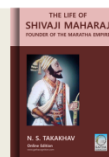




THE LIFE OF SHIVAJI MAHARAJ FOUNDER OF THE MARATHA EMPIRE

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Chapter - 1

Ancestry

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Introduction

Shivaji Maharaj, the illustrious founder of the Maratha Power, derived his descent from the renowned Bhonsle family. This noble Maratha house claimed an ancient Kshatriya origin. It is said that the family was transferred to the uplands of Maharashtra by a Rajput warrior, Devraj Maharana by name. The family tradition tells a long tale of chequered adventures and vicissitudes. In what is now known as the modern province of Oudh, there ruled for centuries the ancient princes of the royal Sesodia family. They claimed descent from the mythical Solar Race, which along with the Lunar Race comprises the genealogy of every Kshatriya family in the land. One of these Sesodia princes crossed the Narbada and became the founder of an independent principality on its southern banks. The fortunes of this family were, however, destined to wane before the rising glory of the famous Shalivan, who inaugurated a new Hindu era, which is still current south of the Narbada. The ruling Bhonsle prince of the time was defeated and his kingdom annexed. At this crisis the afflicted queen of the prince escaped with her young son of five or six years across the Narbada and sought shelter in the inhospitable regions of Mewar in the vicinity of the Vindhya Mountains. There she found an asylum in a poor Brahman family, her son keeping the Brahman's kine. Once while out engaged on his cow-herd duties the boy

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discovered a hidden treasure. This he disclosed to his patron and acquainted him with the story of his origin and fall. The Brahman listened with sympathy and encouraged and exhorted him to endeavour to recover his royal power, giving him to that end every assistance within his means. It was a mountainous region in the possession of the Bhils, with whom they had to fight. When the conquest of the country was completed, they erected a fort upon those mountain heights under the shadow of a temple of the goddess Bhawani. This fort they named Chitrakote. They restored the ancient temple of Bhawani and built another within the fort in honour of Eklingji Shiv. The descendants of this prince are said to have reigned at Chitrakote for about five hundred years. This fort of Chitrakote became afterwards famous in history as the fort of Chitore.

They followed the establishment of Mahomedan power at Delhi, and the interminable wars between the Mahomedan emperors and the Rajput princes. Many Hindu kings had to acknowledge defeat and become vassals of the Mahomedan emperors. These rulers carried on constant wars with the Rajput state of Chitore, but with little success to boast of. The Chitore princes defended their kingdom and independence very bravely. About 1275, the Maharana Lakshman Singh succeeded to the throne of Chitore. The affairs of the administration were in the charge of his uncle, Bhim Singh. This Bhim Singh had for his consort one of the greatest beauties in the land, Rani Padmini¹. This princess is said to have come from Ceylon. Her great reputation for beauty reached the ears of Allauddin Khilji, the emperor of Delhi, who conceived an unholy passion for her. With an immense army he advanced upon Chitore and laid siege to the fort. The Rajputs fought with the valour for which they are famous; they beat back the enemy in all their advances, but still Allauddin would not raise the siege. He had invested the fortress on all sides with very powerful forces. The garrison had now exhausted all their resources. Driven to desperation the Rajput king resolved at the head of his whole army to make a sudden sortie upon the enemy and meet a warrior's death on the field of battle. All the Rajputs to a man applauded the plan. But surely it was not desirable that the whole race of the Sesodias should be extirpated from the earth, and must be found to perpetuate it. The king had twelve sons. They all vied with each other in the desire to sacrifice their lives upon the battle-field. But the second prince Ajay Singh was the special favourite of his royal father. The Raja explained to him, how undesirable it was that his royal race should be totally extinguished and

1. Some chronicles describe the Rani Padmini as the wife of the JS Maharana Lakshman Singh.

commanded him to betake himself to an inaccessible part of the Aravalli Mountains, known as Kailwada, and save himself. This advice was by no means palatable to a prince of the courage of Ajay Singh. But overcome by the urgent entreaties of his father he was obliged to acquiesce in this plan, and according to his father's wishes escaped to Kailwada². Thereupon at Chitore, the Raja with his followers and kinsmen dashed forth upon the enemy, and nearly fourteen hundred of them were cut to pieces. The fort fell into the hands of the Mahomedans. The whole place was pillaged and plundered; not even the royal insignia were saved; the gigantic war-drum and the massive gates composed of an ingenious amalgam of five metals, celebrated throughout the land, fell into the hands of the enemy.

When, as related above, Ajay Singh made his escape, he took with him Humbir Singh, the minor son of his eldest brother. He then rallied the remnants of his people and again formed a fairly large principality. As Humbir Singh grew in years he proved himself a brave and capable leader. Ajay Singh was a man of a very pious disposition and loved his nephew with a father's love. He crowned him king of his forefathers' realm and himself took charge of the administration. They built the fortress of Rajnagar and made it their capital. For they had sworn not to return to Chitore until they had retrieved from the enemy the royal drum and insignia. Until they had curbed the insolent pride of those hostile bands who had decimated their race and desecrated the capital of their hereditary kingdom, they were resolved not to carry their war-standards before them, and to deny to themselves the luxury of plate and couches, and not even to trim their beards. This hatred of Islam they transmitted to their posterity. They made new conquests; they built new forts and consolidated their power; and at last with Udaipur as their capital, they established their independence.

On the demise of Ajay Singh, his son Sajan Singh thought it unwise to quarrel with his cousin for a partition of territory, and considered it more glorious to win new realms for himself. With this design, this brave prince advanced southwards. The territory of Sondhwad was conquered by him, and there he made his capital. Among his descendants we read the names of Dilip Singhji Maharana, Singhji Maharana, Bhosaji Maharana, and Devrajji Maharana in succession. All these constantly fought with the Mahomedans and preserved their kingdom. But at length Devrajji, quite exhausted with the frequency of the Mahomedan invasions, gave up his kingdom, and coming down to the south maintained a precarious independence as a *polygar* in the

2. Chitnis's chronicle gives a different version to the effect that at Lakshman Singh's desperate sally his queen escaped to the Bhil country with two princes, who subsequently propagated the race.

valleys of the Krishna and the Bhima. On coming to the Deccan he changed Bhonsle. His object was, if possible, to lay the foundations of a new sovereignty in this land. But the Mahomedans carried everything before them and his high ambition was not destined to be realized. At last he had to content himself with the Patelship of Singnapur.

His descendants afterwards obtained by purchase the Patelships of various places, such as, Khanwat, Hingnsi Begdi, Dewalgaon, Verul, Vavi, Mungi, etc. In the line of direct descent from Devrajji we have Indrasen, Shubhkrishnaji, Rupsinghji, Bhumindrajji, Dhapji Barhatji³, Khalaji⁴ alias Khalkarn, Karnasinghji alias Jayakarn, Sambhaji and Babaji alias Shivaji. The last named Babaji was born in 1533⁵. Babaji was a man of piety and character. He had two sons, Maloji and Vithoji. Maloji was born in 1550 and Vithoji in 1553. They were both men of ability and character. When they came to years of discretion and began to look after their estates they had many land disputes with the agriculturists of Dewalgaon. They, therefore, came and settled at Verul (Ellora), near Dowlatabad. But agriculture is at best an “arida nutrix,” and gives little scope for the free play of genius. They began to look out for an employment which might better develop their virtue and talents. This they found by enlisting themselves in the service of Likhji Jadhav of Sindhkhed in the humble ranks of the “bargir” infantry. Likhji Jadhav, a scion of the Devgiri, was Deshmukh of Sindhkhed. Under the Nizami Dynasty of Ahmednagar he held a *mansab* or command of 12,000 horses and he had a *jahgir* made over to him for the maintenance of his forces. He had great influence in the councils of the Nizami Government, and there were indeed very few generals in that state who could compare with him in bravery and

3. Chitnis gives the name as Barbatji.

4. Elsewhere given as Kheloji.

5. This genealogy chiefly follows the account in Chitnis's Bakhar or Chronicle history. It agrees in all particulars with the genealogy prepared by the Rajah Pratapsinh of Satara. The latter has been printed and published at Kolhapur under the auspices of the Maharajah of that state. Col. Tod in his History of Rajasthan refers to a genealogy of Shivaji which he had obtained from the Bhats or troubadours of Mewar. This genealogy agrees generally with the one followed in the text with a few variations. While referring to the above mentioned genealogy Col. Tod remarks that it was reserved for the house of Sajan Singh eventually to produce a hero, who would overthrow the Mahomedan powers, and that this was realized by Shivaji, the founder of the Satara dynasty. It may be remarked that many discrepancies and variations from the story followed in the text are to be found in other *Bakhars* or chronicle histories, as for instance in the famous bakhar of Shivaji called the Shivadigvijaya or Triumph of Shivaji. This is not to be marvelled at, as many of these bakhars contain various traditional tales indifferently strung together. Mr. Keluskar in his original note gives the variant versions of other chronicles. The name “*Bhonsle*” is derived by most chroniclers from “*Bhosi*” or “*Bhosavant*”, a fortress near Chitore. Khafi Khan gives some legends about the meaning of “*Bhonsla*” (Vide Elliot VII, 255).

power. Jadhavrao was delighted to welcome Maloji and Vithoji into his service, offered them a salary of five *hons* (pagodas) each, and ordained that they should keep him company at table.

The Career of Maloji

Maloji was strong and burly in figure, so that few horses could bear his weight on a prolonged excursion. He was therefore chosen to mount sentry at the outposts. With his talents and brilliant parts he soon won the favour of Jadhavrao, who introduced him to Murtezashaha Nizam and recommended him to the royal favour as a man of integrity and honour. The Sultan was pleased with him and retained him as a “shiledar” or cavalry officer in his service. Henceforth Maloji served the Nizam at the head of his own foot and horse, but seems to have still remained a dependent of Jadhavrao.

Maloji was married to Dipabai, the sister of Jagpalrao Nimbalkar, the Deshmukh of Phaltan. After his admission into the Sultan’s army his rise was rapid. His brother, Vithoji, had also been promoted to the position of *Shiledar*. Vithoji had eight sons but Maloji as yet had no children. This was a source of great affliction to his wife Dipabai. True to Hindu sentiments the pious pair made endless vows to the gods and practised many a rite of religious merit that their home might be blessed with children. At length he made a vow at a celebrated shrine at Nagar, that of the Pir Shaha Sharif. Every Thursday Maloji used to give alms and doles to *fakirs*. This he practised continually for six months. At last Dipabai had the good fortune to get her heart’s desire, being delivered of a son in 1594. Deeming the birth of the child as an act of benefaction on the part of the Pir, Maloji named the child, after the Pir, Shahaji. After some time he had a second son, whom he named Sharifji.

Shahaji was a handsome boy, and with his sprightly ways, no less than with his sweet childish prattle and precocity, he made a most favourable impression upon all people. There was a peculiar charm in his manners, gait, and voice. Jadhavrao conceived a great fondness for the boy. He often took him home, decked him with clothes of various styles and embroideries, and indulged him in all his boyish whims. Now Jadhav had an only daughter two or three years of age, with whom Shahaji used to play and romp for hours. Thus the two grew up together, playmates and companions almost from their cradles. Thus Shahaji grew to five years of age; and now once it happened that Jadhav was celebrating the Hindu festival of the *Shimga*. On the day of the *Rang-Panchami*, he had invited all his friends and relatives to his house. Among those who had received the invitation was Maloji. He attended the social function, which was a kind of durbar, with his son. Jadhavrao called the youngster towards him and seated him on his lap. Soon after his daughter,

Jija, came running from the inner apartments of the house and sat down on the other knee of her father. Both the children were so pretty and handsome and equally matched in age, that it was nothing strange that Jadhav addressing the young girl asked her in jest whether she would have the boy for her husband and, turning to the company, exclaimed that they would be a proper pair indeed! Scarcely had he spoken when the children, snatching handfuls of the red powder which was standing near in a plate, began to throw it upon each other. The company present was much amused at this display of childish fun and spirits and laughed outright exclaiming that they were indeed a pretty match. At this, Maloji and Vithoji stood up, and, “Listen, gentlemen,” they exclaimed, “from this day, Jadhavrao and ourselves have become related by betrothal. Jija is now our daughter-in-law. You have just heard what Jadhavrao has said. His resolution is made. Great men never recede from a declaration made in public.” Thus calling all the company to bear witness to what had occurred, they sat down. The spectators assented. Jadhavrao was astonished at this scene. He had never imagined that any one would place such a construction upon words uttered in jest. But he made no reply.

The next day Jadhavrao invited his friends to dinner. Maloji also was invited. But he in return replied in these terms: “We are now to be related by the marriage of our children; the wedding will be the proper time for us now to feast together; kindly do not invite us till then.” When Jadhavrao’s wife, Mhalsabai, came to learn of these proceedings, she resented this impertinence of Maloji. That a common *Shiledar* like Maloji should dream of a marriage alliance into the house of a rich mansabdar of the rank of Jadhav was in her eyes the height of folly and insolence. Mhalsabai remonstrated with her husband for his unguarded words in the assembly. “It was wrong of you,” she exclaimed, “to have uttered those words; more wrong still not to have replied when Maloji stood up and spoke. Maloji is a dependent of ours. It will never do to give our daughter into his house. What will the world say, if we pass over eligible youths from the houses of the Mahadiks, the Shirkes, the Nimbalkars, our equals in rank and wealth—Mansabdars and Deshmukhs —, and stoop so low as this house of Maloji? Yes! what will the world say?” Thus she fumed in spite of all the efforts of Jadhavrao to console her. “I spoke in jest,” he declared, “I don’t think I am any way bound in honour.” Then he sent a peremptory message to Maloji: “A truce to this talk of a marriage union! Our people cannot entertain it. What I spoke before the assembly was merely in jest. It is preposterous to construe it into a solemn declaration. Do accept the invitation. The gods alone know the future.” Maloji retorted upon this, “A pronouncement made in presence of so numerous a company — how could it be void? We claim an affiance with your house.” Jadhavrao was very angry at this insolent reply. After the feast he summoned his clerk to him and

ordered him to make up the accounts of Maloji and Vithoji, pay up the arrears due to them, and discharge them immediately from his service, with notice to quit his territory at once, bag and baggage.

Thus the two brothers now lost the high positions of command so nobly earned and were forced to return to their paternal homestead at Verul, again to become farm hinds and till the land.

This was a great insult to the haughty spirit of Maloji. He felt the degradation all the more keenly, because he saw that Jadhavrao had dared to treat him thus only because he was a dependent without wealth and rank; and he now firmly resolved to make every effort to retrieve his fortune. This now became the one desire of his life and he dedicated his nights and days to the realization of his lofty aim. To a man of his spirit and character death itself seemed better than the ignominious repudiation by Jadhav of what he considered a solemn avowal of betrothal in the presence of the assembled chiefs and nobles, the elite of Maratha society. The sense of dishonour rankled in his heart. In this agitated and disconsolate frame of mind, the two brothers went out one night to watch their crops. It was the full moon night in the month of *Magh*. They kept watch by turns. At first Vithoji went to sleep while Maloji remained watching. There was an ant-hill at the spot where he had stationed himself. After a little while, he saw a bright and lustrous hand like that of the goddess Bhawani, bejewelled with armlets of gold, coming out of the ant-hill and beckoning to him, and after waving once or twice it vanished out of sight. Maloji awakened his brother and described to him the vision he had just seen. "It is all an illusion," cried Vithoji, and he undertook to watch himself and asked Maloji to sleep. Now as soon as he was asleep he had a wondrous dream. He saw in his dream the goddess Bhawani standing before him, draped in silver white, with the red powder mark on her brows, and decked with the richest jewels. He thought she stroked him on the back and awoke him, and addressed him in these terms: "Behold, oh mortal, I have of mine own accord become propitious and lavish my favours on thee. The snake thou wilt find haunting this ant-hill is nought but my divine self in another guise. Be it thine to salute the snake and dig up the ant-hill ; and take thou the gold thou shalt find therein, but harm not the reptile, for it shall go its way. Twenty-seven of thy descendants in the direct line shall reign in the land!" Maloji awoke from his dream and described the marvellous vision to Vithoji. The two brothers now resolved to test the truth of the wonderful prophecy and began to dig the ant-hill. They found in it a great quantity of gold and

precious gems. They brought it home and buried it safely, in the yard behind their house⁶.

This unexpected windfall gave a new stimulus to Maloji's energies. He caused a rumour to be circulated among the people that the goddess Bhawani had been pleased to be specially propitious to him and had put him in possession of an untold amount of gold, and had given her divine promise that there would be born in their house an invincible hero, who would inaugurate a new era in the land. They then deposited their money at the house of a great banker at Shrigonde, Shesava Naik Pande by name. They had an old family connection with Shesava. With his help Maloji purchased, a thousand horses and enlisted many *bargirs* and *shiledars* in his service. From the beginning he had been known for his piety, and this new accession of wealth which he attributed to divine favour only served to accentuate his natural predilection for religion. He resolved to devote a great part of his acquisitions to objects of benevolence. He made bountiful presents to deserving Brahmans upon the farm which had been the scene of the discovery of his treasure, and he erected a beautiful temple upon the site of the ant-hill. There is in the Satara District the famous hill of Shambhu Mahadev. On the top of this mountain there used to be held every year a great religious fair in the month of *Chaitra*. No less than 500,000 persons used to gather at the fair at this time, but they suffered from a great scarcity of water. The devout pilgrims had to provide themselves with water from a distance of over five or six miles. With a view to mitigate this grievance, Maloji built a great reservoir of water upon a suitable site. He spent freely upon this work. On the completion of the reservoir, he gave a great feast to Brahmans and liberal alms to *fakirs*; he also erected some *dharmshalas* at this place. He restored the dilapidated temple of Krishna at Verul and built a reservoir near that town. In the same way he built tanks, wells, etc. at different places and spent much in charity at the various shrines.

By the performance of these and other similar acts of religious merit so congenial to the sentiments of orthodox Hinduism, Maloji earned a great reputation for wealth and munificence. He now commenced to put into practice the great scheme of his life. It has already been mentioned how he had begun to maintain a cavalry force of ten to twelve hundred retainers. He went on adding to his retinue, and when he found himself well established he renewed his demand for the daughter of Jadhav. But Jadhav would not upon any terms consent to this proposal, which he could only regard in the light of a

6. Grant Duff thinks that Maloji must have acquired his riches by plunder. But the imputation is quite gratuitous. It was nothing strange in those exciting and revolutionary times to discover a hidden treasure, and it was the common practice to bury precious things underground as the only effectual way of saving them from the hands of the spoilers.

misalliance. Maloji now began harrying the territory under Jadhav's military control and opened communications with the Nimbalkars to the effect that they should co-operate with him with a reinforcement of two thousand horses and curb the insolence of family pride which had caused Jadhav to break his promise. These negotiations proved successful and Maloji now concerted a systematic war of invasion and depredation upon Jadhav's *jahgir*. But nothing that Maloji could do to molest him would make Jadhav swerve from his decision. Then Maloji had recourse to a strange stratagem. At the head of the cavalry force of the Nimbalkars, Maloji and Vithoji marched up to Shrigonde. Leaving behind them their heavy baggage and artillery at this place, they poured down the pass of Nimbdevara and crossed the Godavari past the village of Nevase. There they killed a couple of pigs and threw the carcasses into the mosque at Dowlatabad, having previously tied round their necks letters enclosing a petition to the Nizam Shahi Sultan of Ahmednagar. The petition recited the grounds of these disturbances, how Jadhavrao had forsworn himself in deference to the whims of the ladies of his house and had basely discharged the Bhonsle brothers from his service, and how they had sought shelter with the Nimbalkars and taken revenge with their encouragement and support. The missives concluded with threats of further disturbance and desecration. When the news of this desecration came to the ears of Nizam Shaha his anger knew no bounds, but it was curiously directed against Jadhavrao, whom he summoned to his presence and threatened with menaces. He told him that it was most improper on his part to have made a declaration of a betrothal and then to have broken it off, and declared it was owing to his headstrong obstinacy that a sacred mosque of Islam had been desecrated so. He expostulated with him on the folly of protracting a private dispute at the expense of the public weal and ordered him peremptorily to put an end to it by conciliating Maloji and signalizing the event by giving his daughter into the Bhonsle house. Jadhavrao replied that his objection to the match was based on the inequality of social position between the two houses ; otherwise they stood related by ties of race and blood, and that his people desired that his daughter should be given into a house of the same fortune and standing as his own.

On hearing this reply the Sultan reflected that the high honours enjoyed by Jadhav had made him insolent, and that the only way of making him eat humble pie was to exalt Maloji to rank and honour, by conferring a high *mansab*, or military command, upon him. Strange that the Sultan should have thought of this kind of friendly treatment towards the Bhonsles! In truth Maloji and Vithoji had been guilty of an atrocity which outraged public opinion and Islam sentiment, and which under ordinary circumstances would have instantly called forth the retribution it deserved. But the Nizam Shahi

State of Ahmednagar had fallen on evil days. The Emperor Akbar was endeavouring to overthrow the kingdom and absorb it within the ever widening bounds of the Mogul Empire. The Mogul armies were every hour gaining ground inch by inch into the sultan's realm, and the only breakwater capable of keeping off the accumulating tide of invasion was the solid and united front of the Maratha nobility. If at this critical time the state were to embark on a policy of fomenting dissension among the Marathas, it would have been fatal to the best interests of the ruling dynasty. The disaffected Maratha chiefs were sure to go over to the enemy's camp, and every accession of strength to the Mogul meant a corresponding loss to the Mahomedan prince of the Deccan. Thus the sultan had to think deep before committing himself to a hasty step, and his final decision was the rather startling proposal to conciliate and heap honours upon men who had given him mortal offence. He invited Maloji and Vithoji to the royal presence and received them with courtesy, conferring upon each a *mansab* of 12,000 horses and the title of "Rajah" upon Maloji⁷, together with the forts of Shivneri and Chakan and the adjoining territory for his maintenance, and the districts of Poona and Supa in *jahgir*.⁸ This event took place in March, 1604.

Now that the sultan himself had espoused the cause of Maloji and had given him an exalted rank at his court, Jadhav could no longer withstand the demand. The sultan ordered both the parties to bring their families and relations to Perinda (Parinda); and the nuptials were celebrated with great pomp and eclat in the royal presence. The fact that the sultan himself attended the wedding and took a personal interest in it was sufficient cause for all the Omrahs of the court to attend it without exception. Under such auspices was celebrated the marriage of Shahaji and Jijabai. Maloji grudged no amount of expense on this great occasion, which, in truth, was the crowning glory of his life. He gave a grand banquet to the Omrahs, and distributed large sums in charity to Brahmans and *fakirs*. This wedding took place in April, 1604. Maloji had not only won his object, but had secured a *mansab* and the title of Rajah into the bargain.

After the marriage, the Rajah Maloji, now a mansabdar or commander of the Nizam Shahi kingdom did very useful service to that government in those troublous times. By his bravery and talents he soon gained an overwhelming ascendancy at that court. He earned the gratitude of the state for his success in the most difficult operations of war and his services both civil and military. It soon became apparent that though the high command was

7. Other accounts mention a *mansab* of 5,000 for Maloji only.

8. The Shiv - Digvijaya gives a longer list of jahgir lands which would include some parganas of Poona, Nasik, Ahmednagar and Khandesh.

originally conferred upon Maloji merely on account of the sultan's displeasure at Jadhav's obstinacy, the recipient was well worthy of the honours lavished upon him. The state officials now consulted him in all questions of moment. Besides by his conciliatory and courteous manners he always kept on terms of the utmost cordiality with the high officer of the court. Shahaji used to attend the court in company with his father. His fine figure and noble bearing, his penetration and sagacity, his habitual courtesy and persuasiveness soon won for him the golden opinions of the sultan and the court. He became a "persona grata" with all the great Omrahs and courtiers. After enjoying his great *mansab* and prosperity for fifteen years with ever increasing influence in the state, Maloji died in 1619. The Nizam Shaha conferred his *jahgirs* and honours upon the Rajah Shahaji.
