



THE LIFE OF SHIVAJI MAHARAJ FOUNDER OF THE MARATHA EMPIRE

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Chapter 14

Re-union of Father and Son

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It goes without saying that no person could have been in greater ecstasy at Shivaji's successive triumphs and the crowning glory of the peace that made Bijapur a tributary to a vassal's son than his father Shahaji. He was naturally most anxious to meet again a son whose valour and good fortune had well-nigh proved invincible. Frequent correspondence passed between father and son, the one reporting in brief the events as they developed one after another, the other exhorting and felicitating him on his victories. But the correspondence was most guarded. Shahaji had no desire to have it disclosed that he had any part in Shivaji's affairs. Such a disclosure in his opinion would have been prejudicial, nay fatal, to his far reaching designs in the Karnatic. He had already had experience of the mistrustfulness of the Bijapur durbar. It was only when peace was made between Shivaji and Bijapur that he applied for leave to pay a short visit to Maharashtra, ostensibly to visit the old shrines and temples and perform the traditional rites and ceremonies. He exerted private influence on the durbar to have this request granted. In sanctioning his application for furlough the durbar wrote to him in reply that now that he was returning home, he ought to persuade his unmanageable son to be obedient to the central power and bring him to pay his respects to the sultan. He should become a noble or omrah of the court. If he presented himself at the durbar, they would be but too eager to give him the grand viziership of the kingdom. At any sacrifice Shahaji ought to use his diplomacy

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to make Shivaji a willing feudal lord under Bijapur. To this Shahaji replied that the durbar already knew well enough how little Shivaji cared for the parental authority, but he would do his best to advance his chief's fortunes. After his vows to his guardian deities had been discharged, he would call upon Shivaji and give him good counsel. Shahaji received a reply exhorting him to try his best to persuade Shivaji. Should he, however, persist in keeping aloof from the Bijapur influence, Shahaji was exhorted that he at any rate should not make common cause with him. He was asked to return to his sovereign's service, unaffected by the ties of a parent's love.

Under such circumstances Shahaji left the Karnatic to visit once more his native land after a long term of absence from home. He was accompanied by his second wife and the son she had borne him, Venkoji. Shivaji was apprised of his father's coming home again with the permission of his sovereign.

On reaching the shrine of Tuljapur Shahaji attended the temple of Bhavani to discharge his vows. Large sums of money were distributed in charity. It is said that Shahaji had made a vow to the deity of Tuljapur that if his son's noble enterprise for the establishment of religious and civil liberty among his countrymen were by the deity's blessing to be crowned with success he would adorn the temple with votive images and offerings to the value of a lakh of rupees. The events of Shivaji's career had turned out so auspiciously that Shahaji had now come with the greatest eagerness to make good his vows. He had statuettes in gold cast by the artists of the Karnatic which he now dedicated to the goddess. Shahaji visited several other holy places, among others the temple of Mahadev at Shingnapur and the Vithoba of Pandharpur. At every holy place, Shahaji performed acts of charity including the banqueting of learned Brahmans and alms to the poor.

On the arrival of his father within the limits of his kingdom, Shivaji appointed officers to provide for his comfort at every halt. If Shahaji was so eager to clasp in his arms his glorious son, Shivaji was no less eager to welcome his beloved father. To Jijabai indeed it was a great occasion. The reunion between wife and husband, father and son, which after such a prolonged absence was now under the auspices of the gods to take place, was arranged by consultation with the Brahmans to take place in a temple. The celebrated temple of Jejuri was selected for the function. The cavalcades of father and son were to approach this place at an appointed hour. On the arrival of the Rajah Shahaji in the neighbourhood of Jejuri. Shivaji sent forward his commander-in-chief accompanied by foot soldiers, cavalry and elephants to greet and receive him in the name of Shivaji, while the Maharajah himself waited at Jejuri. Amid strains of music and jubilation on the part of the

multitude Shahaji advanced escorted by the procession that had gone forth to receive and lead him to the temple. The sacred rites performed, Shahaji went through a quaint Hindu solemnity of renewing old love with relations meeting together after a prolonged separation. A large basin of bronze was brought filled with clarified butter, and the long lost relations had their first sight of each other silently and simultaneously in the reflection of their faces mirrored on the surface of the liquefied *ghee*. The persons to whom Shahaji was thus introduced in the quaint forms of the family reunion ceremony prescribed by Hindu tradition, were his wife Jijabai, his son Shivaji and Shivaji's two wives. After this solemnity, Shivaji saluted his father prostrating himself at Shahaji's feet, who raised him up with great emotion and clasped him in a loving embrace. The tears started to their eyes with joy and gratitude. Shahaji was then taken in a palanquin to Shivaji's camp, Shivaji walking bare-footed by his side and holding his father's slippers in his hands. On arrival Shahaji was seated on the divan, while Shivaji stood before him with his father's slippers still in his hands in a reverent attitude and addressed him somewhat in the following strain: "I have transgressed your precepts and made war upon Bijapur. This has brought your life time and again in jeopardy. It was most gross and improper that a son's misdeeds should recoil upon his father. The son now pleads guilty to the charge and now that he has repented of his misbehaviour he offers himself for any punishment at the hands of his injured father." These words stirred tumultuous feelings in Shahaji's breast and drew tears from his eyes. He embraced his heroic son and seated him next to him, not without much resistance and made reply in the following terms: "Your deeds, indeed, are no misdeeds, but such as may be expected of a scion of the Sesodia line of warriors. I am proud and gratified to behold the record of valorous deeds by which you have vindicated and established the civil and religious liberty of our countrymen. You have fulfilled the family tradition that there should be born in our house a ruler who was destined to inaugurate a new era and restore the Hindu liberties and religion. Your valour and wisdom have revived the glories of our historic house. What greater happiness in heaven or on earth than to have been the father of such a glorious son?" At these words of praise and encouragement Shivaji acknowledged his thanks by again bowing down reverently at his father's feet, exclaiming that his was the glory and the praise if any meritorious deeds had emanated from so humble an instrument as himself. Shahaji's good wishes and paternal blessings had wafted him onward to victory and the little success he had achieved was entirely to be credited to his account.

When the interchange of loving greetings and confidences had lasted some time, Shivaji introduced to his father the officers and dignitaries of his kingdom. Then he saluted his step-mother Tukabai with affection and

reverence and embraced his step-brother, Venkoji. Shivaji was then introduced to his father's officers. Everyone was gratified at the filial piety of their chief towards his father. Unstinted eulogies of father and son were heard on all sides. In honour of the joyful event, Shivaji made liberal largesses to the poor and banqueted the Brahmins. Joy beamed in every countenance.

The camp was then moved to Poona, where Shahaji stayed for two months.¹ Shivaji treated his father's attendants and followers with royal hospitality. He personally superintended the arrangements for Shahaji's comfort. Shivaji made a full recital to his father of the civil and military arrangements he had made in his principality, and while his father was under his roof he transacted no state business without consulting him. Nay, all was done in Shahaji's name while he remained in his son's territory. Shahaji's gratification knew no bounds at these marks of honour and affection. Who could have expected such humility and filial obedience in one who had practically been the architect of his own fortune? Shivaji showed him all his treasures. Shahaji was astonished at the vast accumulation of treasure and precious stones which he had got together in so short a time — treasure, indeed, which might have done honour to the ruler of a world empire.

Shahaji had brought with him from the Karnatic some swords of exquisite workmanship, which he presented to Shivaji, and as a special mark of his esteem and satisfaction he gave to Shivaji a be-jewelled sword which he himself usually carried. Shivaji received it with reverence and gratitude, and as having been hitherto wielded by his victorious father he gave it the name of the 'Tulja' sword and kept it with great reverence side by side with his sword Bhawani. In normal times these swords were the objects of certain acts of

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1. We have followed the traditional account of Shahaji's visit to his son at Poona in 1662. However according to the Jedhe Chronology, Shaista Khan had already captured Chakan and taken possession of Poona by October (or November) 1660. Prof. Sarkar, basing his conclusion on the Persian chronicles states that Chakan was captured by the Moguls in August 1660, and soon afterwards Shaista Khan returned to Poona. As the city of Poona was occupied by the Moguls at least till April 1663 (Jedhe Chronology pp. 186), we have to conclude *either* that Shahaji's visit to Shivaji was paid at some other place than Poona, or that it took place, as it seems more probable, after the retreat of Shaista Khan, in the middle of 1663. The trend of thought in the chronicles is to the effect that Shahaji paid his visit before Shaista Khan's occupation and this is accepted by nearly all historians. But the statements in the Jedhe Chronology and the Alamgir Namah, which Prof. Sarkar relies upon, are in favour of the view that Shaista Khan began his offensive almost about the same time that Shivaji was besieged at Panhala by Sidi Johar. Khafi Khan gives no date as to the occupation of Poona by Shaista Khan, but states that he marched from Aurangabad towards Poona and Chakan about the end of January 1660 (Vide Elliot, VII, p. 201).

worship at the hands of Shivaji, a superstitious belief which was much in fashion with Indian soldiers of all ranks.

During these days Shivaji spent all his time in the performance of filial offices. No great events or campaigns requiring him to turn aside from these filial duties were entered upon during this period. Shivaji attended not only upon his father but also upon his step-mother, Tukabai, towards whom he made no difference in his affection or behaviour from what he observed towards Jijabai. The same evidence of zeal and service he showed in his relations with his brother, Vyankoji.

After some days Shivaji requested his father to inspect his principal fortresses and give him the benefit of his opinion upon their equipment. Shahaji made the tour of inspection in Shivaji's company, the latter describing the circumstances under which each fort was captured and noting the suggestions made by Shahaji, with his wide experience of the art of fortification. Shahaji was taken to Pratapgad and shown over the fort, the temple of Bhawani, and the tower or *buruz* commemorating the death of Afzul Khan. Shahaji now learnt in detail the stratagems pursued at that crisis culminating in the great tragedy. The officers in charge of the different forts, and the leading nobility of every district that was visited were introduced to Shahaji throughout the tour.

When at last they came to the fort of Panhala, Shahaji signified his intention to return to the Karnatic. Shivaji requested him to reconsider his decision and spend the close of his life in his mother-land, superintending the affairs of his kingdom there. Shahaji pointed out in reply that were he to yield to the dictates of his family affections he would have to give up the fortune he had acquired in the Karnatic. Another weighty argument in favour of his departure, said Shahaji, was that his occupation of the Karnatic might be of service to Shivaji in carrying forward his higher ambitions, the ultimate goal of which was to expand his power over the entire Indian continent and expel the heresy of Islam. Shivaji listened to these reasons and abandoned his importunity and began to prepare for his father's impending departure. There was another round of banquets and entertainments at Panhala in honour of the departing guests. Magnificent presents were exchanged with Shahaji's followers. His chief officer, Trimbak Narayan Hanmante, was presented with an embroidered suit, gifts of jewellery and a sword and shield. Shahaji himself and his second wife and son received costly offerings befitting their rank. A large force of cavalry and elephants was got ready to attend them on the way.

The final farewell was most sad and pathetic. Shivaji was sincerely affected at the prospect of his father's old age being spent in the service of an ungrateful court, and quite convinced as he was of the essential degradation

and unhappiness of such a position, he desired nothing better than that his father should spend the ripe years of his old age in the tranquil calm of his native country and amid his kindred. But Shahaji's firm decision and the grounds he had mentioned for it had disarmed him of every argument. The final moment, however, overwhelmed him with grief and he exhorted Shahaji's officers, again and again, to take care of the aged veteran assuring them that he would reward them for their painstaking zeal, as he soon expected to return Shahaji's visit.

Tradition affirms that Shivaji entered into an undertaking with his old father not to enter on any further warlike operations against Bijapur during the rest of Shahaji's life. Shahaji first reported himself at Bijapur and at a private conference with the sultan made over to him the jewellery, horses, and elephants which in reality Shivaji had presented to his father, but which Shahaji, averred were sent by his son as a nazar or state present to the Adil Shahi durbar. He also announced that he had effected his mission with Shivaji and with these assurances he took himself to the Karnatic.

Shahaji did not live long after his return to the Karnatic, and this was the last meeting between father and son. The tragic circumstances of his death have already been described in the second chapter. The news of the tragic event filled Shivaji's heart with sorrow. His one protector was gone, he exclaimed, by whose silent support and approbation he had been nerved to defy his Mahomedan foes. The pride and satisfaction of a loving parent at the exploits of his son, which are such inestimable spurs to noble action and enterprise, were lost to him for ever. And thus he grieved. Jijabai was more disconsolate still. Her grief it was impossible to calm or restrain. She prepared to perform the rite of *sati*, with the devotion of a faithful *Kshatriya* wife. This resolution of his mother aggravated Shivaji's sorrow. He begged her, besought her, held fast to her feet, but she would not yield. The ministers of state, Moropant, Niraji, Dattaji and others at length intervened representing to Jijabai that Shivaji would so much take to heart her self-immolation by the act of *sati* as scarcely to outlive her death and the empire he had built up by long years of labour was sure to collapse with his death. The name of Shivaji and together with it that of Shahaji would both alike be extinguished with her death. It was, therefore, imperative in the interests of the state that she should bear her grief in silence and patience instead of yielding to the impulsive thought of sacrificing herself on her husband's funeral pyre. This weighty argument shook her resolution. In order that she might witness the glory of her son she consented to live a widowed life.

Shivaji performed his father's funeral rites in the orthodox Hindu fashion, spending lakhs of rupees that the hero's shade might rest in peace.

Shivaji erected a monumental tomb in honour of his father at the town of Bandekir where he died.² For the upkeep of the monument and the celebration of periodic festivals in honour of the event Shivaji appointed officers, ceding the revenues of certain villages, which he purchased for the purpose from the Bijapur durbar, to meet the recurring expenses.

2. Different variations of this name are found in the different authorities, viz. Bedikare, Bedgiri and Bandgiri. Vide foot-note at the end of the second chapter. It was also called Basavpattam, a town captured by the Adil Shahi state, perhaps with the help of Shahaji, in 1639, (Vide: Jodhe Chronology, p. 178).