



THE LIFE OF SHIVAJI MAHARAJ FOUNDER OF THE MARATHA EMPIRE

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Chapter 30

The End, 1680

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Shortly after the fortification of Khanderi, word was brought to Shivaji that a large amount of treasure was being sent under convoy from Delhi to Aurangabad, for the military operations of the Mogul power. Upon receipt of this intelligence, Shivaji set out with a chosen body of horse and veiling his movements in the greatest secrecy, attacked the convoy and securing the whole of the treasure from the enemy, returned by forced marches to Raigad. The violence and rapidity of these movements brought on a reaction that prostrated Shivaji. The extreme exhaustion was attended with pain in the chest, fever and haemorrhage from the mouth¹. The disease became more and more malignant from day to day. The officers at the court spared no remedies to restore the health of their king. The prescriptions of the most renowned Indian physicians, vows to, the gods and prayers at the temples, magic and

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GATHA COGNITION[®]

1. The chronicles of Sabhasad and Chitragupta state that Shivaji suffered only from an ague. Chitnis and the Rairi Bakhar assign the cause of death to fever. Grant Duff describes the mortal disease as an inflammation of the knee-joint. The Bundela chronicler attributes it to the wrath of heaven occasioned by the curses of the *fakirs* at Jalna, who are said to have been looted at Shivaji's last attack upon that town. The curses, so it is said, brought on the illness to which he at last succumbed. The Shivdigvijaya gives a still more romantic legend, viz., that Shivaji was poisoned by his second wife, Soyerabai that her son Rajaram might succeed to the throne, while prince Sambhaji lay imprisoned at Panhala. In the present text as given above the author follows the versions of Dr. Fryer, the traveller, and the historian, Orme.

astrology were tried in vain, without any alleviation of the malady.

Shivaji had given strict orders to his people not to give out the news of his mortal illness. Nor would it have been easily believed in abroad, as rumours of his death had often been spread before, which, according to the Mahomedan chroniclers, had often turned out to be the preludes of some important campaigns. And at this very time a part of the forces of Shivaji had invaded the Mogul territories up to the walls of Surat, which had already commenced to feel the brunt of their assaults. The inhabitants of Surat apparently imagined that Shivaji himself led these invading hosts and the dread memory of previous invasions had thrown them into a panic. The British merchants had sent their valuables to their boats down the Tapti. The Mogul governor of Surat at last paid a heavy tribute and purchased his peace. Moropant, the Peshwa, returned homewards with these spoils. Shivaji's original plan was himself to go upon the campaign. His mortal illness prevented this project. On his return to Raigad, rich with the fresh spoils and tributes, Moropant found the king's, malady aggravated beyond cure.

Convinced that his end was drawing near, Shivaji summoned his ministers and intimate relatives to his bedside. Among the dignitaries who answered the call were Moropant the Peshwa, Pralhadpant the Chief Justice, Balaji Avji Chitnis, Ramchandrapant the Amatya, Ravji Somnath, Suryaji Malusare, Baji Kadam, Mahadaji Naik Pansambal and others. Addressing himself to them, Shivaji said that he had now arrived at the end of his life; the hour of his death was approaching apace. His physical endurance could hold out no more. A patrimony of forty thousand pagodas he had converted into a kingdom of a crore. A cavalry guard to eighty thousand was maintained by him in his service. He left no son competent to preserve and defend this wide kingdom with valour, with courage, with strategy. Rajaram was only a minor, and if he grew to man's estate he might protect and augment his dominions. Sambhaji the elder son was of age, but he was not governed by reason. He had thought of partitioning the kingdom between his sons, but Sambhaji had not consented to the compromise. But with all that if he divided the kingdom, the great lords and dignitaries of the state would take opposite sides, and the end would be rivalry and dissension instead of growth and advancement. There would be no order and obedience. The law of succession was that the elder should succeed to the throne, and the younger obey and serve his elder brother. But he could see little chance of his sons conforming to that law. Sambhaji would occupy the whole kingdom after his death. The brave officers in the army would go over to his side as the elder; Rajaram as a minor would command little support from the army. The civilians and the ministers would go over to Rajaram. This would create factions. Sambhaji would cause men of worth and position to be arrested and executed. The great nobles of the state

would be subjected to indignities and insults. His reign would be a triumph for the base and the vulgar. The honoured leaders and nobles who had shared his toils and enterprises would be laughed at and insulted, and the noble discipline of his state thrown into disorder. Given to habits of dissipation as he was, his reason would be clouded and he would be governed by his passion in the insolence of power. The state would be at the mercy of rash and cruel people. As to himself he had always tried diligently to discern and cherish merit and with the support of such men he had built up the fabric of his state. These men of worth and character would be degraded and down-trodden under Sambhaji and they would have to fly the kingdom. With such anarchy reigning in the land Aurangzeb would find it convenient to subvert the new power. The emperor had preserved peace owing to the awe of Shivaji's name. He would be emboldened by the disorders in the Maratha state to launch a new army of invasion. He would extinguish the tottering powers of the Adil Shahi and Kutub Shahi dynasties and then lead his triumphant hosts against the Maratha state. Sambhaji would prove unequal to the task of defending the state from the invader. Aurangzeb would bring utter destruction upon him. Habits of dissipation easily bring a man to ruin. If Rajaram survived, then only was there some hope of recovering the kingdom from the enemy. No other way of safety seemed to open itself before his wind.

These words of final despair overwhelmed the minds of his listeners and brought tears to their eyes. Seeing them in this agonized state, Shivaji bade them be of good cheer. For death was the appointed goal to human life. This was a world of mortality. He that was born was destined to die. To none on earth was given the gift of immortality. Wealth, son, wife, valour, victory, self were illusions and must be left behind. He that loved them and was at one with them gave himself to needless agitation. It fetched no profit. The way to salvation was to take the fortune of the moment and to act disinterestedly. They were all brave. It was their clear duty to put forth their highest efforts and save the state. It was for them to act unanimously. They had exhausted their efforts for curing his malady. Their human efforts had proved to be of no avail. They must now stop these efforts. He had reached the bourne of his life and was now prepared for a flight to heaven. Theirs it was now to observe every precaution and to defend the state by deeds of valour. It was his keen desire to subdue the Indian continent, capture Delhi, liberate the Ganges from the yoke of tribute, extend the empire beyond the attack and govern it by law; but these higher aims had remained unrealized. The streams of his life had been exhausted. They must not repine with a sense of this grief, but control their mind, balancing it with reason. Having thus consoled them, he bade them retire from his presence.

Shivaji now gave himself entirely to the performance of the last rites of religion in the few hours of life that were yet left to him.

He had a purificatory bath in the holy water brought from the Ganges, and sacrificial ashes were smeared over his body. He wore upon his person necklaces of the sacred *rudraksha* beads and wreaths of *Tulsi* (basil) leaves. Seated on a part of the floor strewn with *darbha* grass, associated as it always has been in India with holy meditation and spiritual thought, he invited great pandits and ascetics to his presence, and discussed with them the problems of spiritual destiny and salvation. Resigning earthly thoughts, he devoted the few moments of life that yet remained to the glorification of the Holy Name, listening to the readings from the sacred books and the exhortations of the kirtankars. The charities usual on such occasions were dispensed to the Brahmans, the dying king personally going through the solemn rites and, where he could not stand the fatigue, making solemn vows to that effect. Recitations from the Bhagwat-Gita and songs of divine praise were ordered to be chanted. In this manner, amidst the sacred chants of the Brahmans that surrounded his person, with a mind profoundly impressed with a deepening feeling of spiritual repose, expired the great king, the hallowed name of *Shriram* still hovering on his lips. It was on a Sunday, at noon-tide, on the full-moon day of the month of *Chaitra*, in the Shaka 1802, corresponding with the 5th of April 1680 A. D., that the great king closed his earthly career². He died in the pride of power, in the meridian height of his earthly splendour; and yet he died without any feeling of regret or repining at quitting the scene of his terrestrial glories, thus exhibiting in his death the greatest of earthly triumphs, the triumph over the temptations and frailties of our human nature. That serenity of his last moments was begotten of faith and fortitude. It was an earnest desire of his, and it had recurred to his mind again and again, even in this life to quit the scene of his earthly splendours, following in the footsteps of the saintly kings of yore, whose names are enshrined in the pages of Hindu legend and history. He had fondly hoped to be able like these great kings to abdicate the throne in favour of his son and devote the autumn of his life, without hindrance or interruption, to meditation and prayer and the service of God. But a great part of his ideal, the complete over-throw of the Mahomedan hegemony and the exaltation of the Hindu power still remained to be realised. His heir-apparent had betrayed qualities in direct antagonism to the virtues of an ideal ruler. Under these circumstances, the thoughts of abdication and the assumption of the life of a wandering recluse or a cloistered saint appeared too heroic and extravagant to be of any practical

2. Jedhe (p. 195) states he died on *Saturday*, but he gives the same month, hour, and year.

value. His wakeful anxiety for the good of his subjects and his prophetic fears of an untimely wreck of his life's work, the disgrace of which would recoil on his name, rendered the entertainment of such ideas impossible and reconciled him to a continuance of a life of political endeavour, relieved by such opportunities, as it presented, for well doing and spiritual thought, chastened by the precepts of virtue and religion, and illumined by the inspiring society of great sages.

The death of the great leader was a grievous blow to the ministers and nobles of the state and the relations of the royal family. All classes of society mourned the loss. The ministers took the precaution to close the castle gate and prevent the publication of the tragic news. The funeral of the great king was celebrated with royal pomp and honours. The third wife of Shivaji, Putalabai, performed the *sati* rite upon the funeral pyre of her husband. The obsequies were performed by a member of the Bhonsle House, Sabaji Bhonsle of Shingnapur³, assisted by Prince Rajaram, the latter being too young to perform all the rites himself. Religious charities in honour of the event were dispensed on a liberal scale.

Shivaji married seven wives. Sayibai, the mother of Sambhaji came of the Nimbalkar family; Soyerabai, the mother of Rajaram was a daughter of the Shirke family. Putlabai, the third wife, who performed the *sati* rite on the death of Shivaji, had no issue. The fourth wife Sakwarbai came of the Gaikwad family⁴. She gave birth to Kamaljabai, who was married to Janoji Palkar. The fifth wife Lakshmibai died childless. The sixth Sagunabai had a daughter Rajkuwarbai who was given in marriage to Ganoji Raje Shirke Malekar. Of the seventh wife Gunwantabai, nothing is known except that she died childless⁵.

Sayibai gave birth to prince Sambhaji in 1657. The character of this prince has already been sufficiently indicated in the foregoing pages. Rajaram, the second son of Shivaji, was born in 1664⁶. He was a prince of good character which augured well of his future, and Shivaji had high hopes about him. Sayibai died in 1659. She was a wise woman and a loyal consort to Shivaji, who loved her fondly. In fact after her death, he does not seem to have quite enjoyed the blessing of a happy family-life. Soyerabai is said to have been an intriguing woman. It was her ambition that her son Rajaram

3. Grant Guff gives his name as Shahaji Bhonsle.

4. If the entry at page 181 of Jedhe's Chronology refers this lady, Shivaji married her in 1657. It was probably this wife of Shivaji who died about March 1674, as we learn from Narayan Shenvi's letter to the deputy, governor of Bombay.

5. See Appendix at the end of this chapter.

6. Some bakhars give 1661 (A. D.) as the date of the birth of Rajaram.

should succeed to the throne, and she had been working in this direction even in Shivaji's life-time. She had won over most of the ministers to her side. Annaji Datto the Sachiv in particular was the leader of this faction. The thoughts of Shivaji with reference to Sambhaji, were, as we have seen, most despondent and pessimistic. The ministers decided to join the party of Soyerabai and exalting Rajaram on the throne, to conduct the affairs of government in his name. With a view to carry out these plans they attempted to suppress the news of Shivaji's death till Prince Sambhaji, who was only a prisoner at large within the limits of Panhala, was made secure and kept under a strong guard. Janardanpant, the Sumant, was sent with a body of troops to Panhala, the fort of Raigad was strengthened with an addition to the usual garrison, a force of ten thousand cavalry was posted at Panchwadi⁷, and Hambirrao, the Commander-in-chief, was ordered to encamp with his army, in a state of alertness at Karhad. As these operations were likely to take some time to mature despatches were forthwith sent to Hiroji Farzand, the governor in charge of Sambhaji, instructing him how he was to behave in reference to his ward. Notwithstanding all the ministerial precautions, it would seem that the news of the death of Shivaji had already leaked out and found its way to Sambhaji, or at least that he had a very strong suspicion on the subject. For when the bearer of the ministerial despatches reached Panhala, Sambhaji intercepted the courier and compelled him, on pain of death, to deliver the despatches to himself. Upon this the courier seeing no other remedy to save himself, handed over the despatches to him. Apprised that the secret despatches from the ministers had fallen into Sambhaji's hands, Hiroji Farzand took fright and fled to the Konkan. Sambhaji first put himself in possession of the fort and executed two of the officers who tried to offer resistance. He put the fort in defence order and waited to hear of further developments on the part of the ministers. Janardanpant Sumant, informed of the change of situation at Panhala Fort and seeing that it was impossible to enter it tried to besiege the fort, but shortly after leaving his troops to continue the blockade, he withdrew to Kolhapur.

Meanwhile the ministers had installed Rajarain on the throne and conducted the government under his name. But there was no cordiality of feeling among the ministers. The rivalry between the Peshwa and the Sachiv which had already commenced during the life of Shivaji now developed into a mutual hatred. Hambirrao had not been admitted into the secret cabal of the ministers and felt estranged from them. That Janardanpant withdrew from the siege of Panhala and voluntarily retired to Kolhapur was perhaps due to some

7. Panchwadi is the same as Pachad, where the English ambassador had to halt at the foot of Raigad.

similar cause. Sambhaji won over to his side some of the soldiers, who had been stationed around Panhala, and upon Janardanpant arriving there, the prince with a body of Mavalis raided his camp and brought him prisoner to Panhala Fort. Hambirrao was delighted with this exploit of Sambhaji, which went to show to him that the young prince was a chip of the old block, and he determined to throw the weight of his authority on the side of one whom he took to have inherited the valour of Shivaji. On the news of the capture of Janardanpant reaching Raigad, Moropant Pingle came out with an army ostensibly to fight and liberate Janardanpant. On arrival at Panhala he forgot his warlike intentions and threw in his lot with Sambhaji, who, satisfied with his conciliatory attitude, confirmed him in his office of Peshwa. Hambirrao came to Panhala and joined the prince with all his army. With his cause thus strengthened, Sambhaji came down upon Raigad, but already before his arrival the fort guards had declared on his side and made prisoners of his opponents. The troops cantoned at Panchwadi likewise came over to Sambhaji. Under these circumstances Sambhaji did not experience the least difficulty in making himself master of Raigad. The first order he issued on entering the fort was to put the Sachiv, Annaji Datto, into irons and confiscate his property. Rajaram was imprisoned, and his mother, Soyerabai, was arrested and, when brought before Sambhaji, insulted in the grossest manner. She was accused of having poisoned Shivaji, and ordered to be put to a cruel and lingering death. The officers attached to her cause were beheaded, and one of them, who had perhaps been more zealous than the rest, was ordered to be hurled down the rock from the ramparts of Raigad. By these acts of cruelty and revenge he overawed all opposition, and seated himself on the throne in August 1680. Happily for us the recital of the manifold atrocities that disfigured a reign commenced in so inauspicious a manner, lies beyond the scope of the present narrative.

Appendix

Shivaji's Wives and Daughters

Grant Duff mentions four wives, “a fourth wife whose name and family are unknown.” (Chapter IX). Dr. Fryer says that Shivaji married a fourth wife at the time of his coronation, (Vol. I, Letter II, Chapter IV). Prof. Sarkar quotes from Henry Oxenden’s letter of 27th May 1674 to the effect that Shivaji was then busy with his coronation and married two other women. (Factory Records, Surat, Vol. 88). This is supported by an entry in the Jedhe Chronology, which states that on the 4th of the first half of the month of *Jeshta* (May) Shivaji was invested with the sacred thread and on the 6th of the month,

just two days later, he was married with the *Vedic mantra* rites; and another entry states that the Coronation took place on the 12th Jeshta, i. e. six days later, and it is easy to believe that in the same manner in which the thread ceremony was completed by a Vedic rite of marriage, similarly also the coronation ceremony of the 6th of June 1674 (properly speaking 13th, not 12th of Jeshta) was followed by a marriage with vedic rites, to which Henry Oxenden's letter of the 8th of June 1674 refers, citing that "the Rajah was married to a fourth wife," to which reference is also made by Grant Duff. The interpretation to be put on the words "*fourth wife*" probably is that the bride married after the coronation ceremony became the fourth living wife of Shivaji, and not the "fourth wife" married in the same season. And yet Prof. Sarkar speaks of Shivaji "marrying three young women, though he had two or three other wives, and two sons living." (Sarkar's *Shivaji* p. 428) Prof. Sarkar probably assumes that Shivaji married two wives in May 1674 and *one* in June 1675, but that does not explain how the last mentioned bride could be the "fourth wife" if "two or three" other wives were living and three new ones were married. On the other hand Prof. Sarkar makes an apparently contradictory statement at page 281 of his "*Shivaji*," which is probably a correct representation of the facts of the case. At page 281 Prof. Sarkar states, "On the 8th (June), Shivaji took a fourth wife without any state or ceremony. Shortly, before he had married a third." The sarcastic reference of Prof. Sarkar in the foot note at page 281 to the desire of Shivaji to assert his right to hear vedic mantras in sacramental ceremonies really furnishes to us a clue to the mystery of these late marriages. However this would limit the number of Shivaji's marriages in 1674 to two, one after the thread ceremony and the other after the coronation, and not *three* as stated by Prof. Sarkar at page 428. He had lost one of his wives about the month of March in that year (Narayan Shenvi's letter, Factory Records, Surat, Vol. 88).

In the bakhsh of Ramdas Swami, there is a statement that besides three wives Sayibai, Soyerabai and Sagunabai, Shivaji had two concubines. Sabhasad states that besides Sayibai, Shivaji had six other wives; but he does not mention the names. This statement is not corroborated in any of the bakhars. Mr. Rajawade in his "*Sankirna Lekh Sangraha*" printed from the *Granthamala* states on the authority of a paper found at Tanjore that Shivaji had *eight* wives. The paper describes the names and parentage of only six of them, whence it is concluded that the other two were concubines. The date and authority of this document are doubtful.

Mr. Kincaid following the genealogical tree of the Shedgaokar Bhonsles gives the names of seven wives of Shivaji (1) Sayibai, daughter of Vithoji Mohite Newaskar, (2) Putlabai who committed *sati*, (3) Soyerabai of the Shirke family, mother of Rajaram and of a daughter Dipabai, married to a

Maratha noble named Visajirao, (4) Sakwarbai, mother of Kamaljabai who became the wife of Janoji Palkar, (5) Lakshmibai, (6) Sagunabai, mother of a daughter named Nanibai, the wife of Ganojiraje Shirke Malekar, and (7) Gunawantabai. Of this list Putlabai, Lakshmibai and Gunawantibai are described as childless. Besides the daughters, Dipabai, Kamaljabai and Nanibai, Kincaid mentions a daughter of Shivaji by his first wife Sayibai, who was given in marriage to Harji Raje Mahadik of Tarale, governor of Jinji, and he mentions a fifth daughter in a foot note also to Sayibai. This princess was Sakhubai, given in marriage to Mahadji Naik Nimbalkar of Phaltan, from which family came Dipabai the wife of Maloji Bhonsle. As regards this marriage, the Phaltan state records tell an interesting story. Bajaji Nimbalkar had become a Mahomedan, and wanted to come back to Hinduism. Jijabai, the mother of Shivaji, interested herself in the subject and got the priest of Shinganpur to re-admit the Maratha Mahomedan to the fold of his religion and caste, and in order that no doubt might be left on the subject she brought about a marriage alliance between him and Shivaji, whose daughter Sakubai by his first wife Sayibai (who according to most accounts herself came from the Nimbalkar family) was at Jijabai's instance, given in marriage to the son of Bajaji. This story illustrates the solid work done by Jijabai in the matter of Hindu unity and religion. Shivaji purchased the patelship of a village in Taluka Purandar for 1200 pagodas and conferred it upon his son-in-law.

Mr. Sardesai names three wives and three daughters of Shivaji in the genealogical table at the end of his *Riyasat* and in this list Rajkuwarbai is given as the name of the princess who in the genealogy followed by Mr. Kincaid is named Nanibai and is described as the wife of Ganoji Raje Shirke. Nanibai was perhaps the pet name of Rajkuwarbai.