



THE LIFE OF SHIVAJI MAHARAJ FOUNDER OF THE MARATHA EMPIRE

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Chapter 8 Shahaji Entrapped

N. S. Takakhav

Professor, Wilson College, Bombay.

Editor

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Kiran Jadhav

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The disturbances caused by Shivaji in the Bijapur territory had been overlooked for two or three years; but the Kalyan affair was the last straw, and even that apathetic and indulgent government had now to bestir itself. For the plunder of the royal treasure on the way to the capital, the conquest of Kalyan and the out-lying forts, and the rumours that were now bruited abroad about Shivaji's future projects had caused great consternation and raised an out-cry against the lethargy of the government. The sultan, Mahomed Adil Shaha, hastened to the wrong conclusion that the master mind of Shahaji must be at the bottom of this affair. Nor was this suspicion quite unreasonable. On the retirement of Randulla Khan from the Karnatic, Shahaji had succeeded to the government of that province, and having in a short time won popularity and affection from the grateful population both by his conciliatory spirit and consummate statesmanship, as described in the second chapter, he was now half way towards the establishment of an independent sovereignty, under nominal allegiance to the Adil Shahi dynasty. Added to this was the fact that the country which was the scene of Shivaji's incipient activities was one which in quite recent times had owned the practically absolute authority of Shahaji. It was natural under these circumstances that Mahomed Adil Shaha should have jumped to the conclusion that Shahaji was the real author and inspirer of his son's rebellion.

But for a time the Adil Shahi sultan could do nothing more than nurse his suspicion in secret. To declare open hostilities against Shahaji was really

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not in his power; but to despatch a sufficient force against Shivaji was under the circumstances quite as inexpedient. Such an overt act of hostility against his son might possibly precipitate the growing ambition of Shahaji into active defiance, and Shahaji's defiance might, between the Mogul on the north and the rebellious chieftains in the south, jeopardize the very foundations of the Adil Shahi empire. The sultan therefore decided that the only way open to him was to make peaceful overtures to his powerful vassal and pointed out to Shahaji how regrettable it was that the son of a loyal vassal like him should turn traitor, fall upon the sultan's forts all round his jahgir in Poona, and end with the atrocious seizure of Kalyan. He enjoined him in his own interest to see to it that Shivaji was adequately chastised for such rebellious conduct and compelled to give up his marauding career and make submission as became a loyal citizen and vassal of the Adil Shahi state. This injunction culminated in threats of reprisals against Shahaji in person and his son, and a hint that if Shahaji was not able to manage his son, he should hand him over to the Bijapur government.

Shahaji replied that Shivaji was no longer in his power. He was not responsible for his evil ways. He was himself a loyal servant of the state and had no art or part in Shivaji's doings. Should any direct charge be made against him, he would come to the sultan's presence to answer in person. It was open to His Majesty to move his forces against Shivaji, put him under arrest or wreak his royal will in any manner upon him. He would not oppose it. It was for His Majesty to reduce Shivaji to allegiance, and he had nothing more to say on the subject. Such was the tenor of Shahaji's reply, but it brought no conviction to the sultan's distrustful mind. He sent secret despatches to Baji Ghorpade of Mudhol to procure the arrest of Shahaji by stratagem. Only thus he thought he could bend Shivaji to his will.

Such is the traditional account of the cause of Shahaji's incarceration as handed down to posterity by Chitnis and other Marathi chronicles, and as accepted by all leading historians from Grant Duff to Kincaid. But the Jedhe chronology (page 179) says with characteristic brevity that Shahaji was arrested near Jinji, along with the Mavali deshmukh Kanoji Naik Jedhe of Rohida by Mustapha Khan. The Basatin-i-Salatin states that Shahaji was arrested by Baji Ghorpade and Yeshwant Rao Asad-Khani by treachery under orders from Mustapha Khan for disobedience. It would seem from these authorities that the neighbourhood of Jinji was the scene of the arrest and that Mustapha was in authority, and got Baji Ghorpade to arrest Shahaji for non-compliance with his orders. Prof. Jadunath Sarkar quotes a Bijapur chronicle, the *Muhammadnamah* (pp. 371-372) to show that Mustapha was the Adil Shahi commander-in-chief in the south and that Shahaji was in charge of siege-operations around Jinji. Shahaji wanted to retire to his own country

leaving the siege-works incomplete and said he would do so without writing for permission, when Mustapha got him arrested and had him sent to Bijapur. As will be seen from a foot note at page 47 in the second chapter, this version is also followed by Modak in his History of the Adil Shahi Dynasty (Marathi). Modak constantly copies the Basatin-i-Salatin and the Adil Shahi chronicles like the Muhammadnamah. But the Jedhe chronology is an altogether independent piece of evidence. However if Baji Ghorpade acted treacherously upon the orders of Mustapha Khan, it is just possible that the latter acted upon the orders of the sultan.

Whatever the original reason for the arrest of Shahaji might have been, the sultan treated the captive as a hostage for the submission of his son. Naturally, therefore, have the Marathi chronicles represented the whole event in this light. Incidentally it may be remarked that here is presented to us an array of facts that establishes beyond doubt the attitude of Shahaji as regards the movement his great son had entered upon. There is first the presence of Mavali chiefs in Shahaji's camp. There is the fact that at this particular time of his career Shahaji wanted to retire to his country in defiance of orders from his superiors. There is lastly the fact that immediately after his liberation he bound the Jedhe family (Vide Jedhe chronology, pp. 179-180) by solemn oaths to serve Shivaji in all his wars, even against the Mogul and the Adil Shahi armies.

How Ghorpade effected his treacherous object has already been described in the second chapter. Shahaji was brought to Bijapur and enjoined to put a stop to Shivaji's rebellious acts. Other nobles of the court were asked to exhort Shahaji to the same purpose. But to all of them Shahaji returned a reply in the same strain as before. At length the sultan compelled Shahaji to compose in his royal presence an urgent letter to Shivaji, calling upon him to come straightway to Bijapur and make a complete restitution of all forts and territories seized from the government, and apprising him of the forlorn condition to which he had been reduced by Shivaji's disobedience

The receipt of this letter and paternal mandate presented a great dilemma before Shivaji's mind. On the one hand it was unfilial to disobey his father and desert him in the perilous situation in which he found himself. On the other hand obedience to his father's command meant disgrace, forfeiture and surrender. To surrender the hard-won forts and territories, to declare submission and vassalage to the Mahomedan despots of the Deccan, to leave his great designs half-executed were proposals from which his nobler instincts recoiled. And what could he gain in exchange? That, the hatred of which had been the main spring of all his actions, a state of sordid and servile dependence upon the powers of Islam! In this disconsolate frame of mind he

was observed by his wife, Sayibai, who inquiring into the cause and learning the reason, replied to Shivaji's request for advice that it was not for a woman to advise in affairs of such moment, that Shivaji indeed had captains and ministers more qualified to give an opinion, but so far as her home-spun wit as a simple woman went, she thought it nobler to pursue the great design of liberty and independence and freedom of worship. She asked him to act with unshaken faith in Providence; that private affections must give place to political forces; and that Shahaji himself would have applauded such a plan, were he not an exile on foreign soil. This was some re-assurance to Shivaji's perplexed mind. His mother, ministers and officers concurred in this line of reasoning. Strengthened by these re-assurances Shivaji replied to Shahaji's letter that his coming in person to Bijapur would serve no useful purpose and he was not prepared to surrender the conquests he had made. They must follow – the father and the son – the divergent lines of fortune ordained for them by inevitable destiny.

This letter was submitted by Shahaji to the Adil Shahi sultan, with fresh importunities that he might be now set at liberty, and that the sultan might take such action against Shivaji as he deemed proper. But the sultan was not satisfied with these representations of Shahaji and persisted in the belief that Shahaji was the secret instigator of his son's rebellion. He thought that the direst punishment in his power must be inflicted to curb his obstinacy. The sultan ordered a wall to be built with a stone niche just large enough to accommodate a person seated. Shahaji was confined in this niche, which was all but built in, except for a single opening, and he was threatened that even this opening would be permanently closed in with masonry, if Shivaji did not make his submission within a given time. Twice during the day he was released for a few minutes from the niche and again confined in that living tomb.

The news of this horrible punishment inflicted upon his father by the enraged sultan came to Shivaji's ears and filled him with sorrow. The thought that the impending death of his father should be due to his acts was most maddening! His high ambition and enterprise had thus far not provoked any censure from his father, and this he had so long interpreted as a mark of his acquiescence and even of his approval. Inspired by this silent sympathy and approbation, he had zealously carried forward his designs, never dreaming they would lead him to such a tragic issue. For he was sure of the great prestige of his father in the Karnatic and never imagined that he would ever be at the sultan's mercy. The treachery of Ghorpade had led to this unexpected denouement.

It is critical occasions like these that test the mettle of a truly heroic spirit. The crisis brought forth the most eminent qualities of Shivaji's character. His unswerving filial devotion was in the first instance put to a glorious proof. Had he been merely selfish and greedy of power, he might have recked little of the safety of his father. For in the very age in which Shivaji lived, Aurangzeb was soon to exchange a father's love for a throne. Had Shivaji been governed by a similar strain of ambition, why think of voluntarily surrendering a power and sovereignty built up with such patient toil from the debris of an alien empire, merely to rescue his father from his impending fate? But Shivaji was not a man of such sordid ambition. Another great virtue of Shivaji that was tried on this occasion was his iron determination not to leave half done what he had so well begun, for all the dangers and obstacles in his way. His filial duty and affections and his ambitious labours for the political emancipation of his countrymen now seemed to be at cross purposes. One seemed to demand the sacrifice of the other. It was left to Shivaji's statesmanship and resourcefulness to steer straight between Scylla and Charybdis, without the least detriment to his ambition or the pious affection due to his father.

Up to this time Shivaji had maintained the most friendly relations with the Moguls. One obvious reason for this was the fact that it was highly inexpedient to be at war simultaneously with two Mahomedan powers. Besides the provinces on the Mogul frontier were well-secured and fortified. The Mogul emperor himself must have thought fit in the interest of expediency to have friendly relations with Shahaji, of whose valour he had a foretaste, and with his son Shivaji. Lastly Shivaji must have looked upon this power as an asylum in reserve for any extreme emergency.

Apprised of the intentions of the Moguls with regard to the Deccan powers, Shivaji saw that the temper of the Mogul emperor was such that any aid he might solicit against Bijapur would be granted without demur. With this knowledge of the currents of political thought, Shivaji decided to assume a supplicatory attitude towards the padi shah, invoking his patronage and instant aid against the danger Shahaji ran of being immured in the fortress wall, and offering, both for himself and Shahaji, to enter into the Mogul service. Shivaji petitioned that the part Shahaji had formerly played in arresting the onward march of the Mogul standards in the Deccan might be generously forgiven and urged that in saving the life of such a distinguished general the emperor would strengthen the foundations of the Mogul power in the Deccan and could count upon the grateful assistance of Shahaji and himself. Shahajahan had personal proofs of Shahaji's dash and daring and from time to time had heard favourable reports of Shivaji's valorous enterprise. Such towers of strength he thought he could not afford to despise

in his future plans against Bijapur and Golconda. With these views, he graciously complied with Shivaji's request.¹

The Emperor Shahajahan accordingly sent peremptory orders to the Bijapur durbar that the Rajah Shahaji Bhonsle be immediately set at liberty.² Shivaji was informed that the imperial court had forgiven Shahaji's past offences and was prepared to admit him again to military service under the empire, and as to Shivaji himself they were prepared to grant him a mansab or command of 5000 horses. The Adil Shahi sultan dared not despise the peremptory mandate of the Mogul. The tenure of his power was precarious and depended on a recent treaty between himself and the Moguls. In displeasing the latter power, he was sure to incur the gravest risks to his independence. Shahaji was, therefore, released on his giving sureties for his loyalty in the future, but he was ordered to remain at Bijapur as it were on parole.³ This event took place in 1649. For four years thereafter Shahaji remained in enforced inaction at Bijapur. He tried every expedient to get permission to march to the Karnatic, and his friends tried to intercede for him, but the sultan was inexorable. At length after four years when it became obvious that the slackening of government control in the absence of the powerful grip of Shahaji had encouraged all the elements of anarchy and unrest in the province of the Karnatic to come to a head, and it was felt that none but a brave and experienced commander like him could be safely trusted to deal with the rebellious naiks and deshmukhs of the south, he again received orders to march to the scene of his power and greatness. But before

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1. Shivaji did not negotiate directly with the emperor at Agra, but with his son Prince Murad, governor of the Deccan. This is amply borne out by the *Parasnis MS.* and Appendix A at page 149 of Mr. Kincaid's history, where by a strange mistake a letter under the seal of Murad is described as Shahajahan's letter to Shahaji. From one of the letters of the Mogul authorities it is clear that Shivaji sent Ragho Pandit (probably Raghunath Ballal Korde) to treat about the restoration of the deshmukh rights over Junnar and Sangamner which had been formerly granted to Shahaji (Vide note on page 27, Chapter II).
 2. Prof. Sarkar thinks that notwithstanding these Mogul promises the Mogul government did not probably in the end actually intercede for Shahaji.
 3. Some of the bakhars attribute the credit of Shahaji's deliverance to the intercessory aid of his friends Randulla Khan and Murarpant. It is said that these veteran ministers represented to the sultan that the cruel execution of such a tried and experienced commander would redound to the discredit of the state and cause disaffection among the sultan's vassals. There is no ground to believe such a story, for both these ministers seem to have been dead by this time. The tradition of the strange device by which Randulla Khan attempted to intercede for his friend is referred to in a foot-note in the second chapter. Prof. Jadunath Sarkar is inclined to think that Malhar Ramrao Chitnis is right when he ascribes the release of Shahaji to the mediation of Randulla Khan.

proceeding southwards he was compelled to pledge his word that he would in no way molest the treacherous Ghorpade of Mudhol or his jahgir. The sultan did not content himself with this promise; but further to reconcile them to each other and induce them to let bygones be bygones, he got them to make an exchange of their inam and jahgir lands. In accordance with the terms of this exchange, the Ghorpade gave to Shahaji all his jahgir in the Karnatic and received from him all his rights and titles in the district of Karhad.

But Shahaji did not bury the past in oblivion. No sooner did he reach the Karnatic than he sent word to Shivaji that as a true son of Shahaji it was left to him to wreak vengeance on Baji Ghorpade. In fact this was an unnecessary spur to a willing horse. Shivaji hated the Ghorpade with more than a mortal hate and was only waiting for an opportunity to avenge on him his dastardly conduct towards his father. But he had to wait for nearly eight or nine years for this consummation of his wishes. About 1661, the chiefs of Sawantwadi, Khem Sawant Desai and Lakham Sawant Desai, called for the help of Bijapur against Shivaji, and upon that occasion the services of Baji Ghorpade were lent to them by the Bijapur government. Ghorpade marched from Bijapur into the Konkan at the head of his forces, but before descending to the sea-board he paid a visit to his jahgir town of Mudhol. No sooner did Shivaji hear tidings of these movements of Baji Ghorpade than he swooped down from Vishalgad and by forced marches suddenly presented himself before Mudhol. A desperate encounter took place between Shivaji's and Ghorpade's forces and in the melee Ghorpade was slain. Mudhol was laid waste with fire and sword. All the kith and kin of Ghorpade perished or were seized and executed. The massacre is said to have reached three thousand.⁴ Never before or since did such cruelty stain Shivaji's wars. Savage as the punishment meted to the Ghorpade family was, it illustrates the price Shivaji considered must be paid for the treachery which had all but extinguished before its time the glorious career of Shahaji. It illustrates above all his keen sense of filial duty.⁵

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4. A son of Baji Ghorpade, named Maloji, managed to make his escape during this crisis. This Maloji afterwards rose to great eminence and succeeded to the paternal jahgir. At a subsequent date Shivaji attempted to conciliate him and in a letter addressed from Bhaganagar. (Hyderabad) made overtures to him to unite with the Bhonsle power and jointly turn the scale against the Mahomedans. But Maloji remained obdurate and to the end served his Adilshahi sultan.
 5. From a letter of Shivaji to his father (Vide Kincaid vol. 1, page178), it would seem that the latter gave a clear mandate for vengeance against Baji Ghorpade. It was Shahaji himself who informed Shivaji about the proposed movement of Baji Ghorpade to carry succour to Lakham Sawant and Khem Sawant of Wadi.

During the period of five years, 1649 to 1653, when Shahaji was at Bijapur on parole, Shivaji abstained strictly from any act of hostility against Bijapur. Nor was it possible for him to take the offensive against the Moguls, whose friendship had so recently stood him in such good stead, and an estrangement with whom was again likely to endanger the life of Shahaji. He had indeed to congratulate himself that the Bijapur Government was so far cowed by the threat of Mogul intervention that they did not insist on his surrendering the conquered forts and provinces as they might have done by fresh threats to Shahaji, who, while he lived on parole at Bijapur, had constantly this sword of Damocles hanging over his head. Shivaji turned this period of enforced quietude to good account, overhauling the conquered fortresses and completing the revenue settlements in his new provinces. The Bijapur government seems at this period to have been under the impression that any further protests against Shivaji would directly have the effect of making him throw in his lot with the Moguls and with their active support or connivance renew his depredations upon their territory on a still more extended scale.
