



THE LIFE OF SHIVAJI MAHARAJ FOUNDER OF THE MARATHA EMPIRE

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Chapter 13

The Bijapur Government on its Knees, 1661-62

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The Bijapur Government was in a sullen mood. The disgraceful return of Sidi Johar and Fazal Khan had filled the sultan with indignation. In the first impulse of his wrath he announced his intention of taking the field in person against the Maratha leader. With a large army under his command, the sultan moved to Karhad. This movement had the immediate effect of stirring up those of his feudatories on the border that had consented to pay tribute to Shivaji. These chiefs now hastened to the royal camp with humiliation and consternation and began to proffer their allegiance and service to the sultan. Sidi Johar at the same time supplicated for pardon. But he did not volunteer to attend the sultan in his campaign, knowing as he did by experience the petty envy and personal spite that reigned supreme with such disastrous results in the sultan's court. He retired to his jahgir.

The sultan began well. He besieged and captured Panhala. (August, 1660). Pavangad followed. The minor hill-forts in the neighbourhood fell one after another, but the forts of Rangna and Vishalgad held out. The rains having set in as he did not desire to expose his army to the heavy rains on the crest of the Sahyadri, he returned to Chimalge on the banks of the Krishna to canton his army during the season of storms.

Shivaji's plan was to encourage the sultan to fritter away his forces. He was no match for the overwhelming forces of the Bijipur durbar. Shivaji's such as Tanaji and others were going to concentrate on Janjira soil and with the active co-operation of the Abyssinians deliver a combined attack upon

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army had already been considerably impaired by the stress of the campaign with Sidi Johar. The new storm had burst so soon after the last that he had scarcely any time to make up his losses. The sultan might meanwhile waste his strength on the capture of minor forts, and when his forces were affected as they were bound to be by the tear and wear of the desultory campaign, Shivaji resolved to put forth all his strength and beat back the invader. On the repulse of the sultan it would be so easy to recover the lost ground. Such were Shivaji's plans.

Nor was he quite idle. He turned the vanguard of his army once more upon the town of Rajapur. The Maratha horse entered the port a second time. The British East India Company, as has already been mentioned, held an important factory or entrepot at this flourishing town. The company incurred heavy losses during this invasion. Four British merchants including the agent, Henry Revington, were taken prisoners and confined for three years at the fort of Waisati and afterwards at Raigad. The reason of this harsh treatment was that the British factors at Rajapur had supplied ammunition to Sidi Johar during the last invasion, and some members of the Rajapur factory had been actually bribed by the Bijapur authorities to join their camp and help in the bombardment of Panhala fort.¹ Three years afterwards the British prisoners were allowed to be liberated on ransom.

On the fall of Rajapur Shivaji turned his forces against Shringarpur, where a Maratha noble of the name of Surve had set up an independent principality.² He had got together an army of about 10,000 and confident of his strength, he had been carrying on a marauding warfare with the landed gentry in the neighbourhood. His chief officers were two Maratha nobles, Pilaji and Tanaji, of the Shirke family. Pilaji attended Shivaji's camp in the capacity of Surve's vakil or agent. By way of retaliation on Surve for his insolence Shivaji threw Pilaji into chains and marching upon his master, took Shringarpur by a sudden assault. Though deprived of his head-quarters, Surve did not acknowledge defeat. He rallied his men and continued the war. At length Shivaji advanced against the post where Surve had concentrated his forces. A desperate battle ensued, in which Surve was defeated and slain. But Tanaji Shirke made good his escape from the field of battle. On the destruction of Surve some of his feudatories took shelter with the Abyssinians

1. Rajapur, *Factory Records*, quoted by prof. Sarkar, p. 299.

2. Grant Duff names him Dalvi and says Surve was his minister. He does not mention Shirke. The account followed in the text is that found in the Marathi bakhars. As explained before Dalvi was an additional name of the Surves.

of Janjira. Shivaji foresaw what this would lead to. The adherents of Surve, Shivaji. In order to forestall such a combination, Shivaji conciliated Tanaji Shirke, giving him Shringarpur and other districts in inam. Shirke acknowledged the feudal suzerainty of Shivaji. Encouraged by this act of generosity on the part of the victor, the fugitive retainers of Surve returned from Janjira and were permitted to enter again upon their old *vatan* or hereditary rights of property. Such of them as were willing and fit for active service were enrolled in Shivaji's army. A little later Shirke's daughter was married to Shivaji's eldest son.

The rains had now begun in earnest. But Shivaji could not afford to remain inactive. Simultaneously with the invasion which the sultan had undertaken in person, the Abyssinians, throwing to the winds the treaty recently made with Raghunathrao Atre, renewed their incursions into Shivaji's territory. Shivaji resented the treachery and wanted to accelerate his operations, so as to exterminate the foe before either the sultan or the confederate chief of Wadi could come to his help. The command was given to Venkoji. After a protracted struggle, Venkoji conquered Dandarajpuri with the territory surrounding that town. The conquered country was occupied by a strong expeditionary force of five or six thousand and fortifications were raised at suitable points to overawe the district. Only their stronghold of Janjira remained with the Abyssinians. Shivaji opened a cannonade upon this fortress, but had soon to give up this attempt, for want both of sufficient artillery and of expert artillery-men. On the close of the monsoons, Shivaji had to relax this campaign and concentrate his attention upon the movements of the sultan.

That prince, as we have seen, had postponed active operations for the autumn and encamped his army at Chimalge. While encamped at Chimalge he received despatches from the Karnatic announcing an extensive revolt against the Adil Shahi power. The sultan decided to send Sidi Johar to the Karnatic to quell the rebellion and with this object invited him with all honour due to his position to lead an expeditionary force to the Karnatic. But Johar who distrusted the sultan and was at bitter enmity with Ibrahim Khan, the prime minister, declined the responsibility and straightway returned to his jahgir. The sultan construed this action as a proof of his being in secret league with the rebels in the Karnatic, as also with Shivaji.

The sultan was in great perplexity at being thus caught between two fires. He had embarked upon this campaign with Shivaji with the firm resolve of never turning his back upon the operations, before the name of Shivaji was wiped out of the country. Some of his adherents were even now of the same opinion. But there was also a weighty expression of opinion on the part of

those who maintained that the situation in the Karnatic, both for its gravity and the magnitude of the issues involved, required the immediate attention of the durbar. The pursuit of the elusive Maratha warrior over valley and mountain, forest and plain, and the sacrifice of vast armies to secure this paltry end would be at best, they fancied, an illustration of the mountain in labour and the proverbial mouse. While the sultan was distracted between these conflicting opinions, the proposal of the deshmukhs or chiefs of Wadi came as a great encouragement to him. For the Sawants of Wadi, Lakhman Sawant and Khem Sawant, applied for liberal reinforcements to enable them to prosecute hostilities against Shivaji and undertook to destroy utterly all his authority over the entire Konkan coast. This proposition was most welcome to the sultan as it immediately relieved him from an anxious dilemma. The prayers of the Sawant chiefs were readily acceded to. It was decided that Behlol (*Bahlol*) Khan and Baji Ghorpade, the chief of Mudhol, should muster all available forces and march to the succour of the chiefs of Wadi. The three leaders were required to concert together a plan of operations against Shivaji and the sultan in person was to take the field against the rebels in the Karnatic.

Preparations were being rapidly made on an extensive scale for a campaign on which mighty issues seemed to rest. While the forces were mustering, Baji Ghorpade had occasion to pay a flying visit to his jahgir of Mudhol, a movement of which instant intelligence was conveyed to Shivaji by his spies. This was the man who bore the stigma of having been the instrument of that treacherous capture of Shahaji which had almost culminated in a frightful tragedy. When Shivaji with wonderful tact and resources saved his father from the sultan's vengeance on that occasion, he had, as it will be remembered, sworn a deadly feud with the chief of Mudhol. The hour he had long waited for to vindicate the family honour had now at last arrived. For the gates of Mudhol fly suddenly open before Shivaji's columns and with streams of blood and heaps of slaughtered dead the treacherous chief and his clansmen atone for their villainy.

Khawas Khan took the place of command made vacant by the death of Baji Ghorpade. But the Mahomedan generals had not advanced more than a few days' march before they were ordered to divert their forces from the Konkan and required to present themselves without loss of time at the scene of war in the Karnatic. The flames of rebellion in the southern provinces of the kingdom had assumed very grave proportions and required a larger effort to quench them than had been anticipated by the sultan.

Shivaji could have prayed for nothing better. While the deadlock in the Karnatic engrossed the armies of the Adil Shahi state, Shivaji swept rapidly from fort to fort recovering lost ground and adding many a new province he

had never conquered before. The Sawants of Wadi who had paraded their loyalty to the sultan and applied to him for help in a concerted attack upon Shivaji had certainly not even endeavoured to veil their malignant animosity against the rise of the new power. Nemesis was not slow to overtake the chiefs of Wadi. Shivaji swiftly overran their dominions. The Sawants were in despair. They could scarcely put forth any resistance, without the active aid of the sultan; and this aid the sultan's present embarrassments had prevented him from sending. Shivaji made immediate conquest of Kudal, Bande, and other territorial possessions of the Sawant Wadi chief. The latter found an asylum in the hospitable country of Goa, the capital of Portuguese India. Shivaji sent a peremptory reprimand to the Portuguese authorities, whose eyes were now opened to the risks they were incurring in harbouring the refugees, and the latter were again cast adrift to encounter the forces of Shivaji. At length, deserted by every prince or feudatory chieftain, they made humble appeals to Shivaji, through their wakil or agent, Pitamber Shenvi. They averred that the Sawants were related to the Bhonsles by many ties of relationship. They deprecated the fact that the two families should act as enemies. They protested their readiness to transfer their allegiance to Shivaji, praying him to forgive and forget the past and admit them again to a feudal dependence upon him. Shivaji was gratified to see them acknowledge the error of their ways and profess their loyalty. He gave them pardon and invited them to an interview, at which it was decided that they should continue to enjoy in perpetuity the revenues of their fief as *deshmukhs* of Wadi, subject to an annual tribute.³ Their infantry force was transferred to Shivaji's service and sent on campaigns far away from their homes, while their own possessions were placed under a defence force composed of Shivaji's veterans.

Now there were two valiant commanders in the service of the Wadi chief, viz., Nana Sawant⁴ and Rama Dalvi. Pleased with their address and chivalry Shivaji received them with open arms in his service. Rama Dalvi was indeed a name to conjure with in the Konkan. This valiant leader was entrusted with a large army for the reduction of the outlying parts of the Konkan. The Sawants thus lost for ever two of the main pillars of their strength.

During this campaign Shivaji first came into collision with the Portuguese. By rapid conquests he got under his occupation the Portuguese districts of Panch Mahal, Mardangad and Bardesh, and threatened the land

3. Sabhasad says that they were to receive a fixed revenue of six thousand pagodas, reside at Kudal, and abstain from any building or entrenching operations or mustering an army.

4. Sabhasad names him Tanaji Sawant.

communications of Goa itself. To deliver Goa from a possible blockade and escape further hostilities at his hand, the Portuguese made overtures for a peace through the medium of Anant Shenvi, who was the *sabnis* or paymaster of the forces under the Desai or Chief of Kudal. But Anant Shenvi professed a friendly attitude towards Shivaji only to cloak his treacherous intentions. He represented to the Portuguese authorities that the sending of a peaceful embassy would throw Shivaji off his guard and the occasion should be seized to entrap him by a midnight raid upon his camp. But Kanhoji Tandel, the skipper of a local barque, divulged the sinister plot to Shivaji. Profiting by the information, Shivaji remained in readiness awaiting the development of the treachery. True to the information received, Anant Shenvi noiselessly led an ambushed force of 10,000 Portuguese to surprise Shivaji's camp. But what was his anguish to discover that Shivaji had fallen back about a mile and placed his men in battle order in evident expectation of his midnight assailants! Come what may, the Portuguese had now to open fire, which they did as soon as they came up to the encampment. Shivaji held in his men till day-break, when his cavalry dashed down upon their opponents and cut them to pieces. The Portuguese were utterly routed. Scarcely a thousand of their men escaped with their lives. Some fell dead upon the field of battle; others were drowned in the creeks, and a large number were wounded. The Portuguese government was now in great fear. Shivaji harried the entire Bardesh with fire and sword. Portuguese captives without exception were put to the sword. The Portuguese merchants were arrested and subjected to heavy war-fines. The military cantonments of the Maratha cavalry stationed in the various parts of Kudal, Bande, Sakli, (Sankhal or Sankhali), Maneri and other places were extended to Bardesh. The landward portions of Goa were, in one word, brought under permanent occupation, and events had come to such a crisis that it seemed that the whole of that little peninsula would slip for ever from the hands of the Portuguese. The Portuguese government now repented of their folly in listening to the treacherous counsels of Anant Shenvi. They sent ambassadors for peace and made an ample apology. The ambassadors came laden with presents to Shivaji's camp, the presents consisting chiefly of a sum of 20,000 crowns and magnificent suits of apparel. The treaty now made with the Portuguese provided that they should annually furnish a certain number of new cannon to Shivaji as also jewellery and should obtain from him warrants for the passage of their mercantile vessels.

The Bijapur government now mourned the downfall of the Sawants. The chief of Wadi was the last of their great barons in the Konkan. His fall left little scope for the recovery of that region in the future. The Abyssinian chief of Janjira, once the high admiral of the Adil Shahi crown, was equally maimed and crippled by the repeated onslaughts of Shivaji. The Abyssinians

saw that henceforth they could not depend on the fostering care of their Bijapur sovereign. The fate of the Sawants made them indifferent towards their masters. The Bijapur durbar was in great perplexity as to the next move they should make in the game with Shivaji. No general at their court would undertake a new campaign against him. Wearied with the constant internecine struggle, the grand vizier of the court at length opened secret communications with Shivaji. There were reasons for this secrecy. The grand vizier plainly saw that the courtiers, whose craven spirit shirked the perils of fighting, would be the first to throw themselves into attitudes of injured honour on hearing of a treaty with this enemy. They would stand with folded hands, spectators of the rapine and bloodshed, and try to redeem their indifference by an insincere outcry against a peace. The vizier knew the temper of these gilded popinjays too well not to perceive that they might even attempt to taunt him with accusations of breaking faith with his sovereign, if not in formal terms at least by innuendo. They were even capable of using back-stairs influence with their sovereign to procure the banishment or death of the advocate of a conciliatory policy. The chief conditions of these informal negotiations, which shortly afterwards resulted in a treaty, were that the conquests hitherto made by Shivaji should be allowed to remain in his hands and the Adil Shahi durbar should make no further attempt at their recovery. The durbar was to recognize Shivaji as an independent sovereign, cede him certain defined districts and stipulate to pay him an annual tribute of seven lakhs of hons amounting to about Rs. 35,00,000 at the ruling rate of exchange. There was to be a defensive alliance between, the two powers, and Shivaji's ambassador, Shamji Naik Pande, was permitted to reside at Bijapur and represent him at the Adil Shahi durbar.

If the durbar acquiesced in such terms, they did so manifestly because of the utter exhaustion of their military resources. Never was defeat more complete or acknowledgment more ample on the part of a sovereign towards a former vassal. Shortly afterwards the Rajah Shahaji obtained permission, as is told in the following chapter, to revisit Maharashtra. On this occasion the Bijapur durbar exhorted Shahaji to use his influence with his son to continue these friendly relations with their court. The result of Shahaji's advice was that Shivaji ceased to attack Bijapur.

Shivaji may now be said to have attained the crown of his earliest ambition. Every crisis had tried the high spirit and sterling virtues of which he had given promise from his early years. The plans and visions which Dadaji Kondadev and others had considered so chimerical had been proved to be not only practicable but to have been actually realized. He who had been so recently no more than a petty jahgirdar was now famous and feared throughout the whole of south India. The lesser glory of envious deshmukhs

and haughty sardars of the Maratha gentry had paled before his. The spectacle of a sovereign state paying tribute to its tributary vassal filled his rivals with wonder and dismay.

This will be the proper place to review Shivaji's possessions at this period of his career (1662). His territory comprised in the first place the whole of the Konkan coast from Kalyan to Goa, a strip of 300 miles in length. From the Bhima to the Warna, the uplands that rise above the Konkan were also in Shivaji's hands. This territory was on an average about 160 miles in length and about 100 miles in breadth. His military resources comprised 50,000 foot and 7,000 horses. This army was much too large considering the dimensions of his kingdom. But living as he did in the midst of constant alarms and compelled to keep himself on a war-footing so as to meet at any time the forces of two empires, this army cannot be said to have been too numerous. Of these the first had been worsted; with the second he had just come into collision. The result of that collision was not a long way off.
