



THE LIFE OF SHIVAJI MAHARAJ FOUNDER OF THE MARATHA EMPIRE

Homepage: <http://www.gathacognition.com/book/gcb20>
<http://dx.doi.org/10.21523/gcb4>



Chapter 10

The Capture of Javli and other Events 1654-58

N. S. Takakhav

Professor, Wilson College, Bombay.

Editor

Kiran Jadhav

Published Online

17 March 2018

After the complete liberation of Shahaji from the Sultan's watch at Bijapur and his return to the Karnatic, Shivaji revived the aggressive policy he had slackened in the interim. His object was now to win over from the sultan the entire region of the Konkan and the uplands of the ghats, and to round off these possessions with the conquest of new hill-forts. The news of these freshly awakened activities threw the Bijapur durbar once more into consternation. For they were in the dilemma that if they were to move their forces openly against Shivaji, he might in all probability enlist the sympathy of the Moguls and demand their protection, and thus they would only accelerate their downfall. Thoughts of public hostilities could not therefore be entertained, but a force of a thousand horses was entrusted to a nobleman, Baji Shamraj by name, who undertook the arduous task of surprising Shivaji and making him prisoner. Shivaji was then encamped at Mahad. Baji Shamraj with the active support of Chandrarao More of Javli formed an ambushade in the defile of the Parghat, lying in wait to fall upon Shivaji unawares and apprehend him. But Shivaji was apprised of this plot of Baji by his faithful scouts, and the result was that far from Shivaji falling into the trap, Baji Shamraj's party itself was suddenly attacked and dispersed in all directions. Shamraj returned to Bijapur defeated and crest-fallen.

The active support lent to his enemies by the More family naturally

Originally published in 'The Life of Shivaji Maharaj: Founder of the Maratha Empire', 1921.

Adopted from the Marathi work by **K. A. Keluskar**.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.21523/gcb4.1813>

GATHA COGNITION®

rankled in Shivaji's mind, and he now set about to teach them a lesson they would ever remember.¹ Chandrarao More held sway in the districts which formed the watershed of the Krishna and the Warna. He entertained more than a thousand Mavalis in his service and was one of the principal feudal lords under the Bijapur durbar. The payment of the annual tribute left him an ample surplus upon which the family had thriven and prospered for centuries. He was the lord of many a hill-fort and mountain defile, his principal position being Hashamgad. Several times before this Shivaji had tried to win over this mighty chief and bind him to his interests, and had represented that he might either stop the tribute paid to Bijapur and divert it to Shivaji or might enjoy all the revenue to himself, on no other condition than that of helping him with a force of 5000 in time of need. To these proposals the loyal More had systematically turned a deaf ear.

Now it was quite apparent that this little world of hill and dale under the rule of the More family stood in the way of Shivaji's complete domination over the zone of the highlands of the Western Ghats. It comprehended many a mountain fastness, the keys to the mastery of fields and pastures in the valleys. Shivaji's ultimate plans to strike at the Mahomedan power required that he should be first safely ensconced among these rocky wilds as the undisputed master of the Western Ghats. This must inevitably bring him into collision with the More family. But the More's was an ancient name, and he had thousands of brave Mavali retainers in his service, and many a gallant warrior and chief strove night and day for its prestige. Among them Suryarao, the brother of Chandrarao More, and Hanmantrao, his private secretary, were men of acknowledged military genius. To put his forces against those of the More family in an open encounter was in Shivaji's opinion likely to prove a bloody experiment without much probability of ultimate success. Shivaji, therefore, according to the traditional bakhar account had to act with circumspection and avoid any act of overt hostility. With this object in view, he got two of his officers, Raghunath Ballal Korde and Sambhaji Kavji, with a small escort to proceed to the principality of Javli to reconnoitre the place and report on its hill-forts and positions of strategic value.² To facilitate this plan, Shivaji's officers feigned as an excuse for their intrusion that they had come on an embassy to negotiate a match between Shivaji and Chandrarao More's daughter. Relying upon this assurance More gave orders to arrange for the

-
1. Chandrarao More was the hereditary title of the fief-holders of Javli. The feudal lord of Javli at the time was Krishnaji Baji. (Parasnis: *Itihas Sangraha*, *Sphuta Lekh* I, 26)
 2. According to Chitnis, Sabhasad, and Shedgaokar Raghunath Ballal Sabnis was sent upon this mission, with a few soldiers. According to Shedgaokar Bakhar, Sambhaji Kavji was later on sent to Hanmantrao and murdered him.

comfort of his guests. Now More was much addicted to drink. He had not the least suspicion of the ulterior intentions of these alleged ambassadors. These men on the other hand were scrutinizing everything they saw or heard. Raghunath Ballal did not take long to discover the reckless security in which the drunken More lived and the dissensions that existed in his garrison. Conceiving the plan of surprising and assassinating the unguarded chief within the walls of his own fort, he consulted his comrade Sambhaji Kavji and with his concurrence wrote to Shivaji that they had it in their power to settle the last account with More, provided Shivaji advanced with his army in the vicinity of Javli and at a given signal appeared on the scene. Shivaji descended from Rajgad with a small army and came by forced marches to Mahabaleshwar by way of Purandar. He arranged his troops in the forest and remained on the alert for further developments, having notified Raghunathrao of his arrival. Having set the trap ready, Raghunathrao proposed a confidential conference with Chandrarao and his brother Suryarao. In the course of the conversation he found an occasion to draw his dagger and killed the brothers on the spot, and set forth straightway to descend the castle with the band of his followers, who were drawn up all ready for the start³. But they were interrupted by the sentry mounted at the gate who had meanwhile received word of the murders committed within. Shivaji's men forced their way at the sword's point through their ranks and made good their escape into the forest. The retainers of More made little serious attempt to pursue the treacherous guests. For the lord of the castle having himself fallen, who was there to rally the pursuers and keep up their spirits? Shivaji now descended from Mahabaleshwar by the Nissan ghat, or *Pass of the Stairs*, to Javli and blockading Hashamgad on all sides gave battle to the More hosts. Chandrarao's sons Bajirao and Krishnarao and the minister Hanmantrao fought with the energy of despair. But at length Hanmantrao fell dead on the field and More's brave sons were wounded and made prisoners.⁴ These brave

-
3. According to the version in the Shivdigvijay, Ragho Ballal came to an interview with More's secretary, Hanmantrao, on pretence of a marriage alliance, and finding him off his guard killed him by treachery. Upon this Shivaji marched upon Chandrarao More, defeated and slew him in the field and captured Javli. The Rairi bakhar gives nearly the same version with this addition that Hanmant was first overtaken and slain in a battle at Mahabaleshwar and next Shivaji advanced against Chandrarao More and defeating him conquered Javli and Mahabaleshwar.
 4. There are other versions: - (1) According to Sabhasad this Hanmantrao was a brother of Chandrarao More. On the conquest of Javli he retired into the Konkan and set up a small principality there. Fearing he might return and repeat his attempts for the recovery of Javli, Shivaji sent Sambhaji Kavji on a diplomatic mission to Hanmantrao. The envoy opened the discussion of a marriage alliance between Hanmant and Shivaji and despatched the unsuspecting chief with his dagger. (2) Chitnis omits these gruesome details and only says that Sambhaji killed Hanmantrao.

warriors with the ladies and children of the More family were kept in confinement upon fort Purandar. Shivaji intended to confer a suitable jahgir on the heirs of More so as to keep up the prestige of an ancient name. But they were detected in a traitorous correspondence with Bijapur for arranging a flight to that court. This correspondence was intercepted and put in evidence against them. They were found guilty of treason and executed. The ladies of the family were then set at liberty.

Such is the traditional account of this event, as it has come down to us from the pens of the leading chroniclers. As regards statements of details they differ much from one another, as will be seen from the foot-notes. Let us put together these divergent statements, and they lead to one conclusion, that there was an offer of a marriage alliance that under pretence of such an offer, *either* Chandrarao More himself *or* his captain and kinsman, Hanmantrao More, was treacherously slain, *either* by Raghunath Ballal *or* by Sambhaji Kavji. For it is too much to believe that Raghunath Ballal proposed a marriage alliance to Chandrarao More and stabbed him, and *at the same time* to believe that after this murder had taken place Sambhaji Kavji made a similar proposal to Hanmantrao and murdered him. We hold that if Chandrarao More was deceived and murdered, Hanmantrao, who is described as a brave and wise man, the actual administrator of Javli and the only pillar of strength to the More family, was too shrewd a man to fall into the same trap. The probability is that if the one was murdered, the other was not. Hanmantrao would not be deceived by offers of a marriage alliance (Shedgaokar bakhar, 81), if Chandrarao More had been done to death by a similar treacherous proposal.

The Jedhe Chronology tells us plainly that the fighting with the Mores was a prolonged affair and not to be settled by the murder of one man or another. This chronology gives no account of treachery, it speaks only of fighting. The struggle lasted for above five months, from December 1655 (*Pousha* of Shaka 1577) to at least April or May 1656 (*Vaishakha* of Shaka 1578). Under the first entry (December 1655) we are told that Shivaji captured Javli with the help of the Jedhe deshmukh and the followers of Bandal and Silibkar (Silimkar) and other Mavli chiefs, and we are distinctly told that with their help Shivaji *fought* and took Javli. Before proceeding to the second entry, we will remark that this first entry confirms the statement of the bakhar account published in Parasnis's *Itihas Sangraha, Sphuta Lekh I*, 26, where we are told that after mutual recriminations and challenges, Shivaji sent an ultimatum to Chandrarao (presumably through Raghunath Ballal Korde) and descending from Mahabaleshwar by the Pass of the Stairs (Nissan ghat), laid siege to Javli for a month. This account further states that at the fall of Javli, Chandrarao More escaped to Rairi, seized it from Shivaji's men and fought the fort for *three* months, at the end of which he was forced to

capitulate. Now these statements (*Itihas Sangraha Sphuta Lekh I*, 26-29; II 11, and Parasnis's *Mahabaleshwar* 19-21) are supported by the second entry in the Jedhe Chronology (pp.180-81), which is undoubtedly an independent authority. This entry, under the month of *Vaishakh*, *Shake* 1578, reads as follows: - "In *Vaishakh* the Rajah Shivaji took (recovered) Rairi. Along with him were Kanhoji Jedhe deshmukh, of Taluka Bhore, and Bandal and Silibkar deshmukhs, and a force of Mavalis. Haibatrao and Balaji Naik Silibkar used their mediation and Chandrarao descended the fort. The *Itihas Sangraha* account further states that Chandrarao More was pardoned and re-established in some of his old possessions and honours as a fief-holder under Shivaji, until he opened an intriguing correspondence with the Ghorpades of Mudhol, when he was executed at Chakan, perhaps along with his sons, and then the glory of Javli came to an end. On the other hand the Jedhe entry concludes with a statement that Shivaji rewarded the services of Haibatrao Silibkar in bringing about a reconciliation with Chandrarao and that the territories of the latter were divided between him and his brothers. There is nothing contradictory between this and the *Itihas Sangraha* account. They mutually confirm one another. The Shedgaokar bakhar says expressly that the quarrels of the brothers wrecked the realm of Chandrarao. Reconstructing the whole story, we may proceed to state, as related in some of the bakhars, that Hanmantrao More still continued to defy Shivaji after the submission of Chandrarao, that Sambhaji Kavji was therefore sent to him (Sabhasad 10) perhaps under pretence of a marriage alliance (Sabhasad and Shedgaokar) and that under some such pretence he stabbed him to death (Chitnis, Sabhasad and Shedgaokar). When it is considered that Hanmantrao belonged to the More family and that Chandrarao More was only the hereditary title of the fief-holders of Javli, it seems possible that the Marathi chronicles describing the events full two generations after they had occurred would make a muddle of the whole affair and some of them proceed wrongly to state that Javli was taken by tricking Chandrarao More into a proposal of marriage. There is nothing improbable in such a reconstruction of the whole event, which is the only intelligible form in which it commends itself to our acceptance in sympathy with the general tenor of the conflicting versions. Prof. Sarkar (Shivaji, 54) might well have spared his gibes against recent "discoveries" of "old chronicles", for it is not necessary to press upon the reader the acceptance of that part of the *Itihas Sangraha* narrative which asserts that Chandrarao More had attempted to seize Shivaji by treachery and had intrigued with the Ghorpades of Mudhol against him. This attempt to represent that event in a retaliatory light has unnecessarily provoked the ire of Prof. Sarkar. That intrigue was probably the last incident of the tragic tale. It led to executions and reprisals, and the practical extinction of the More family (Shivdigvijay, 131) though, as Prof. Sarkar shows, some of the members of

the More family unquestionably escaped and attempted to avenge themselves by co-operating with the Rajah Jaysingh at a later date.

In this manner was effected the conquest of Javli and the fortifications comprised in that demesne. Shivaji's flag was now flying over all its hill-forts. The large treasures in gold and specie accumulated by many generations of the More family fell intact into Shivaji's hands. Under the auspices of the Mores a Brahman named Babaji Kondadev had waxed in power in the valley of Shivthar. This man now constituted himself into a sort of independent ruler, plundering the neighbourhood and defying Shivaji's authority. He was arrested and though under ordinary circumstances he would have been straightway executed for his arrogant defiance, his character as a member of the priestly class excited commiseration in Shivaji's eyes. Instead of inflicting the extreme penalty of the law, Shivaji ordered his eyes to be put out.⁵

The deshmukh of Hirdas in the Maval region, Bandal by name, was another of these turbulent chiefs whom Shivaji had long meditated to bring under his allegiance. He had hitherto evaded Shivaji's peaceful proposals. His head-quarters were the mountain-fort of Rohida. According to Chitnis, about this time, Shivaji concerted a successful night attack upon this fort and Bandal found himself overwhelmed on all sides. Bandal knew well that he had little hope of safety, being so completely hemmed in by Shivaji's forces. But he was resolved never to yield and launched a violent attack on Shivaji. Both parties put forth their utmost efforts. Bandal himself rushed over the field, sword in hand. He was at length defeated and fell mortally wounded. The few surviving followers of Bandal made their submission, the chief among them being Bandal's minister, Baji Prabhu Deshpande. Shivaji, pleased with Deshpande's bravery, treated him with great generosity, confirming him in his privileges and estates. When Shivaji had received further proofs of his loyalty, he got him to enlist in his service. He was placed in charge of a battalion of infantry. What signal services he rendered to Shivaji, and in how heroic and self-sacrificing a manner, will be seen in the sequel.⁶

5. Sabhasad gives a different name, viz. Baji Kodanerao, and the Shedgaokar bakhar names him Dadaji Mahadev (pp. 20, 21).

6. Chitnis's version is followed in the text as regards the conquest of Hirdas Maval. On the other hand the Jedhe Chronology, as mentioned before, says that Bandal deshmukh, or at any rate his followers, co-operated with Shivaji, in capturing Javli. Prof. Sarkar remarks that the twelve Mavals were completely conquered by Dadaji Kondadev, and rejects this version of Chitnis. But Prof. Sarkar seems to contradict himself when he states that the fort of Rohida (Rahira) was gained some time afterwards (Prof. Sarkar: *Shivaji* 39, Foot-note and 41). Moreover the name of Baji Deshpande is not mentioned before this event. It would seem that Bandal made war and peace according to his convenience, and hence these discrepancies among our authorities. (Vide Foot-note (1) in Chapter VI)

After the extirpation of Bandal and his party, Shivaji's rule over the Maval region knew no check or interruption. The elements of discord being exterminated, the peasantry became secure and fearless and in consequence happy. The introduction of a regular system in the collection of the land revenue contributed greatly to their prosperity. The settlements were neither arbitrary nor oppressive. The people's interests and wishes were everywhere studied and consulted. Those who were willing to serve in the field had ready access to Shivaji's army, as new recruits were being constantly picked up wherever they could be discovered. Shivaji admitted a large number of More's brave retainers to serve in his field force.

In order to consolidate his conquest of Javli and the adjacent parts, Shivaji resolved to erect a central fort among the mountains at the sources of the river Krishna and entrusted the building operations to Moro Trimal Pingle. Pingle was a gallant officer who had accompanied the Rajah Shahaji upon his first expedition into the Karnatic. He had received his training in finance and war under the expert guidance of his own father and the Rajah Shahaji, in the disturbed times which had marked the early vicissitudes of Shahaji's life. From the Karnatic he returned to Maharashtra about 1653 and, took service under Shivaji. He won the confidence of Shivaji by the loyalty, zeal, and ability he displayed in the execution of every duty entrusted to him. He carried out the building of the fortifications quite up to Shivaji's standard. The fortress was christened Pratapgad. The old temple at Mahabaleshwar was remodelled and repaired. A new temple, with a massive court and walls, was erected next to the fountain head of the Krishna. An image of the tutelary goddess Bhavani was here set up in imitation of the ancient Bhavani of Tuljapur. Shivaji adorned the temple with rich ornaments and made frequent pilgrimages to this shrine.

A little later Aurangzeb marched southwards and defeated Bijapur and concluding a new treaty retired to North India. We have already seen the precautions Shivaji had taken to ensure his possessions from the ravages of the Moguls. By professions of humility Shivaji had succeeded in deceiving a past master of state-craft like Aurangzeb and obtained permission to have his own way in the Bijapur territory. On Aurangzeb's retirement to the North, Shivaji turned his attention to the conquest of the Konkan. In quick succession the sea-board towns of Ratnagiri, Vijaydurg, Suvarnadurg, Salsi and Kharepatan fell before Shivaji.

About this time a troop of 700 Pathans came to Shivaji to seek employment in his army. They had been disbanded by the Bijapur Government after the last treaty with the Moguls. They came straggling to Poona and applied to Shivaji for employment submitting that they had been

attracted to him by the fame of his name and the martial renown of Shahaji Bhosle. Shivaji was much at a loss whether to entertain or not a corps of Mahomedan soldiers in his service. Some of his intimate followers distrusted them and represented to Shivaji that they might be in a secret league with Bijapur or the Mogul camp and sent on purpose to sow sedition in his army, and might turn traitors at any moment. But among the trusty officers of Shivaji was a havaldar, Gomaji Naik Pansambal, who had seen service under the redoubted Lakhji Jadhav and had come over to Shahaji in Jijabai's escort at the time of her marriage. He had shared in all the vicissitudes of Jijabai's career and served in Shivaji's earliest enterprises with undeviating loyalty and courage. Shivaji had raised him to the rank of havaldar, having appreciated his zealous loyalty towards himself and his services in the development of his ambitious plans of independence. This veteran counselled Shivaji to secure the services of these strangers who had been drawn to him by the glory of his military exploits and argued that for the final triumph of his cause, the establishment of an independent power, it was essential that his realm should be an asylum to all men of worth and talent, irrespective of the religion they professed. "The true ruler" exclaimed this honest soldier "shall be equally impartial to all castes and creeds. He shall give freedom of religion to all his subjects and vassals, and shall recruit his servants from all races and classes of men, worth and valour being the sole tests of selection." In this way the gallant havaldar prevailed over Shivaji's wavering mind, with the result that the latter summoned the strangers into his presence, and having by a close scrutiny and cross-examination satisfied himself as to the sincerity of their profession and the genuineness of their desire to enter into his service ordered them to be enrolled.⁷ Ragho Ballal Atre was placed in command of this Pathan Division. After this incident Shivaji began to enlist Mahomedans both officers and sepoys, on a large scale some of whom are known to have risen to great eminence by their zeal, loyalty and bravery.

The Abyssinians at Janjira were now the only considerable power that impeded Shivaji's progress towards the reduction of the entire Konkan coast under his hegemony. The Chief of Janjira⁸, strong in his naval resources, time and again harassed Shivaji's possessions in the Konkan. Perceiving that his conquests there could not have even the shadow of security till this foreign ruler was subjugated, Shivaji determined to concentrate his forces upon the

7. This officer's name must not be confounded with that of Ragho Ballal Korde who figures in the tragic story of the capture of Javli.

8. The word "Janjira" means an island-fort or sea-fort, and the island of Zanzibar off the coast of British East Africa is said to have been so called from its being an island-fort under its Moorish masters.

reduction of this enemy. Resolved to carry out this part of his programme without delay, Shivaji ordered Shamrajant, the Peshwa, to move his forces against Janjira. Fatteh Khan was the Abyssinian chief then bearing sway over Janjira. This chief knew that Shivaji's intentions towards Janjira were by no means friendly and had prepared himself for an encounter. Between Fatteh Khan and Shamrajant several skirmishes took place near Danda-Rajpuri, and the Peshwa got the worst of these engagements. Shivaji's forces had to retire before the skilfully concerted military movements of Fatteh Khan, and numbers of the Peshwa's expeditionary force perished. Shamraj had to return home disgraced and dispirited. This was the first considerable reverse sustained by Shivaji's arms, and he took it ill to such an extent that he discharged Shamrajant from his office of Peshwa and entrusted Raghunathant with the campaign with a considerably re-inforced army. The office of Peshwa was conferred upon Moro Trimal Pingle, who exercised, the duties of this position of trust for the rest of his life. Among other transfers of office Nilo Sondev was given charge of the duties of Muzumdar, (accountant-general), Gango Mangaji those of Waknis (record-keeper) and Yessaji Kunk was appointed to be the commander-in-chief of the infantry force, with the title of sirnobut.

In the course of this war with the Abyssinians, the chief of Sawantwadi came to learn of the great armaments embarked by Shivaji upon the conquest of the Konkan coast. The Sawantwadi chief had little of internal resources to stem the tide of the expected invasion. The chief owned the hegemony of Bijapur and had hitherto paid little heed to the rise of Shivaji. But the annihilation of the power and prestige of the great More family, the discomfiture of neighbouring feudal chiefs and the surrender of numerous hill-forts and positions of vantage without any successful resistance on the part of Bijapur, added to the utter paralysis of inaction and dissension which had overtaken that state after the last Mogul invasion, opened the eyes of the Sawantwadi chief to the utter futility of any expectation of aid in the hour of peril and the advisability of entering into an understanding with one whose star was unmistakably in the ascendant. A treaty followed by which it was agreed that the Sawant should cede half his revenues to Shivaji, who was empowered to collect his moiety by his own agency. The Sawant was to enjoy the rest of the revenue with all the rights and prerogatives of *deshmukhi* or *zamindari* lordship over Sawantwadi without let or hindrance. In pursuance of this plan the Sawant chief was to discontinue payment of the time-honoured tribute to Bijapur, to maintain his garrisons all over the forts, and keep an efficient infantry force of 3000 to be placed at Shivaji's service on demand. In effect, the chief disowned the hegemony of Bijapur and acknowledged that of Shivaji.

The treaty thus entered into was plainly not the outcome of the Sawant's free will, and in a short time he repented of the step to which he had rashly committed himself. It was too galling to his spirit to submit to Shivaji's domination which he soon made shift to change for that of Bijapur. How Shivaji visited this fickleness on the Sawant's head will be described in a later chapter.

Meanwhile the forces sent against the Abyssinians had met with foemen worthy of their steel and the monsoon setting in made the protraction of the struggle impossible. In the following campaign the command was entrusted to the Peshwa Moropant assisted by Netaji Palkar. The campaign was interrupted by the monsoons, which began rather earlier than usual. Meanwhile a new crisis threatened to overtake Shivaji's fortune which made a pause necessary in the Maratha enterprise and required the exercise of all their concentrated resources. This was the invasion of Afzul Khan.
