a close look at this Rat. The Sultan was in a rage. He was furious and the only possible thing he could do was to abuse this pigmy, calling him a mountain Rat. This name spread later to Moghul Capital and that Tiger could later have only empty growls of fury.

Jija Bai, the great mother, who supplemented Shivaji's brain, was also his solace, incentive and refuge, and the source of his indefatigable moral energy. Shivaji's irritants to the Sultan increased. Protests and anger to the father, Shahaji, a commander in the Sultan's army availed nothing. Shahaji denied responsibility, as usual. He left the Sultan to deal with his son as the Sircar thought fit. A great treasure, the richest and most priced and perhaps most needed for the Bijapur Darbar was passing through the pass of Wei. With three hundred horsemen, Shivaji attacked after ambushing the thousand strong escort. He looted the entire treasure of Mullana Ahmed and added the firearms to his scarce armoury. The Sultan heard. He got enraged. But he could only cry Bismillah!

The capture of the Treasure and Arms increased the sinews of War for Shivaji. Wai and its surrounding strategic areas came under the control of Shivaji. This cut the arm of Bijapur across to Konkan.

Hearing of this great victory, more Mavalis and more Mahrattas joined him. Women and the old and the elders praised him as the Defender of Vedic religion and Liberator. There were cries of Jai Shivaji all around. Cries of Jai Shivaji echoed and re-echoed in the mountain forests and spread to the plains. What was his strategy what succeeded so well ? How did he successfully beard the lion of Bijapur in its den ? Was he Hannibal, Hannibal of the East ? Greece and Sparta and the Aeigian, small surroundings to play with and tactics against hoards of barbarian army – that was Hannibal's glory ! Shivaji excelled Hannibal. He was facing the sophisticated armies of Bijapur and under talented war veterans. The Western Ghats, what could have Hannibal done here ?

Is he to be compared to Napoleon Bonaparte ? Where is the comparison with this great Idealist – Shivaji seeking to redeem his Holy Land from the alien marauders and free Bharath to its destiny of the Ancient Vedic Culture and Universal Civilisation !

Terror of the regular army, Shivaji had none. Numbers on the field never intimidated him. Lack of equipment – why worry so long as the enemy has it – to be snatched away by his tactics and heroism ! Was he not the originator of the Guerilla War ? The modern cowardly terrorist has made this name stink – the Guerilla ! Shivaji was elusive. He was there where one seldom expected. He had no capital. If an army was sent to capture him and destroy his strongholds, he shifted and always found another and a better and a more formidable one. When the Sultan's

army went away or became lethargic, he swooped on them, and regained the stronghold. He never harmed women and children and the old. His respect and regard extended to the peace-loving followers of Islam. He never insulted that religion or any religion. In his civilised behaviour he never made any mistake or difference on the ground of religion. Shivaji took root, no wonder in the Mahratta's hearts and 'Jai Shivaji' became the war cry and Freedom cry of the oppressed and downtrodden. He had a hawk's eye for the enemies' weakness. His ears were open wide to the strength and weakness of the enemy. His personal exploits of bravery entering into the enemy's camp in disguise, befooling and wounding them, have gone into history. How could Bijapur catch this valorous Eel ?

Shivaji's warriors under the able leadership of Yesaji Rao went as far as Ahmednagar Fort and returned with plenty of loot. Shivaji rose to the status of being regarded a King in his domain of conquest. His kingdom was regarded as Vedic Samrajya. He had his capital at Rajghar. There a son was born to him. He held a ten-day Darbar there.

Petty chieftains all around and the people paid Nazar. He had his Peshwa, Administrators, Courtiers and Darbaris. Names famous in the history of Maharashtra – Moro Trimbak Pingle, Neelo Sondev, Majumdar, Netaji palkar, Chari-Nowyath, Abaji Sondev, Gangaji Mangaji, surrounded him. The conquest of Junnar fort and the loot of its enormous treasures, and the news of Shivaji's Darbar added fuel to the

fire, in the Royal Court of Bijapur, and flamed the anger against this vassal's son.

The Sultan of Bijapur was ill. The Begum Sahabe was in charge of the palace and administration. She discharged the state duties with vigour and capacity. Shivaji's exploits swallowing up the whole of Konkan exposed Bijapur and its rule to ridicule. Engaged in a life and death struggle with the Moghuls and its armies, Bijapur had not had the time and energy to look up and deal with this upstart, Shivaji. One by one the chieftains who had forgotten the existence of Bijapur and its authority taking advantage of the Moghul wars, were brought to their knees, and the forgotten tributes began to flow in again. More Jagirs' heads bent on the earth at the Darbar of Bijapur. The commanders and generals of Bijapur with snobbish bravery of success in their petty wars against erring vassals, beat their chests and twirled their moustaches, that they would bring to book this mountain Rat. They just waited for the command of the Rani Saheba for this petty crushing mission.

With all her administrative capacity, Begum Rani Saheba, too, began to be conscious that after all her rule was that of the Purdha. In spite of boasts and pompous challenges outside, none of the nobles and commanders came forward to her, to suppress this Shivaji and bring him bound hand and foot. Rumour had multiplied the warrior might of this Jagirdar's rebellious son. Afraid to beard him in the mountain ghats and fortresses, the cowardice of the Bijapur Lords also chose to acquiesce in the exaggerations. Shivaji's conquests of Kalyan Biwandi did not encourage these

brave commanders of Bijapur to venture after Shivaji. A ten thousand foot-soldier army of his was multiplied to a sixty thousand. Cavalry competed with that of Bijapur. The Begum called for a special Darbar. Her speech was contemptuous of this rebel and made light of the campaign of his capture. As if expecting that the whole Darbar would rise to volunteer for this puny task, she wanted the Generals, anyone up. The moustaches were having an unusually downward look and the hands of these brave generals were folded carefully on their laps, lest by mistake they should go up accepting this petty task !

The Begum rose in anger and cried 'Fie' on her nobles and military brass hats. Unable to tolerate her insulting innuendos, one man, fat and tall, veteran of several wars, famed for cruelty and plunder and fanatical destruction of the infidels, boastfully came forward. He bowed to carpet, to the Begum, and beating his chest, vowed that he would bring this Rat in just that time – and he snapped his finger ! This was Abdulla Battri, popularly known as Afzal Khan. From the chest his hands rose to his moustache. He twirled, and pointed it. Afzal Khan was praised for his loyal undertaking of this all too simple a task ! He was given the freedom to take such military as he wanted to proceed without delay.

Afzul Khan came home. He slouched on his cushions. He did not answer even his servant for dinner. He murmured to himself and cursed the Darbar and the Begum. He was a soldier. He had fought innumerable petty wars. He got commendation from the Darbar for his exploits with the Moghuls.

His military sense told him that he had unnecessarily boasted and the camp gin against this formidable Mahratta who challenged this kingdom, might be his undoing. This cruel man, inhuman, and breaker of innumerable idols – stone Gods of the Kaffirs and their ancient temples, unsparing of the Hindu chieftains and people, could not suppress the foreboding which insisted in clouding him, against even all reason that he could summon. He failed to turn up at the palace, leaving the Purdah ruler to fret and fume.

The day after he accepted the risky assignment in bravado, his elephant suddenly died. The next day his war horse broke its knee and was shot. To crown all these ill-bodings, his long time war sword broke by striking against a wooden panel when he was jumping and practising. These bad omens of the infidels caught hold of this faithful-brave and made him extremely depressed. His spirit fell low to measure his feet. The Begam Saheba sent a peremptory and angry summons to this hero who undertook to crush this mountain Rat. The great Khan could not delay any longer. He stood before the ruler with all his finery and customary boast and trimmed moustache.

The upshot was the historical event of his campaign against Shivaji, with an army of pure cavalry under brave subalterns. The honour evaded by Nawas Khan, Kutub Khan and Gond Govinda Rao and others fell rather heavily on this cruel warrior. Did he feel strongly that he was going to meet his fate – death ?

It took only just a few weeks for this seasoned warrior to devastate the usurped territories, loot and burn them and put to the sword and fire this Rebel's subjects and his rebellious onetime Jagirdars of his Darbar. Shivaj's hilltop hideouts and fortress strongholds fell one by one. Not daring to risk facing this experienced cavalry in front line battle, Shivaji thought it wise to move from his fort, taking the flower of his army with him, putting up only a delaying and rear-guard action. He was pushing on and on into the depths of the Ghats and mountain fastnesses.

It was a victory march for Afzul Khan. What grand victories ! Slaying defenceless men, women and children, warrior swords tarnished red and rusted by innocent blood ! He reached Pandarpur the City Holy of Holies, the Temple of Lord Pandurang. Gruesome horrors and vandalism perpetrated by himself and his followers have made darker the darkest pages of history. He pulled down the Temple walls, stone by stone. Not a hut was left in this Vedic pilgrims' heaven. Flames rose, smoke engulfed the skies and unanswered cries for succour split the air drowning the 'Whoopees' of the marauders in their massacre. Thousands who sat and took refuge in the temple were put to the sword and their brains shattered by maces. Hundreds perished in tragic, spiritual calm before their fond Lord Vittal, chanting his name, to the very last until mutilated death sealed their lips. The idol of Pandurang was smashed to smithereens. The Grand Victory achieved, this reputable hero among heartless brutes, marched on

striking terror everywhere and camped at the village of Wei.

The Begum had advised him to use cunning against this wily Mahratta, and kill or capture him by treachery and then put his henchmen to the sword and fire. Her vassal, this Afzal Khan, was only too prone to this advice. His ever present shadow of bad omens at the start, prevented him from thinking of frontal assaults on the Stronghold of Shivaji.

Shivaji had retired to the fortress of Pratapgad. It remains even now as it was before, the Fort of Glory :

Eagle Ho ! do thou fly as high

Build thine nest in the sky as high

Eagle nosed son of Bharath beat you there

Robbed your glory of eery heights, his fortress there.

Bridle paths wound to steep steps

Steep steps stumbling, broke in-steps,
broke in-steps

Looking down dizzy depths, shied the eyes

Heroes Nest-a speck for distant eyes.

Afzal Khan, the fantastic terror from
Bijapur's Hell

Swore and cursed the Maharatta,

Hound of Hell

His prey had climbed into this fortress sky

Perfidy in heart, he climbed to the nest
midnight

Hyena, he, met this Mountain Fox

Climbed Afzal's head, pole on rocks

Passing this place, panting en route,

The Fortress wells revealed Bhavani's Suite.

Here, had valour for succour prayed

Here, has eternal Glory Shivaji's stayed

Here and see here Divine Grace

Dissolving all in Time and Space.

In a room of this Fortress Jija Bai was reading the Gita. She was alone. Suddenly the door opened. Shivaji, her dear son, entered. Where was her son's usual calm face and confident demeanour ! What did she see in his eyes ? Not the flashing sparks of the hero. Sorrow seemed dripping from the eyelids. He suddenly knelt, unbuckled his sword and placed it on her lap :

"Oh Mother Dear ! What a heroic mother for the worm of a son ! Like a cur with its tail looped behind the legs, I have run away from place to place, Fort to Fort, abandoning our dear subjects, men, women and children of the Vedic faith. Their homes are burnt. Their fields are destroyed. Am I their protector ? Have they not dared the Anger of the Beasts of Bijapur because they listened to me ? Why have I not died with them ? I am not fit to live, thou jewel of Vedic Womanhood. You

gave me this body. I am not fit for this body that took birth in thy holy and heroic womb. Free me Mother. Avenge my cowardice. Cut this head with this sword and reign to eternity as the Heroine of Dharma."

He knelt and placed his bared neck and bent it to touch the ground. Tears flowed from the eyes of Jija Bai and mixed with the tears flowing out of Shivaji's eyes. Her body trembled once. But her voice was calm and sharp.

"Arise my stupid son ! Where did you get this confusion ! You have retired in the best of strategy to draw the enemy to battle in a place and time of your choice. Millions perished in Kurukshetra ; did the Pandavas commit suicide ? Pursue your strategy, son ! Draw this fattened tiger of Bijapur still closer to your fortress net. Dispose your army to encircle and hide. Go and bring my grandson to me !"

Shivaji wiped his eyes, girdled his sword, got up and marched out of the room. Did his face disclose determination ?

Afzal Khan had marched his army along the banks of the rivers Bheema and Nira. He had marched West. He had entered Palton District, near Wei. In the village of Malvadi he had camped. He sent his commanders around for capturing shaky Deshmukhs ; to kill and loot and bring him gold and treasure to pay his soldiers and meet the expenses of war. They struck terror and left no temple standing and no home unburnt. Afzal Khan got unexpected help. Apart from the self-seeking, disgruntled, cowardly Deshmukhs, a prized ally came from the family of Chandra Rao More.

Chandra Rao was the head of the Havali Jagir. This had grown vastly by petty wars and additions, by killing the surrounding Jagirdars and capturing their territory. This family developed a great hatred for Shivaji, whose growing popularity and power formed an eyesore and a heart-burn. They successfully prevented the expansion of Shivaji's excursions South. About three years earlier, by stratagem Shivaji had gained access to their residence and murdered the head of their family and seized by the sword their Jagir and annexed it to his suzerainty. The members of this family and their friends joined Afzal Khan gladly and offered him all help to fight Shivaji. Afzal Khan had heard that Shivaji was camping at Pratapgad. That Pratapgad has been fortified and secret Mavali brigades were hiding in the hide-outs of the mountain ranges was no news to Afzal Khan. He had expected from Shivaji nothing less. His spies lost no time in bringing information about Shivaji's military resources. The army brought by the Khan was no doubt better trained and richer in sophisticated war experience than the hordes of Shivaji. But he gnashed his teeth in rage and disappointment, when he found that he had no choice but to fight Shivaji on locations of his choice. His better trained army would have chance of fooling or foiling the Mavali braves, whose hide and seek and hit and run, were best suited to annihilate the untrained in the mountain warfare of the Ghats. The sniping, sudden shooting, the unexpected onslaughts by enemy cavalry vomited by hidden ravines and steep hill emplacements – these thoughts sent a shudder through his spine.

Agitation, confusion and hesitation were not confined to Bijapur Camp. Shivaji had called a Durbar of his trusted lieutenants, put before them the situation and wanted their counsel. All of them were brave men of war, talent, scars and sacrifice. But none of them advised Shivaji for a fight. They recommended a peace overture at this critical time to the Khan of Bijapur. Wriggling out and turning about could be left for future situations.

Shivaji was propitiating his Divine Mother Bhavani at the temple Pratapgad, his family



deity. The rituals were over. The gathering of devotees had dispersed. Night covered in dark canopy the Fort and forests. Shivaji entered the sanctum sanctorum alone. He remained there for a few minutes. He came out. He walked there in erratic steps in front of the temple. His agitation was apparent. He entered again and stood in the presence of Bhavani. He turned round and bolted the door inside. He faced the Divine Mother Bhavani again. His eyes did not wink. His eyes burned. Tears did not flow. He came close to Her feet. He knelt. He placed his forehead on the flowers of

Her feet. He spoke. His voice was steady but steely. He talked of Vedic Dharma, its followers, the fanatic marauding and murderings his strenuous efforts to annihilate these and establish Freedom for Bharath and its Vedic followers, the sons of the soil. Now the fate of Pandarpur hung over Pratapgad. To fight was to be defeated and his ambitious efforts and all the innocents to vanish in blood and fire. To yield, was also to bring the same fate. These men of the Faithful had little faith in remaining faithful to their word.

Is she going to repeat the horror of Pandarpur ? Well, Shivaji, did not want to live to witness. Shivaji placed his head on the Bali Peeta, the offering Stone. He placed his neck over that. He drew out his sword and held it raised over the neck in his right hand and spoke.

"Mother here is your gift, Bhavani-ki-Talwar. Let this do its last act of glory. My head as sacrifice to you to save the heads and honour of all those still under the flag of Vaidika Dharma !"

The sword swung down. But it never reached its target. As if struck off by somebody, it jumped off the fingers and clattered down to the floor of the sanctum. Shivaji shouted in pain and stood up. "Oh My Lord Gurudev ! Thou here !" He placed his forehead at the feet of Samarth Ramdas standing, wearing kaupin (a little loin cloth) with a coarse torn sack cloth on his shoulders. The Siddha Purusha's eyes were blazing. This Raghuvir, Great One, how did he come into this bolted sanctum ! Shivaji had swooned away. The great Samarth touched him, lifted him and

embraced his pet chela, Shivaji. He regained consciousness at the touch of his Guru. The Guru made the Chela sit by his side on the strewn altar of flowers. Shivaji was calm. Tears rolled down on the faces of both. They forgot the Witness. Mother Bhavani seemed to smile and bless. A thrill and ecstasy pervaded the Sanctum. The Samarth took from the offering a plantain. He peeled it. He put small pieces into the mouth of Shivaji. Like a dream-child he swallowed. Ramdas : "Whose property is your body and life and everything ?" Shivaji : " Oh My Lord ! they all belong to thy sacred all merciful Self." Ramdas : "You are a liar ! If thine body was mine how did you dare to sever it?"

They laughed like two children. Samarth : "My Mother Creates, Sustains and Destroys. Who are you to question and respond ? Are you the shaper of destinies ? Do your duty. What does your enemy understand ?" Shivaji : "The language of the sword and the courtesy of kicks ?" "Then make him understand !" The Great One disappeared as he came.

History has recorded the sequence. Afzal Khan sent a Brahmin Emissary with a letter. It contained soft words of praise and promises of protection for everything and everybody, if only Shivaji entered his outstretched arms of honour and friendship. Shivaji understood this language very well. And he responded. He sent his Brahmin emissary with his message : Shivaji was shivering from head to foot at the sight of Mighty Army and the Mightier Battari. His fright prevented him from going down to the Great Khan. Why not meet half-way

up Pratapgad ! 'Shivaji and Afzal to come unarmed but for a danger of dignity and each to have a couple of unarmed bodyguards.

Krishnaji Bhaskar the emissary; of the Khan was coaxed by the appeals of Shivaji to reveal the real intentions of the Khan, deceit, murder and destruction.



At a decorated pavilion, the puny Mahratta and the giant Afzal met. Their bodyguards had stopped away at a distance. Shivaji got into the outstretched arms in deceitful embrace. It was action in the speed of lightning. With the left arm holding the figure of Shivaji, with his right arm the Khan drew his dagger and plunged it into the Mahratta's back. The mountain fox had anticipated. The dagger blunted by the chain mail armour inside slipped and fell. The Khan slipped the head of Shivaji into his armpit and pressed it like a vice. Shivaji's body shuddered. He was choking fast.

With the warrior's presence of mind, he plunged the steel claws worn on his left finger, hidden by the loose sleeves, into the side of Khan, and with the right hand drove his dagger into the Khan's perfidious heart, Khan's grip slipped and he fell down in death throes. The body-guards clashed. Yesaji, the giant commander bodyguard of Shivaji, felled the bodyguard, Syed Banda, of Afzal. He cut off the head of the General of Bijapur and raised it on a pole !

A gun boomed from Pratapgad Fort. Pandemonium was let loose. Shivaji's Cavalry swept down the fort with cries of "Jai Shivaji !" This cry had its echo all around. Late into the night and in the early hours, the battle, nay massacre of Bijapur's army went on. The war of Freedom was won. Bijapur crumbled. On its defeat and ashes rose the great kingdom of Vedic Dharma. The foundation was laid for a free Bharath.

The Moghuls went the way of Bijapur. The white man came. But the spirit of Shivaji survived and entered millions of hearts in 1857 and in the twentieth century. Tactics changed to suit the honeyed words and soft emasculation of the White Invader.

BHARATH became FREE and is FREE ! JAI BHARATHI !



SACRIFICE

A YOUNG girl leapt into the dancing flames that consumed the remains of her lord and master. The stricken father stood overwhelmed by grief at two buds that were nipped by the cruel hand of time before they could fulfil their life mission. Yet had he not done his little bit to lighten the load of his sorrowing brethren ? Had he not won the hero's laurels ?

Yes, through the embers that were now fast dying out, the father traced the heroic saga of his son. Who was he ? What was the terrible role that he had enacted, that the curtain had so abruptly been rung down ? This then is the burden of this tale.

Koppal was a stronghold of Deccan with a very strong fort, commanded by two powerful Pathan brothers named Hussain Khan Miyana and Abdur Rahiman Khan Miyana. The brothers were notorious for their high-handedness and inflicted untold injury on the people of the area. Their bigoted fanaticism resulted in the destruction of temples and religious institutions. People dumbly submitted to all the injury and insults inflicted on them. They had no hope but to send up fervent prayers to the Almighty to alleviate their misery.

Now it seemed that the Good Lord had heard their prayers and responded. These miserable minions of Koppal learnt one fine morning that Shivaji, the great defender of the common man had come to

Karnataka. People realised that this was a silver lining in their thickly overcast sky. So they set out one day, to explain to Great Shivaji about their miserable plight at the hands of these two brothers. At last, the emissary of a chosen few silently sped to Shivaji's camp. The wily Khan brothers came to know of this and pounced on the families of these representatives and tortured them.

Undaunted, these men told their tale of woe to Shivaji and sadly requested him to relieve them from the clutches of the cruel masters. Shivaji listened to them very patiently and swore to put an end to the tyrannical rule of Adil Shah in that area. He sent Hambirrao Mohite with a large army to attack the Pathans . Two young boys took part in this campaign, namely Nagoji Jedhe and Dhanaji Jadhav. Nagoji had inherited all the valour and daredevil courage from his valiant grandfather. His father, Sarje Rao also accompanied Hambirrao Mohite.

Hambirrao marched with his army towards Sampgaon. The Miyana brothers already knew of the attack, but, having a mighty force at their command, they were not perturbed in the least, and confidently prepared to counter the attack.

As Hambirrao reached Yelburga near Linga Sagar along with his army he saw massive clouds of dust rising from the hoofs of an approaching cavalry. He at once realised

that the enemy had mustered more strength and the Marathas had little or no chance against them. He knew the reputation of the Miyana brothers, who were very brave and strong. There was no turning back now. With their war cry of 'Har Har Mahadeo' the Marathas charged forward, determined to fight to the last and inflict a heavy toll on the Khan brothers. It appeared as though their determination lent extra strength to the entire army and the fury with which the Marathas attacked the ranks of the Khan brothers created panic. The calculated offence planned by the Khans was foiled and now they had to grope their way out of the enemy lines.

The Marathas broke into the Khan's army and were coming close to the Khan himself. The Pathan soldiers were in panic. The Khan realised that he was trapped and ordered his mahout to turn his elephant back. Nagoji saw Hussain Khan's move for the escape and strode fast towards the Khan and struck a severe blow with his

javelin on the temple of the elephant, which sank to the ground, trumpeting in fury and pain. The boy who was hardly old enough to be out of his playground now recklessly threw himself at his enemy in the battle field. Also, such valour was not destined to flower to its full glory in manhood and an arrow from the Khan's hand struck a deadly blow on his tender forehead, piercing his skull, and sending him reeling to the ground.

Though the boy fell, the torch was taken on by other hands and before the Khan could even think of retreating, Dhanaji and Hambirrao Mohite pounced upon him and took him captive. The laurels of the battle were of little comfort to the Marathas who mourned the death of the young lad. Sarje Rao stood in stunned silence by his dying son. His was the glorious happiness of having fathered so valiant a son. This then was the funeral pyre into which his young wife leapt to unite in another world with her heroic partner.



SHIVAJI IN THE SOUTH

PROFESSOR R. ANNAMALAI

THE Coronation of Chhatrapati Shivaji took place in 1674. After his ceremony he assumed lofty titles to signify his full sovereignty. Even after the assumption of the royal title of Chhatrapati, he could not be considered as an Emperor, as his dominion hardly extended beyond 200 miles in length and far less in breadth. In the west coast, the Siddis and the Portuguese were his enemies. In the east, the tottering Sultanates of Bijapur and Golkonda remained sometimes as a threat and at other times as an opportunity. The northern gates were ably blocked from Shivaji's expanding ambitions by the forces of the Mughals. Only the South offered him a valuable chance. Shivaji's brother Vyankoji was ruling the south from Thanjavur.

The compelling reason of Shivaji's idea of conquest of the south was the imperative need of money. The coronation ceremony had already emptied the treasury. Construction of forts, his naval programme and the raising of huge armies drained his vast resources. In 1676 Shivaji completed his plan of an expedition to the south. Historians differ with regard to two important questions : first, as to the motive which compelled Shivaji to undertake this expedition, and second, as to the person responsible for it.

As for the motive, three reasons may be adduced. Some are of the opinion that Shivaji's main object was to plunder the

rich provinces of the south. Others consider that the expedition was planned to punish Vyankoji into submission and to claim his share of his ancestral property left by his father. The creation of a Hindu Pad Padshahi by uniting all the Hindu powers of South India was the most important reason why Shivaji thought of the South.

As to the person responsible for it, opinions again differ. Some name Raghunath Hanumante. Others argue that Madanna Pant, the Minister of Kutub Shah was the author of the scheme. They might have contributed towards the success of the enterprise, but the initiator of this plan was Shivaji himself. He was the sole architect of his fortunes.

The political condition in the southern states at this juncture offered him the great opportunity. In the Mysore region, Chikka Deva Raya was at war with Chokkanatha Nayak of the kingdom of Madurai. The Marathas of Thanjavur and Chokkanatha were at loggerheads. Bijapur Sultans were supposed to be the nominal rulers of these parts. But as the central authority at Bijapur became weak, its governor at Gingee and Walikandapuram began to quarrel with one another. Golkonda tried its level best to profit at this confused state of affairs in the south, Madanna Pant, the Minister of Golkonda was waiting for an opportunity for building up a Pant-Hindu coalition in the south. Raghunath

Hanumante the guardian of Vyankoji accepted the idea of Madanna Pant. Meanwhile Hanumante's interference in the administration was disliked by Vyankoji. As a result, he was compelled to leave Thanjavur and traced his steps to Shivaji's court. Hanumante's persuasion succeeded in getting the willing support of Akkanna and Madanna to Shivaji. The Bakhars, Chitnis and Shiva Digvijaya assert that the object of Shivaji's expedition was to obtain a part of his father's jagirs in the Karnatic from Vyankoji. But the main object of the expedition of Shivaji in the south seems to be conquest and annexation and establishment of Hindavi Swarajya.

English records try to paint this expedition of Shivaji as a campaign of plunder. But from Sabhas one learns that during the expedition Shivaji took the greatest care to see that his soldiers refrained from plundering the inhabitants of the land and causing damage to them. Sabhas mentions that "the Raja (Shivaji) entertained in his heart the desire of conquering the Karnataka from the Tungabhadra Valley to the Kaveri". He wanted to take control of Pondichery, as it was in the hands of foreign powers.

The Course of the Expedition

By the end of the year 1676 Shivaji started his southern expedition with 20,000 cavalry and 40,000 infantry. Raghunath Narayan and Janardhan narayan assisted him with their knowledge about the topography of the Karnatic. Firstly, Shivaji had gone to Bhagya Nagar (Hyderabad) to befriend the Kutub Shah of Golkonda. When he visited Bhagya Nagar he was given a royal reception. The Golkonda Sultan offered

him men and money to co-operate with Shivaji in his design of the conquest of the south. Leaving Bhagya Nagar in March 1677, Shivaji marched southwards towards Shri Sailam, where he worshipped Shri Bhavani. Leaving Shri Sailam, Shivaji passed through Tirupati and Kalahasti and halted at Peddapalam for sometime. He had already sent an advance contingent of 5,000 strong cavalry through Kancheepuram to Gingee. The commanders of the fort were won over by diplomacy and Gingee was taken. He constructed new ramparts around Gingee, dug ditches, erected towers, created basins with perfection.

His next attack was on Vellore which was defended by another Muslim commander. Shivaji was not able to take Vellore, and leaving the siege operations in the hands of Narahari Rudra marched southwards to meet Sher Khan Lodi, the Bijapur Governor. After 14 months Vellore was taken by Shivaji's troops. Sher Khan Lodi had his seat of Government at Walikandapuram. The Maratha forces under Shivaji were met by him at Tiruvedi (South Arcot District). Lodi found it difficult to contain the Marathas and tried to escape to Tevanapatam. Shivaji chased him to Bhuvana Giri. His men Captured Valdur, Tevanapatam and several other forts of Sher Khan. He gave up the struggle and made peace with Shivaji (July 1677).

After his victory over Sher Khan, Shivaji camped for sometime with his army at Tirumal Vadi on the banks of the river Coleroon. Chokkanatha's envoy came from Madurai to meet Shivaji. A sum of 6 lakhs was paid to make peace with Shivaji.

Vyankoji was invited to see Shivaji, and the latter went as far as Tirupatora to receive his brother. Vyankoji was asked to give major portions of his jagirs to Shivaji, which declined. Shivaji was naturally angered. Fearing retribution, Vyankoji took to his heels and Shivaji directed his troops to take possession of the Thanjavur kingdom. Later, Shivaji excused Vyankoji. Shivaji conquered all the country belonging to Sher Khan and deprived Vyankoji of all his open territories on the side of Coleroon. Only Vellore and Arni continued to defy Shivaji. The conquered parts were governed by Raghunath Narayan as Minister and Hambirrao as Commander-in-Chief.

Shivaji left the Coleroon base for Walikandapuram where he stayed for a short time. From Walikandapuram, he went to Tundumugurti and received presents from the Dutch at Tevanapatam. His army took the fort of Eleanasur from Vyankoji. Shivaji went to Vriddhachalam to worship Lord Shiva in the great temple there. He advanced to Srirangam and worshipped Lord Ranganatha (August 1677). Shivaji was in Vaniyambadi in September 1677. Soon he plundered Porto Novo and advanced as far as within two days march from Madras. Arni had surrendered to Shivaji by this time.

Shivaji visited Madras on October 3, 1677. In Thambu Chetty street in Madras, there is a Kali temple (Amba Bhavani) in which Shivaji is supposed to have worshipped Goddess Bhavani. Shivaji offered land gifts to this temple.

Between 1676-80, Chennai Kuppam (Madras) was called Maratta Town when Shivaji visited Madras. Before coming to Madras he had already conquered Porto Novo, Gingee and Kancheepuram. The march of Shivaji threatened the English. They took shelter within the Fort of St. George at Madras Kuppam. The English wanted to oppose Shivaji, but the heroic attack of Shivaji compelled them to take shelter within the Fort of St. George (based on Love : Vestiges of old Madras in three volumes). The Brass cup chariot could be seen even to this day in the temple at Thambu Chetty Street, under repair. The Chariot was drawn in the days Chhatrapati Shivaji.

Shivaji had spent more than ten months in the south. At this juncture Aurangzeb, the Mughal Emperor began to attack the south. Convening a grand council of all his Ministers, Shivaji resolved to return to Raigad. The homeward journey of Shivaji commenced in November 1677. "The forts of Kolhar and Balapur were captured. The country was conquered. Some forts were built. Turbulent polegars were destroyed and reduced to dust." After placing the conquered territories under Raghunath Pant, Shivaji passed through Koppal, Lakshmeshwar, Sampgaon and captured the fort of Belvadi. He reached Panhala in April 1678.



SHIVAJI REWARDS THE POET BHUSHAN

TIKWANPUR, a small hamlet, was destined to raise its humble head in pride at the greatness of its children, for it was in this village that the famous poet Bhushan, who achieved immortality for himself and the Chhatrapati through his literary compositions, was born. Born in a Brahmin family with a cultural and literary background, not only Bhushan, but also his two brothers, Moti Ram and Chintamani, developed great skill in poetic compositions. Moti Ram was the court poet at Aurangazeb's durbar and was eager to introduce Bhushan to Aurangazeb. And so it happened that one fine morning Bhushan stood in the presence of the Moghul Emperor who asked him to recite a piece of poetry. Bhushan was a young man well-known for his straight-forward and frank nature, and the poem he recited very much reflected these qualities :

Calling yourself a Jahanpana,
You sit in Imperial splendour
Upon the Delhi throne
But, O mighty Aurangazeb : know ye,
Your glory is tainted,
Besmirched is your grandeur
By the deeds of treachery
Through which you ascended
This seat of Moghul supremacy.

.....

Imprisoned Shah Jahan stares mutely
At his beloved in Taj Mahal
Of an ungrateful son.
And your brothers shrink away
From the sinful shadow
Of yours ; you who detested sharing
A mere kingdom and a throne
With one that shared your very blood –
Dara.
What do earthly bonds of brotherhood
mean,
To one like you who designed deceit,
To Murad Baksh under oath of Koran ?
Such unpalatable truth had no appeal for
Aurangazeb. Yet, he pretended to be
pleased by the poem, and asked Bhushan
to recite another verse. The next verse
did little to assuage the sting of the first
one. In it Bhushan compared Aurangazeb
to a cat pretending to do penance after a
meal of several rats !
It was very surprising that in spite of such
impertinence Aurangazeb did not inflict any
punishment on the poet. But, Bhushan
knew the consequences of such conduct
only too well. He realised that Aurangazeb,
perhaps, had designs to punish him in the
worst possible manner, sometime later or
in due course, and he quit Agra immediately.

He went to Chhatrasa, the King of Orchha who was a man of culture, sincerely religious and God-fearing. Chhatrasal advised Bhushan to go further to the south and contact Shivaji who was the only ruler that was more than a match for Aurangzeb and his court the only place where Bhushan would be welcomed without the fear of the Emperor's displeasure.

When Bhushan finally reached Shivaji's residence, it was past evening. Shivaji was engaged in the evening worship, the "Sandhya rites". He was informed that a Brahmin poet from the north had come to seek refuge under him. Shivaji immediately ordered him to be admitted with due respect. After a formal chat Shivaji requested Bhushan to recite some of his verses. In his rich, glorious voice the poet sang out :

As Indra majestic on clouds aloft,
As Varuna to the deep fire infernal,
As dispenser of dharma of Raghu's line,
On ego-drunk demon Ravana,
As winds on gathering clouds,
As angry Siva on indulgent Kama,
As raging fire, a scourge to trees shorn
shor,
As lion does reign supreme on décor'd
elephant tame,
As sun-light to darkness of distress and
sobs,

As tiny Krishna – Lord and Victor on
groaning Kamsa subdued,

So, to the Mlechcha hoards – no doubt is
Shivaraja – the brave !

After hearing the verse Shivaji drew a line
on the ground, and said, "Once more
Panditji."

Bhushan recited the verse again.

"Once more."

Bhushan repeated it, once more.

"Go on."

Bhushan went on repeating the verse and
Shivaji drew a line after each recitation.

After repeating the very fifty one times,
when Shivaji asked Bhushan to repeat, the
latter could no longer control his temper.
He said, "Shivaji, it appears my poetry does
not interest you and you are making fun of
me by making me repeat it like a parrot."

Shivaji gave a hearty laugh : He said, "Oh
Brahmin, I had decided to present you the
same number of villages as the number of
times you repeated the poem. After all
you a Brahmin and could not contain your
temper. I just wanted to see how long
your patience will hold." So saying, Shivaji
got up and embraced the poet, praising
his verse highly for its charm and offered
him permanent refuge in his kingdom.



SHIVASHAHI OR RAMARAJYA ?

MUKUND PARKHI

HENRY witnessed the coronation ceremony of Shivaji with great interest. He was observant of every detail, quick to discover anything revealed or suggested in any countenance, any act. People gathered in large numbers, and their rejoicing and happiness proclaimed in no uncertain terms that they loved this man who, from a rugged soldier of a tiny guerilla band, had risen to the mighty generalship of a huge army and was now being crowned as an Emperor. Such love from a people could be won by a King only when he happened to be an able and just administrator. "Now, if only I could know some details about Shviaji's administrative system, I could comprehend this phenomenon of a man much better," Henry mused.

He turned to Shenvi, "Could you please take me to someone who would enlighten me about the administrative system adopted by Shivaji Maharaj ? It would interest me greatly" he said.

Shenvi thought for a while and recollected something. He asked the foreigner to follow him. It was evening, and the rush of working hours was fast diminishing, as most of the workers on the fort of Raigarh had finished their duties and left for their homes. Shenvi thought it was an appropriate time to contact Chimnaji Aoji, the Phadnis – the officer next to the Secretary. Chimnaji Aoji was resting in his court-yard when Henry and Shenvi arrived. He welcomed

them warmly, and made enquiries about the purpose of their visit.

Shenvi replied politely,

"This gentleman wishes to know about our system of administration, the different departments and their functions, etc. I thought you would be the proper person to enlighten him, so I have brought him to you."

Chimnaji reflected for a while and said "Well, gentleman, I shall certainly give you whatever information I can. But, I am afraid I will have to withhold certain facts which are confidential and are not within my discretion to disclose."

Shenvi interpreted the conversation to Henry and the latter nodded his agreement. Then he turned to Chimnaji and asked :

"Will you kindly explain your system of Government ?"

Chimnaji explained, "As you know, Maharaj being the sovereign Emperor is the supreme controlling authority. There is a council of eight Ministers to assist him, known as Ashta Pradhan Mandal headed by Moropant Pingale who is the Prime Minister of Peshwa. The Ministers are allocated different portfolios."

"Could you please give me a brief account of your civil and military administration ?"

"You see, our Kingdom is divided into three zones called 'Prants.' Each of them is governed by a Sarkarkun, who is equivalent to a Council Minister in rank. Each Prant is sub divided into Subhas, with a Subedar-in-charge of each Subha and a Mazumdar is appointed. Besides the Mazumdar each Subha has a Karkun (Clerk) to help him in officer work.

"A Subha is further divided into Mahals – revenue paying units, with a Havaladar in charge of a number of villages and Paraganas which comprised a Mahal. Patil, Deshmukh, Kulkarni and Yardis are different designations denoting the officers of the Village. They are exempt from land revenue and their offices are more or less hereditary in character.

"Now let us discuss the military administration. The army consists of cavalry and infantry. Senapati or the Commander-in-Chief is a member of our Council of Ministers. Our cavalry has Sarnobat, Panchhazari – commanding 5,000 horsemen, Hazari – 1,000 horsemen, Jumledar, Havaladar and Bargir as the officers in that order. Similarly, the same pattern is followed in infantry except that a Naik replaces a Bargir. In addition, a civilian official called Sabnis is attached to the army. There is a separate band of bodyguards appointed to attend on the Maharaj.

"The navy consists of two squadrons of a variety of ships – viz., gurabs, tarandes, tarus, galbats, sibads and bagar. There is a Sarnobat for the navy also. We have a special administrative system for the forts. The officers of the fort are Havaladar,

Sarnobat and Sabnis, besides the Karkhanis who is given charge of stores. Paiks, Naiks, gunners and archers are posted at different points on the forts."

Chimnaji paused. Henry, listening intently, now came out with his next question "

"Could you explain to me the revenue system, its collection and disbursement ?"

Chimnaji continued "

"I am sure you are aware that our main source of revenue is agriculture. The quality of the land, its extent and the extent of yield per year are all taken into consideration for fixing up a revenue ceiling upon every farmer. The farmers who possess first class land, lands with perennial water supply come first. The next best lands are taxed at a slightly lower rate. In any case, the actual yield is measured from the standing crop and the tax is collected accordingly. The Patil is held responsible for the collection of land revenue. If by mistake, more is collected, credit is given for the next year and to that extent the land revenue collected is reduced.

"In case of famines or other conditions resulting in the loss of crop, if reported in time, our land authorities are authorised to give remission according to the contingency. It is necessary to tell you that our Maharaj is very particular that all the intermediaries are eliminated in collection of land revenue and we establish contact directly with the cultivators."

"Wait a minute," before the topic was concluded a doubt was raised by Henry: "What do you mean by intermediaries?"

Chimnaji seemed to be delighted with this question. He continued : "Formerly we had the zamindari system, where the zamindars used to loot the actual cultivators, submit wrong figures to the government and enjoy an unauthorised discount. Maharaj had eliminated the zamindars as also the watandars, the generals who were offered a number of villages to take care of by a Sultan, or a self-styled Badshah. Our village officers like Deshmukh and Desai visit every village for on-the-spot-assessment, taking into consideration all the factors involved and making sure that the farmer does not suffer. Maharaj has shrewdly kept a separate record to see whether these village officials pay the correct amount of revenue out of the total collection. Thus there is a watch kept on these village officials."

"Marvellous" exclaimed Henry in full appreciation. Chimnaji continued : "Besides, land-revenue we also get substantial revenue from our various expeditions, tributes that are imposed on aliens and so on. The budget for each year is prepared with the help of the Prime Minister and details are worked out with meticulous care, allotting the amounts to each department taking into consideration priorities. The expenditure is determined under four heads viz. 1. Expenditure on Civil Administration, 2. On Military Administration, 3. On Agriculture and Industries and 4. Expenditure on the Royal Family. Civil Administration involves the largest share of our revenue, as a huge net-work of employees throughout the country are paid from the Public Exchequer.

"Military Administration also require large funds. The payment of men, upkeep of horses, maintenances of arms and ammunition, of forts and ships etc., are to be met from the same source. Shivaji Maharaj is very keen on the development of agriculture, as it is the major source of our revenue. We advance loans to needy farmers in the form of bullocks, seeds and other kinds of agricultural equipment, and no interest is charged on the advance. The new cultivators get bigger loans as encouragement even for their maintenance till the harvest season. The officers are asked to meet the farmers and needy people directly and to attend to their requirements.

"The state also spends liberally on digging canals and their maintenance as also on other sources of water supply to the cultivable land.

"We have a ship-building industry at Kalyan-Bhivandi, and we use the timber readily available nearby. Ware-houses are maintained to store grains and goods for export and market, and they are sold only when they fetch good money. Then we have a mint at Raigarh itself.

"We also have to expend large sums for building new forts, repairing old ones and in the construction of various other buildings, shopping centres and temples within the forts. Our Kingdom has no less than two hundred and forty and strongholds right now."

"What about the personal expenses of the king and his family ?" asked Shenvi.



"Yes, that is also a part of public expenditure. But, probably you know our Maharaj is a very simple man. He did not spend much on himself except on the occasion of the coronation, when he was compelled to. Yes, there is always some expenditure for the queens, their children, construction of palaces, buildings, halls, temples, etc. The same head of account is also used for the residential accommodation for the ministers as well. Then there are elephants, horses, bodyguards and trusted men of Maharaj to be taken care of. The amount allotted for Maharaj's personal expenses also includes the funds spent on charitable deeds, such as grants to learned people, religious institutions of not only the Hindus, but also of other faiths and to the poor and needy."

Henry seemed quite satisfied with the explanation of Chimnaji, which he thought was to the point. But his curiosity did not

let him remain quiet and he asked him a further question.

"What remuneration do your government officials receive?" Chimnaji tried to evade by saying, "Quite sufficient" Henry was not prepared to lose the initiative from his hands and questioned again.

"Why do you say quite sufficient? Let us know how much amount constitutes 'quite sufficient' for you?" Chimnaji yielded and replied."

"You see, I shall not go into details, but I can give you some figures. The Prime Minister earns 15,00 Huns an year and Amatya 12,000 Huns an year. The other Ministers get 10,000 Huns an year. The Secretary gets 6,000 Huns an year while their soldiers in the ranks draw between 10 and 200 Huns per annum. The Mazumdar, Sarnobat Hasabnis and Havaladar drew between 36 and 150 Huns. Now have I cleared all your doubts? I hope I have given you a clear picture of our administrative system", concluded Chimnaji in all politeness.



HENRY ASKS FOR MORE

MUKUND PARKH

NOT satisfied with a complete account of the administration Henry now wished to know about society, the customs, religious festivals, education, status of women and other aspects of the State.

"Though I admit that your administration is grand it may not give contentment to the people. The people are required to function as a society and when you think of society, your social needs become primary and important. You see, you have certain religious festivals and customs, and good or bad. Again, society needs entertainment, education and so on. Would you kindly enlighten me on these points?"

Chimnaji replied : "You are aware that our society, our social needs and customs are based on our ancient traditions. If we peep into the past we can see that Yadavas (200 B.C. to 1271 A.D.) ruled over this part of the country. Mahadev Rai Yadava spent all his life to make this part, Maharashtra, rich in every way, economically, culturally and socially. His subjects respected him, not only for his deeds of valour but also for his generosity and kindness.

"During his time Maharashtra shone through its golden age. He built many temples, maintained a large army, for the protection of this State, and patronised poets, astronomers, doctors and other learned men. All were happy during his regime – people celebrated festivals like Dassara,

Deepavali and Varsha Pratipada. The very same customs and same festivals are still in vogue. Maharaj patronised learned men and he has made education compulsory. We celebrate Dassara on a mass scale, treating it as a day of victory. Besides this, people attend religious fairs held at different places to commemorate the life of some saints. Women who were once afraid of coming out of their houses now freely participated in the festivals. Gone was the fear that they had of being dishonoured.

Educational Institutions are run out of Public funds. Our Minister of Education is Pandit Rao, who attends to all matters pertaining to education as well as religion. Maharaj encouraged young writers by rewarding them for their writings. Raghunath Hanumante has recently written the Rajya Vyavaharakosha, a volume dealing with political terms and their usage. Similarly Krishna Jyotishi has brought out a treatise on astrology named 'Karan Kaustubh' Ganga Bhatta wrote 'Sivarkodaya', wherein he explained the duties of the people and Paramananda and Bhushan, both of them poets of high order, have composed 'Siva Bharat' and 'Siva Bhushan' respectively. All these scholars enjoy royal patronage.

"That is an account of the cultural life of our State. To make it complete I would mention one special feature. We have our bards or wandering minstrels who compose

songs that will rouse the martial spirit of the people and inspire deep patriotism in them. Then, there are also troupes of singer-cum-dancers, who move from village to village, entertaining the people with their songs called 'Lavis'.

Now that you are curious to know something of our customs let me tell you that our customs are the same as they were years and years ago. Social customs are the same all over India, but our Maharaj sees to it that no custom violates the human aspect of life."

"You said that the women can go about freely without any fear now. Yes, certainly it is commendable. But could you tell me exactly what is the status of women under Shivaji Maharaj?" Henry queried.

Before Shivaji's times women suffered greatly. Not only the Sultan's men but even our own people often took advantage of their weakness. Women were treated as mere objects of enjoyment. Maharaj with the great respect that he has for his mother looks upon all women as the very incarnation of Bhavani, the Mother Goddess. Disregard shown to women by any man in his kingdom infuriates him and such offenders receive capital punishment. So, you see, women are highly respected and treated with true regard by one and all. They have no longer any fears of being harassed.

"I am indeed grateful to you for the patience you have shown in explaining all these things to me. It is heartening to know that chivalry is not dead and that your Maharaj embodies in himself all that is noble and great. Rare indeed is one

who is extolled by his subjects, even while he is alive. Now could you spare a few more moments?"

"I thought that I had told you all that you wanted to be said" replied the patient Chimnaji.

"With this final request I shall wind up. Could you give me a brief account of the welfare schemes that he has brought?"

"Many are the schemes that Shivaji Maharaj has formulated for the welfare of his people. All of them are meant to benefit some section of society or the other. Being a warrior he gives awards for gallantry. Soldiers who have lost their lives are posthumously rewarded and their dependants are well cared for.

"In times of peace he turns his attention to the consolidation of his newly acquired territory. He has canals for irrigation. The farmers are well cared for. Measures are taken against the unjust extortion of money from poor farmers. Transport is made easy by construction and improvement of roads.

"Cutting down of trees was strictly banned. As a result a number of orchards and gardens have flourished during his time. In fact, the gardeners were encouraged and rewarded for their pains. Consequently famine is a very rare occurrence in Maharaj's realms."

"I would just ask one more question, and then I shall not trouble you any further. Could you enumerate the reasons why Shivaji Maharaj has become so widely popular?" said Henry.

"I was sure to answer to your question is already there in the account I had so far given" said Chimnaji with a smile. "Nevertheless there are a few special assets of our Maharaj that add to his glory, and I will enumerate them for you. We are all captivated by his superior personality, his alluring smile, polite manners, and determined will. We admire his character.

"He never takes credit for his own success. He attributes them to the Lord who made him rule over the empire. His sense of justice is very high with no room for any bias in it. He is the trusted friend of those who come to him in friendship, and he is also the most perplexing rival to those whom he suspects of evil designs against himself or his people. He is very simple in his habits of life. He lives like an ordinary soldier, eating and sleeping as they do. His courage is extraordinary. He infuses the same in his colleagues and subordinates. He commends and rewards acts of valour instantaneously. This helps him in winning people over to him. At the same time his hand falls heavily on traitors and cowards, and he does not hesitate to go to the extreme in punishing them.

"His respect for his mother, preceptors and elders in general is noteworthy. Similarly his religious tolerance has earned the esteem of the Muslim community in particular. We have a countless number of Muslim soldiers, cavaliers and sailors, some of them holding very high posts, and Muslim saints and monasteries are given generous grants.

"He has created a number of employment opportunities, through schemes for the

construction of new forts and repair and maintenance of the old ones ; for ship-building, for erection of factories etc. These activities require countless skilled and unskilled labourers like masons, blacksmiths, carpenters, etc. He also encourages cultivation of new lands and offers loans to fresh cultivators. The construction of new forts and establishments of new colonies result in opening new marketing places. Naturally all types of trade flourish under the benign protection of the Chhatrapati.

"Finally, because of his exemplary character he can always hold the scales of justice for nobody can really entertain grievances on account of his punishments, no matter how severe they might be. It is his character, that has made his subjects fearless and at the same time law-abiding. The poor do not suffer ill treatment from the rich. He is acclaimed by our people as a monarch of the lofty eminence of Sri Rama, and we feel his kingdom is indeed Ramrajya again."

Chimnaji thus concluded his long explanation and his eyes glistened with moisture as he spoke with emotion of his beloved king, Henry too was deeply moved.



FARE HARD AND JOURNEY FAST

IN contrast to the splendour of Shivaji's court on ceremonial occasions, the Maratha armies presented a spectacle of Spartan simplicity. Fryer summed them up roundly as "-accustomed to fare hard, journey fast and take little pleasure." In fact, "they looked like our old Britains, half naked, and as fierce." But the same critic admitted their superiority in some respects to the Mussalman armies in being "of a rougher temper, more hardy and less addicted to the soft vanities of music, pomp or stateliness." Unlike the soldiers of the Moghul armies they were subject to severe discipline and disobedience often resulted in death. No women were allowed into the camp. This wholesome provision, unprecedented in that age in Asia or in Europe, gave to Shivaji's forces a mobility hitherto unknown in Indian war-fare.

For an impression of a Maratha camp on campaign we may return for a moment to the sensitive Captain Broughton (whose comments on the Marathas will be remembered) "On marching days the quarter-master general moves off at an early hour, and, upon reaching the ground, where the army is to encamp, he plants a small white flag, to mark the spot where the tents of the commander are to be pitched and which collectively are termed the Deoree. The flags of the different Bazaars are then fixed as they arrive, always in the same situation to each other

and in as straight a line as the ground will admit. The shops for the troops' provisions called Doakans, are pitched in two lines running parallel to each other and they form one grand street from from the front to the rear of the army. The different chiefs en-camp to the right and left of the principal street.

At the door of every tent is a fire, the smoke of which spreads throughout the whole camp where it serves to keep the people warm, to drive the flies away from the cattle and to put out the eyes of all those who are unused to so gross an element."

The fastidious captain is describing the camp of a Maratha field-army at full strength . But in many of Shivaji's campaigns only cavalry were used and their bivouacs were very different. Speed was the main quality desired of the Maratha horsemen. An anonymous Englishman, writing in 1788, said that he had seen bodies of fifty to sixty thousand Maratha horses advance across the country for many days in succession at the rate of fifty miles a day. The average mount was, he notices, "a lean, ill-looking animal, but large-boned." His rider wore no defensive armour except a quilted jacket and "all his baggage and necessary food were contained in a small bag tied upon the saddle. The food of the rider consists of a few cakes already baked, a small quantity of flour and rice and some salt.....that of

the horses, balls of black peas mixed with garlic and hot spices. These balls they make use of by way of a cordial to restore the vigour of their horses after fatigue."

In contrast to the infantry regiments, "tents are very rarely used by the cavalry. Even the officers have frequently nothing but a small carpet to sit and lie upon, and the whole baggage of the General is carried on one Camel. The rider, having provided for his horse, sits down then to his own temperate meal, and after having finished, he lies down perfectly contented by the side of his horse, and when called by the sound of the Nagara, or the great drum, is at once ready to mount." These great drums boomed out at dawn, and in the thin mist the camp sprang to instant activity. A light meal was taken by the men squatting round a wood fire. In the short time the camp was broken up and the whole force had disappeared leaving hardly a trace of its bivouac. The same anonymous Englishman noted how fond the Maharajas were of their horses and how cleverly they trained them. "By being constantly with the riders, who are fond of caressing and talking to them, they acquire the intelligence and docility of more domestic animals. They are taught to stop when in full gallop and or turn round instantly upon their hind legs as upon a pivot.

The cavalry arm was divided into Regulars and Irregulars. In the regiments of Regulars the troops were provided with a horse each and received twelve rupees a month as pay. The Master of the horse received about eight hundred rupees. The Irregular

Cavalry were less, well paid and had to provide their own mounts. Rations were, both to Western and contemporary Moghul eyes, scanty. But then Shivaji himself only ate one small meal a day.

The infantry was not provided with salaries but were paid in kind all except Shivaji's Guard, composed of two thousand picked hill men who were well paid and smartly informed.

There was nothing of the feudal levy or casual militia about Shivaji's army. Military service was regarded as a rare privilege and aspirants had to prove they were worthy of it. New soldiers were only admitted to the service after a personal interview with Shivaji and two soldiers already in Shivaji's employment had to stand surety for the recruit.



SANSKRIT WORKS ON SHIVAJI

By DR. M. D. PARADKAR

Meena and Usha : Good morning Sir.

Teacher : Good morning. Welcome to you.

Meena : Sir, Usha and myself have been your students in Sanskrit, and is it not our right to see you and pay our respects to you ?

Teacher : No doubt about it. But, Meena ! You have now passed your M.A. examination with flying colours, and Usha ! You have just got the first prize in the Annual examination of Junior B.A. I offer my congratulations to both of you. I met your father the other day and he has already given me sweets.

Usha : Sir, we are glad that you remember us so well and show great interest in us.

Teacher : Well that is my duty. But you have not answered my question so far. There must be some purpose in seeing me early in the morning.

Meena : Sir, you have guessed rightly. You know that this year we are celebrating the 300th Centenary of Shivaji's Coronation throughout the country.

Teacher : That is true. It is only in the fitness of things to commemorate that great event and try to emulate that gifted leader of the 17th century. But this is

primarily the topic for a historian, not for a Sanskritist like me.

Usha : Sir, we know that you have great interest in history.

Meena : Moreover, we do want to know whether there are any works on Shivaji written in Sanskrit.

Teacher : Meena, that is a pertinent question. There are many works in Sanskrit that deal with Shivaji's adventurous life. After all he had been a source of inspiration not only to the people of Maharashtra but also to the people of our country in general.

Usha : Sir, If Shivaji has been the idol of the people of his times, he must have been looked upon as God even during his life-time ?

Teacher : Usha, you have rightly guessed. Kavindra Paramananda, one of his contemporaries has written a long poem named Shiva Bharatha and has treated Shivaji as an incarnation of God Siva and considers his life to be on par with the epic, Mahabharatha.

Meena : Sir, You said that this is a long poem. May we know its extent ?

Teacher : Why not ? Shiva Bharatha is written in the old Puranic style and consists of 32 Adhyayas.

Usha : This shows that the intended extent was originally much more than the one that is available.

Teacher : Exactly. The story of Shivaji begins actually in the sixth chapter where the date of his birth namely Saka 1551 is correctly given.

Meena : How far is this author true to history ?

Teacher : Quite a significant question. Along with the date of his birth, Kavindra Paramananda has rightly given the date of the slaughter of Afzal Khan which happens to be Saka 1581 i.e. 1659 A.D. The details of this event namely 'Vikram Samvatsar, Month of Margashirsha, 7th day in the bright fortnight at noon' also indicate the author's precision in this matter.

Usha : Sir, would you consider Kavindra to be a historian ?

Teacher : Certainly now. He must have been an eye-witness to certain events and has described them in detail. His idea in depicting Shivaji as being helped by Goddess Tulja Bhavani is essentially Puranic and Omission of the historical event of Baji Prabhu's heroic Saga cannot be considered as laudatory. It must be admitted that he faithfully depicted Shivaji's proficiency in war-fare and has been true to the vigilant spirit of Shivaji which stood him in good stead.

Meena: Sir, is there any other work written by Shivaji's contemporary ?

Teacher: Parnalaparvatagrahanakhyana by Jayaram Pandya is another work which adequately eulogises Shivaji's victory over

Panhala fort in 1672 A.D. This work, though small in size, successfully indicates the cleverness of Shivaji's assistants such as Kondaji, Ganaji, etc., who brought the fort under their control by suddenly invading it during a dark night and taking the enemy by complete surprise.

Usha: Sir, it has been said that Shivaji encouraged writing original works in Sanskrit. Is it true ?

Teacher: Quite true. At Shviji's behest his Minister Raghunath Hanumante prepared a work named 'Rajya vyavahara kosha' . This work, possibly written in 1676-77 A.D. was intended to substitute Persian and foreign works in Polity (i.e. Rajanit) by original Sanskrit words.

Meena : Sir, this makes Shivaji a pioneer in this field as well.

Teacher : Yes, that is true. The astrologer Krishna wrote his Karanakaustubha, and the celebrated Gaga Bhatta prepared his Shivarkodaya on Dharmashastra mainly due to the encouragement and inspiration given by this far-sighted ruler. Gaga Bhatta considers 'Shivarkodaya to be the vertebral column of the glory of Shivaji'.

Usha : This speaks well of Shivaji as a real patron of learning and culture.

Teacher : Usha, you have rightly said it. Even today it would be profitable to borrow a leaf from Shivaji's book.

Meena : Thank you sir for giving such a valuable information. But we have to ask one more question.

Teacher : Why one only ? Meena, you are free to ask a dozen.

Meena : Sir, you have spoken of ancient works on Shivaji. Are there some Sanskrit works of this type composed during the modern days ?

Teacher : A very good question, indeed ! Meena, it is not quite proper to say that Sanskrit works are not written in modern days. Eulogy of illustrious kings has been the theme of many a Sanskrit work, and how can Shivaji be an exception ? Purushottama's Shivakavyam and the Shivaji charitam by the Bengali poet Kalidas Vidyavinod are works in the 19th century. Shivarajaviryaam composed in prose by the famous poet Ambikadatta Vyas has turned into six editions. Ambikadatta Vyas was eulogised as Bana of the 19th Century, primarily due to his style full of long compounds. Pandit Shripadashastri Hasurkar of Indore has published Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Charitam. This happens to be the second book in the author's Bharata-ratna-mala.

Usha : Sir, I am now inspired to ask whether there is any work on Shivaji in Sanskrit written recently?

Teacher : Here also, the answer is in the affirmative. Shivarajyodayam by Dr.S.B.Vernekar from Nagpur, a Mahakavya of 68 Cantos depicts the life of Shivaji up to the event of his coronation in 1674. This work published in 1972 can be said to be the crowning glory of this sphere. It has now been given an award by Sahitya Akademi, and it abounds in passages which have a quality of a quote.

Meena : Will you be kind enough to quote a few lines so that we may commit them to memory ?

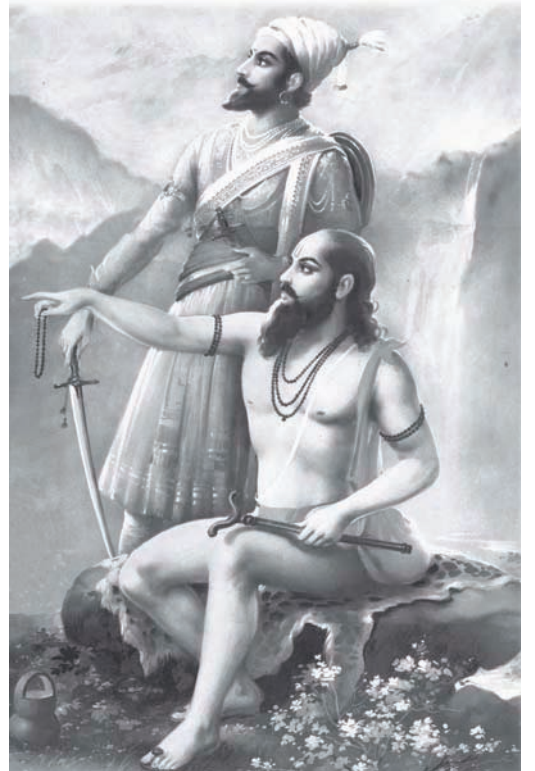
Teacher: By all means. It will be sufficient.

Meena : Sir, quite sufficient for the present. We have learnt so much today. We cannot adequately thank you for this great favour.

Teacher : Dear Meena, Dear Usha, I have done my duty. Have I not taken the opportunity of paying my humble homage to Shivaji, the great inspiring ruler of the 17th century ?

Meena-Usha : Good-bye, Sir.

Teacher : Good-bye. Do convey my respects to your father and mother.



ALWAYS ON THE ALERT

FOR many years Muazzam maintained cordial relations with Shivaji without the knowledge of his father Aurangazeb. In fact, he went so far as to aid Shivaji's men against the cruel plans of his father.

Thirteen years later Muazzam sat quietly in his luxuriously decorated Shamiana. He had been living in the same tent for several months now. It was fringed with gorgeous brocades. The muslim curtains inside silently proclaimed their exorbitant costs. Soft satin cushions of every conceivable colour, delicately embroidered, were strewn over the mattress of imported silk. A 'hucca' was kept close. The decanter on the stool which stood beside the cushions was half empty. Probably, it remained so for quite some time. The court dancer had been waiting in her parlour for hours, but she received no summons from Shahzada. His personal assistant dared not disturb him. Shahzada was not living in 1679. He had geared himself back into the past. A series of events swiftly moved before his half-closed eyes.

"I don't know why, but I always had a longing to see Shivaji Raje. I have heard a lot of him. His magnificent personality, soft but very expressive smile, politeness and modesty in speech and his art of using right words at right places. All these qualities together had captivated me. At once I decided that I should forge friendship with this man. I did not care what my father thought. But why? I can very well keep it secret. I was told to meet Sambaji. He was the exact replies of his father, with

the same dress, the same gait, and the same mannerisms. I was very pleased, indeed. Bound by an agreement with my father, Sambhaji was to remain under me with a regiment of five thousand soldiers. Sambhaji was too young then to take charge, so the regiment was taken care of by Niroji Aoji and Pratap Rao Gujar, two of the most able generals of Shivaji Raja.

"Sambhaji left for Rajgarh and I presented him with elephants, horses and costumes at the time of his departure. Pratap Rao Gujar and Niroji Aoji remained at Aurangabad with me. They were so eloquent in their praises of Shivaji that I became his ardent follower. I admit frankly that though I loved him and respected him I was also afraid of him. That is the reason why I tried to maintain friendship with him. Although my father considered Shivaji as his enemy, I could not do so. Though I was aware that even Shivaji was capable of treacherous acts, I could not help loving him.

"Ah ! to think of those days : I recommended Shivaji's name to my father a number of times. He deserved to be a 'King'. After my continuous efforts, my father bestowed upon him the title of 'Raja'. I did not forget to forward my note with my father's letter. I don't know what Shivaji himself must have thought about it.

"Those days are gone. Niroji and Pratap Rao met me often. We talked, laughed and dined together.

"And then one day I got news that my father wanted me to arrest Pratap Rao and Niroji. I was shocked by the order. We were friends and this friendship had grown during our long stay in the same camp together. The order did not stop at that. My father wanted all the five thousand Maratha soldiers to be slaughtered and rupees one lakh recovered from them as ransom. This was foul treachery. I could not control myself. I invited both Pratap Rao and Niroji to a secluded spot and briefed them. The actual message was expected within the next two or three days. So, I told them to de-camp at once.

"When the actual message came from my father I had to bluff him. I wrote to him that the Marathas had vanished a week ago. Had I known the message earlier I would have tied both of them and brought them to Delhi, and would have slain all the soldiers. My father trusted me, and Shivaji was grateful for my help.

"It sounds funny, but the fact is that I could never cope with Diler Khan, the general my father sent along with me, but found myself agreeing with Mirza Raje. This Diler Khan was always suspicious. After the incident of proposed treachery towards the Marathas, they have grown more annoyed with my father and have broken the truce agreement. They have now renewed their attacks. Within the last four months they have recaptured most of the forts which were given up to us under the agreement. Under such circumstances, Diler Khan does not listen to me. He avoids me like fire. I was obliged to write about his disobedience to my father. I had no alternative but to attack him.

"But then, these Marathas have been playing havoc these days. They have plundered Surat. They assaulted Khandesh and Berar. They have taken an enormous amount of loot of gold, silver and diamonds. They have captured our men and taken away our horses, elephants, arms and ammunitions. All these things are happening before my very eyes. I have been taken to task by my father a number of times for having a soft corner for Shivaji. I have been rebuked for not defeating the Marathas even once. He suspects that I am in league with Shivaji. No doubt, I had a soft corner for Shivaji once. But, now I am a different Muazzam. Not the one that Shivaji knew thirteen years ago. My father is right. Shivaji has broken all his promises. He had been assisting the Adil Shah against my father. This can never be tolerated by me. Now, I have found that I have wronged my father.

"But I can certainly pay him off, and make good for failing my father in the past. I am sure, Shivaji still thinks that I need his help in case I revolt against my father. This is a fine opportunity to make use of. Let me stage a mock revolt. But, let me plan it in consultation with my colleagues, get Shivaji to my own Shamiana and"

A few days later, Muazzam was returning from a hunting expedition alone. He was tired. He was very eager to reach his camp. He was thirsty too. And suddenly, he saw an old man with a white beard and a turban on his head, slightly bent, approaching him with a jar in his hand. He stopped Muazzam and said, "Khan Saheb, will you please oblige me ?" The old man asked politely.

Muazzam got down from his horse. He asked the old man, "What is it that you wish to offer me?"

"Nothing Sir, it's just a little milk ! I can see that you are very tired and thirsty. This is all that a poor man like me can offer," said the old man as he held a jar full of milk before Muazzam. Muazzam was very grateful for this thoughtful gesture. He drank the milk in one gulp but was surprised to see a note at the bottom of the jar. He removed the paper from the jar and read it, "I, Shivaji, present this jar of milk and if there is anything else I can do for you, I am at your service." Muazzam's brow was bathed in sweat and he looked up. Where was the old peasant that brought the milk ? He had vanished.

The meaning of the whole incident did not, however, escape Muazzam's notice.



WHO was it that spoke through Shivaji? Was it Goddess Bhavani, whose temple the Bijapur commander had once desecrated in order

THE BENEDICTION

to humiliate Her and pour scorn on her devotees ? Was it the very one who had revealed Herself to Shivaji's grand-father years before and predicted the birth of a great son in the line ?

The same voice had forecast the triumph of Shivaji and the end of Afzal Khan at one time and the final collapse of the Moghul Empire at another. That such words should come out of Shivaji was impossible. He must have been possessed by some spirit. Of this, the people around were sure. At such times they looked more closely at their chief who seemed to be in a deep trance. Then, gradually, he came out of it and became normal. The difference between the man in trance and the Shivaji that they knew, became quickly apparent to all around him ; more so when he spoke once more in his normal voice.

I

The Scene : Pratap Garh Fort.

Occasion : Meeting with Afzal Khan

He pulled himself up, raised his right hand in salute to all of them and repeated, "I am ready to meet Afzal Khan." Before he moved forward, he urged his men to have faith in him, for he believed he would not fail in his mission. He would return to them, but if the will of Providence decreed otherwise, they must carry on the work where he had left it. "You, my trusted

men, must take over where I have begun for you. You know the goal ahead. Pursue it and rest not until you achieve our objective. May God help you and may He help me, too."

Earlier, Shivaji thought that he would, perhaps, have to live months before the menace of Afzal Khan disappeared from the area. His mind was full of the details he had to attend to, before making his final move. Courageous thoughts of victory alternated in his mind with fears of defeat. He worked hard during the day. He slept but little at night.

It was, according to the legend, after one such exhausting day that he retired to his bed late at night. Sleep overtook him soon, wiping out the troubles from his mind. Then around two o'clock of the early morning a vision appeared to him, as crystal clear as it had appeared to his grand-father, Maloji Bhonsle. It was the vision of the same goddess, Bhavani. She stood before him, appearing in the familiar setting of her own temple at Tuljapur. The temple was desecrated but amidst the ruins She stood, Her eyes peering at him. Then she spoke, at first not so much with the sound of her voice as by silent movement of Her lips. Do not falter, She seemed to say. The, he began to hear the words, "Be calm. Have confidence in your God who will lead you to victory. Your enemy will bite the dust." With a jerk, drenched with sweat and full of excitement, Shivaji awoke. There was no Bhavani standing before him now, but he was sure she had been there. The dream was a true one.

If the Khan's presence in the neighbourhood had disturbed Shivaji, this luminous dream disturbed him even more. But in a different way, for the disturbance was like excitement after a moment of great danger.

Shivaji sat up in his bed. He tried to shake off his sleep so that he could remember the vision he had seen and remember the words She had spoken. "Bhavani Devi has spoken to me," he said aloud, waking up the guards who had been sleeping outside his room."

"Sarkar," they came rushing to him, believing he had called them.

"Nothing," he said. "It is nothing. You can go to sleep again." But his men knew something had happened and they lingered beside him. Then he told them. "Do you know who came to visit me in my sleep ?", he said to the guards.

"Bhavani Devi came," he murmured. In his eyes there was a faraway look they had not seen before.

"Bhavani Devi" ! one of them exclaimed. "Yes, She alone could come, no one else."

Shivaji did not speak any more, for his guards were hardly the people with who he could discuss such a holy vision. "Go to sleep," he told them and with that he too lay down to rest.

The guards left the room. "Sarkar has been dreaming," One of them made bold to say.

"This Afzal Khan would give anyone a sleepless night," another added.

The hours of the night moved on, Shivaji slept in snatches, for he was anxiously

waiting for the morning to come, when he could share his dream with those who could better understand its full import and interpret its meaning. The guards were men of great loyalty but of little mind

By day-break he was up and attending to his morning toilet. Then he sent a messenger to where his mother was sleeping, to inquire from her maid-servants if she were awake. "When she has awakened, I want to see her," he sent word. Not long after, Jija Bai came rushing in, her eyes, still full of sleep. "What is it, what is it?" She asked, believing it was the latest news of Afzal Khan.

"Ai, I was sleeping soundly last night. A vision appeared before me."

"Bhavani !" Jija Bai immediately uttered.

"Hoi," Shivaji replied.

Jija Bai knelt down, and, with her hands folded, touched the floor. Then she bowed down and touched the floor with her forehead. "Bhavani Devi !" She said in awe, as she rose. For the first time she tried to touch the feet of her son, although normally this is the respect paid to an elder, not to a son. Shivaji protested firmly at this gesture from his mother. "You are my Devi." He said, bowing down to salute her in the usual way.

"My son," she said with a broad smile on her face, "but now you are Bhavani's child also. That is blessed a thousand fold. I don't mind if she claims you as hers. I will gladly take the second place. But tell me now, how did she come to you ?"

The dream was still vivid in Shivaji's mind. He could see the goddess as clearly as he could see his mother before him. Even clearer, for in the dream the light was powerful, while now, at the moment there was the mist of dawn. He described the dream to his mother, how the goddess looked and all that she said.



There was a calm at Pratap Garh that morning and in his heart, earlier ruffled by Afzal Kha, there was peace once again. Not often do mortals experience the presence of a great spirit near them. Only on those who have, it has an electrifying effect, which a recital of the incident may not fully convey. There was no need for more conferences on the attitude to be adopted towards Afzal Khan. Bhavani had charted his course of action. He was now to do as his own judgment guided him, for the words of the goddess must fulfill themselves, no matter what line of action was to be chosen. Unbelievable as it seemed to military strategists of the time, this little mountain squirrel was filled with a new strength to meet an enemy who seemed a hundred times his size.

"I am moving off for Pratap Garh today," he told his mother.

"As you think fit, son," she replied, and gave the traditional blessing a mother gives to a departing son. A tear coursed down to her cheeks. She brushed it aside.

When all arrangements had been made, the humble word was sent to Afzal Khan that Shivaji was ready to receive him. The General could now leave Wei to come to Javli.

Near Koyna, where today stands the great hydro-electric project of Maharashtra, Afzal Khan halted for the night. Here, some of the Pathans from the Khan's forces began to feel unhappy about the move their commander was making. They cautioned him but Afzal Khan, preferring to rely on the judgment of his Brahmin envoy, dismissed this caution as unnecessary. Just as Shivaji had not disclosed his inner-most thoughts to his entourage, so Afzal Khan had kept his real intentions to himself. As he closed his eyes and pondered on the future, the Khan could see Shivaji in chains dancing in the streets of Bijapur, as he had promised his Dowager Queen he would make him do. But the Pathans continued to be worried about their Khan's under-estimation of the little Maratha. They were not willing to trust the "mountain rat." "You never know how these rats behave," they said to one another.



There was an exchange of messages between Shivaji and the Khan. As Afzal Khan came nearer to Javli, he heard from his envoy that Shivaji had proposed that their meeting should take place with more than two companions in attendance on either side. As the meeting was to take place on an open plain, there was no need for any troops on either side.

The Brahmins envoy flattered the Khan more and more as the time for the meeting drew near, and with each round of flattery the Khan appeared to be disarmed of every precaution he might have thought of taking.

There was another last minute exchange of messages, for Shivaji learned that the Khan was accompanied by Sayed Banda, a very accomplished warrior. At Shivaji's request the Khan agreed that this soldier would stand at a distance from the place of the meeting.

There was a strange thing noticeable in Shivaji that morning for on the eve of the accrual meeting with the Khan, soon after he had his bath and had done his puja, he appeared to be in a trance. His courtiers began to get a little worried. They wondered whether some deity had possessed him. His eyes looked vacant and there was a fixed gaze in them. He was looking through the people that morning and not at them, and he was speaking words which could not have been

his own. Shivaji spoke with a voice different from his own. Its usual mellowness had disappeared. It was a richer, full-throated voice, which they had not heard before. It was a voice of command mixed with prophecy, altogether an awe-inspiring voice, uttering the doom of Afzal Khan.

II

Time : The days before the Coronation

The Scene : The Shrine at Pratapgad

The coronation ceremonies lasted nearly a month. First Shivaji visited the temple of the Mother Goddess at Pratapgad. He presented the shrine with an umbrella of pure gold, forty-two pounds in weight. Then, accompanied by a few followers, he entered the temple and passed many days absorbed in vigil and prayer. While prostrate in prayer before the altar he fell into a trance, and from his mouth a faint thin voice, which those present declared must have been that of Mother Goddess Herself, began to prophecy the future history of the Maratha State, the final collapse of the Moghul Empire, the entry of the Marathas into Delhi, the twenty-seven generation rule of Shivani's descendants and finally the voice concluded, "The scepter shall pass into the hands of a strange people with red faces."

III

The Scene : The Temple at Sri Saila.

Occasion : Shivaji's Pilgrimage

Now, for the last time we see Shivaji silently slipping away slipping away from his soldiers and crossing the river Krishna accompanied only by Hanumante and just

unpresumptuous ascending the peaks of Sri Saila. Perhaps, the festivities at Hyderabad had wearied him with their false glitter. Once again the age-old yearning for a recluse's life possessed him. Kneeling in the silence and gloom of the great shrine he broke down. He lamented that he should have to pass his life in palaces and camps, whereas he was only happy when alone and at prayer. For ten days, he remained in the temple fasting and in constant prayer. Hanumante grew restive and anxious. He began pleading, urging him to rejoin the army ; the Karnataka lay open for his conquest and time was precious. Shivaji cried bitterly : "But I am happy here. This is where I belong. If I cannot live here, at least let me die here," and saying so he drew his sword. Again the same lookthe fixed and hypnotised gaze.....focussed on someone who was beyond common comprehension. She had appeared again, Shivaji was Her chosen instrument. It was not yet time for him to mergeUrgent Call.....The call of dutyEven renunciation had to wait. Yes, he had to abide by Her command.

Hers was the power that guided and blessed this monarch from time to time. His skill and mastery of detail, daring courage and fore-sight would appear super-human. He struck Shaishtakhan a blow, "whose cleverness of design, neatness of execution and completeness of success created in the Moghul court and camp as much terror of his prowess and belief in his possession of magical powers as his coup against Afzal Khan had done among the Bijapuris." "Shivaji's prestige as an incarnation of Satan (?) against whose entrance no place

was considered to be proof rose very high. The whole country talked of his super – human feat with astonishment and terror.”

What was the effect of it all on the author of these tricks ? He remained through it all a humble son, a devour pilgrim and a loyal servant of his suffering brethren. The pomp and splendour of his kingly life irked him and he longed at moments to be back in the solitary silence of the forgotten shrines where he could lose himself. At such a moment the warrior’s armour, shield and sword slipped off from his shoulders and he stood before that very Bhavani, the Mother Goddess whose true son he was, in the robes of a recluse. He was truly Her instrument. All the wars that he fought were truly fought in the spirit expressed by the Gita,

“There lives a Master in the hearts of men,
Maketh their deeds, by subtle pulling of strings
Dance to what tune He will.”

Since this was the inspiration of his actions which were at times chivalrous, noble and sublime, and at others blood drenched fiery and cruel, how could a common mind comprehend him ? Yet, why should we wonder at the world’s lack of comprehension ? “The strong alone can understand strength : it is not the barn-door fowl but the elephant that understands the lion.”



LEGENDS AND THEIR MEANING

It is said that Lord Krishna freed sixteen thousand and one hundred maidens from the clutches of the demon Narakasura. On another occasion Sri Krishna covered the Sun by hurling his famous Sudarshan Chakra in order to create the illusion of Sun-set to confuse Jayadratha, then suddenly removed the same and pointing his finger he said to Arjuna, “This is the Sun and Jayadratha is here.” What divine intercession to spare Arjuna’s life which would have been otherwise lost due to the most difficult vow he had taken !

Hanuman leapt across the mighty ocean in search of Sita. He plucked Dronagiri from the Himalayas in order to save Lakshmana’s life. In the battle between Lava-Kusha on one side and Rama on the other, the arrows shot by the young princes always dropped near the feet of their father and were transformed into flowers, which fell in a shower over the young heroes. Sita went through the ordeal of fire to prove her purity. Though Sri Rama cut off all the heads of Ravana, yet he remained alive. In the end, he had to remove the nectar from Ravana’s heart to destroy him.

These are some of the examples from our epics that speak of a mystic truth woven around the fantastic feats of heroes. The present turns into the historic past and

history becomes a legend as years pass by. We find that a number of anecdotes and legends shroud the lives of heroes. This creates an aura of mystery, which however in no way detracts from the greatness of such lives. Stories weave themselves around great men even during their life time. They are at first recognised and glorified by their great deeds, then gradually novel ideas and interpretations are projected round their great deeds, which finally turn them into legends. This is the order in which a legend or an anecdote takes shape.

It is an indisputable fact that the greatness of a man remains wedded to his name. The flames that kindle the fire of sublimity in them are projected through myths and legends. Yet, through all the rich tapestry of legendary detail the basic fabric itself is clearly seen by the discerning eye. It is neither hidden nor dimmed by the intricacy of design or delicacy of execution.

The noble behaviour of Shivaji Maharaj depicted in the anecdote of the daughter-in-law of the Subedar of Kalyan only indicates his chivalrous attitude towards women. Even if there are people who declare it to be a mere tale, they cannot overlook the nobility of Shivaji Maharaj that it projects. Legends and anecdotes always try to project the great deeds of heroes who seem to be perpetually balancing on the razor's edge of perfection. Even their apparently insignificant actions gather a halo of glory and these verily are the warp and woof of a legend. How could we reject a fact as a mere legend just because we are unable to establish its historic truth ?

It is necessary to focus our attention on the main aim of a legend or an anecdote, and reject its trappings of apparent exaggeration. The story woven around an incident is a mere covering of the truth that it tries to convey. Take for example, the famous exclamation of Shivaji Maharaj when he heard about the death of Tanaji Malusare. "The fort has been captured but I have lost a lion," cannot be literally taken to mean that Tanaji Malusare has suddenly been metamorphosed into a lion. Similarly, when Shivaji Maharaj became over-conscious of his might while the work on a fort was in progress, Ramdas Swami appeared before him and took out a living frog trapped in the cavity of a stone, to humble him. This saved him from developing an ego that he was all powerful and that he was the supporter of many people. This pride would have been a flaw in an otherwise noble character.

It is a well-known legend that Shivaji felt the presence and assurance of Mother Bhavani whenever he was on the brink of peril. Her assurance at such times was uttered through Shivaji's mouth. Those examples only denote his exceptionally excellent qualities. Of course, the legend serves the purpose of an ornament in which the gem of truth serves the purpose of a locket. The locket alone indicates the truth but only when it is placed in the setting of a perfect ornament does its brilliance shine.

This then is how one could explain why Lord Krishna had liberated sixteen thousand and odd maidens. Here the main aim lay in their freedom from slavery. In fact, he set the first example of Shuddhi by accepting all of them into the Yada Dynasty. This

point of view seems to be more realistic. In the legend of Jayadratha's death, it will be more appropriate to assume that Sri Krishna used his super human powers to confuse Jayadratha and thus protect Arjuna, his devotee.

The real meaning of Hanuman's crossing the ocean should be attributed to his untiring efforts in the pursuit of his goal. In the same way, his fetching mount Dronagiri should be interpreted as an illustration of the super-human possibilities that a devotee is capable of. Hanuman's fame rests not merely in his deeds of valour. The halo of mysticism around this figure of Hanuman indicates his eagerness to fulfill all his tasks with exemplary courage and swiftness.

In the legend of the arrows transformed into flowers the sheer poetry of human love is brought out to perfection by the pen of the poet. That Sita's fiery ordeal is not a legend is proved even today by the fire walkers where the one pre-requisite is absolute continence or chastity. Even fire then refuses to burn.

Even in the recent past, we come across the "electric touch" experienced by Swami Vivekananda when Ramakrishna kept his hand on his head. We are given to understand that Swamiji had experienced the same feeling a number of times. Certainly, he was a person blessed by the Lord. We may take it, that the incidents in Swamiji's life indicate his extraordinary personality. There is an anecdote about the prison life of Lokmanya Tilak. It is said that all the trees around his prison blossomed all through his stay there, but

became barren as soon as he left the prison. This paints a pretty picture of Lokmanya and his noble intentions.

Therefore, in the reading of such lives our efforts should be directed to separate the grain from the chaff and this should be done with a penetrating mind and a feeling heart. Only then will we be able to grasp the real importance of such sublime lives.

One more point that needs to be stressed here is that legends and anecdotes depict the various aspects of great souls only. They do not pertain to ordinary people. These lives afford the maximum scope for idealistic and mystic tales to be woven around them. It is therefore very essential that dry analysis based on reasoning cannot get at the real meaning of the legends.

Instead, it is essential, nay most imperative to draw the correct meaning from them, through very wide perspective, with an open mind and an idealistic approach. Then only will we be able to derive the real meaning of anecdotes and legends.



SHIVAJI'S LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH, 3RD APRIL, 1680

Shortly after the marriage of Rajaram, Shivaji fell ill. About the nature of Shivaji's illness Sabhasad states only that "after a few days the king fell ill with fever". The 91 Kalmi Bakhar mentions the nature of the fever as Navajwar which could be typhoid.

As Shivaji saw his end drawing near, he called his Councilors near him. Sabhasad who might have been present on the occasion mentions Nilopant Prahlad Niroji, Gangadhar Janardhan, Abaji, Hiroji, Suryaji Malusare and others. In his narration Sabhasad has shown that Shivaji spoke of the coming events, predicted Sambhaji's erective behaviour, the invasion of the Moghuls, the near destruction of the Maratha State and its revival by Rajaram. He also speaks of the last utterances of Shivaji :

"Do not grieve. This is a world where death is inevitable. All who are born in this world have to depart. You should now compose your mind. You may now withdraw. I will now meditate."

Having sent the people out the king had his bath with Ganges water, applied sacred ash to his body, put on the Rudraksha, and through Yoga breathed his last. It was on Chaitra Shudha Purnima, Saturday (3rd April 1680).

THE TWILIGHT HOUR SATYA

The twilight of the empire builder
Crept into the palace,
With mourning feet And filled it
With an eerie silence.

Decked in holy beads and ochre-robos
Upon the hard bed of renunciation
Lay the grand rebel,
His restless soul at rest,

Submissive in peaceful acquiescence
To the dictates of the Mightiest Emperor.

Basil leaves cooled his feverish limbs,
Mother Ganges caressed his brow,
The ears in which for years echoed
The thunder of drums and the battle cry
'Har Har Maha Deo'

Now faintly heard the soft humming
Of Vedic chants and the Holy Name.

Softly the sounds faded,
The mind that relentlessly designed
A hundred campaigns now sunk

Into the rest of oblivion.

The brilliant light died out of those eyes

That flashed sparks of fury

And spelt rebellion

At the very word 'Alien'.

The tongue that charmed,

Convinced and beguiled

Enemies into traps

And princes into coups,

Now silently rested

Over the single emerald

In the mouth that uttered

The first freedom call.

The face that inspired

Brave men to braver deeds

Now was shrouded,

And through a peep-hole,

A few drops of holy water

Tried feebly to wet

The parched, uncaring lips.

Upon a simple bier

Sped the rugged soldier

On his last campaign

To report and serve

The Conqueror of the World

Beyond the Nothingness.

Naked trees and dry grass

Scorched by the April sun's fury

Proclaimed in mournful solemnity

The widowhood of a Nation.

Upon the pyre lay the Maratha King

With his head towards the north reclining ;

The head that bowed to none

Now lay in gentle submission

At the feet of the Great King of Kings

Who reigns supreme, in yonder Himalayas.

Stars peeped out of the darkening sky,

To take a last glimpse at the passing hero,

And tiny flames gathered together

Like the little states he combined

Into a mighty flame

That tinted the night sky,

A glowing orange plume

Spreading over the horizon

Like the ochre flag that fluttered

Over his beloved nation.

In Delhi rose the Moghul Emperor

And spelt an enemy's tribute

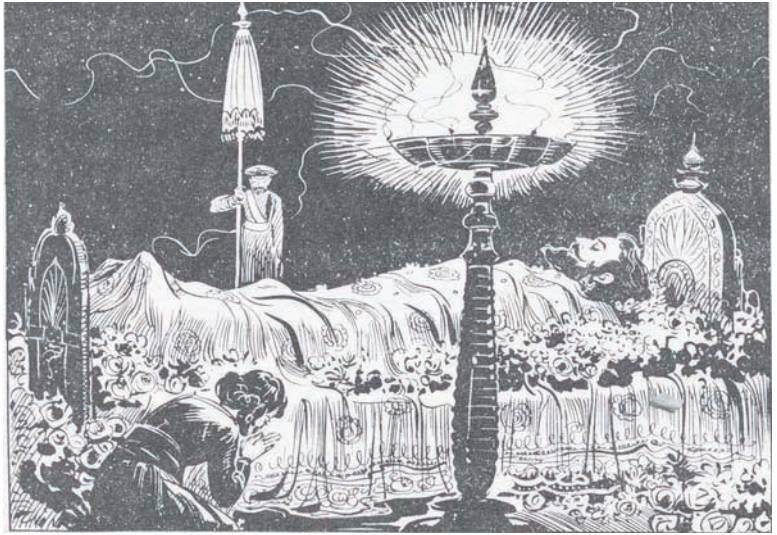
To a mighty warrior –

"The great captain is no more".



WHO SHALL UN-KING THEE?

SAROJINI NAIDU



Wear thou thy majesty inviolate.

Earth's glories free of human
eyes un-seen,

Earth's kingdoms fade to a
remembered dream,

But thine henceforth shall be
a power supreme,

Dazzling command and rich dominion,

The winds thy heralds and thy vassals all

The silver-belted planets and the sun.

Wherever the radiance of thy coming fall

Shall dawn for thee her saffron
foot-cloth spread,

Sun-set her purple canopies and red,

In serried splendour, and the night unfold

Her velvet darkness wrought
with starry gold

For kingly raiment, soft as cygnet down.

O, King ! thy kingdom who from
thee can wrest ?

What fate shall dare un-crown thee ?

Oh ! God born-lover whom (Man's)
love doth gird

An armour with impregnable delight

Of Hope's triumphant keen
flame-carven sword ?

