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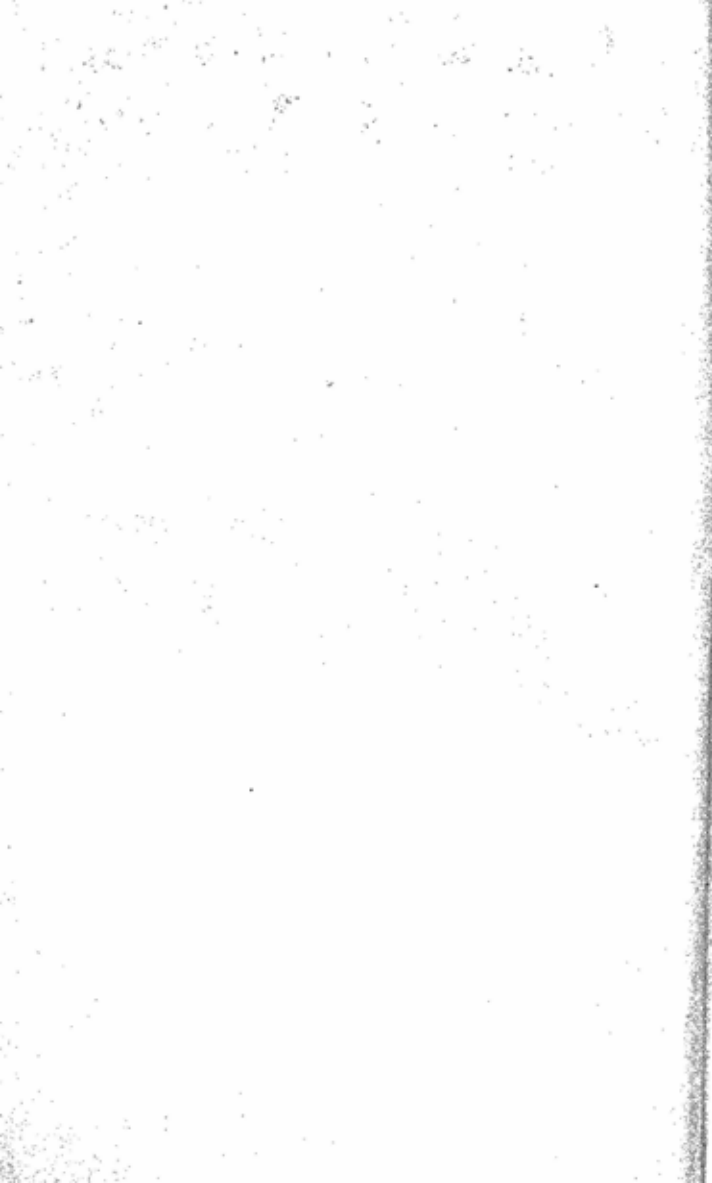
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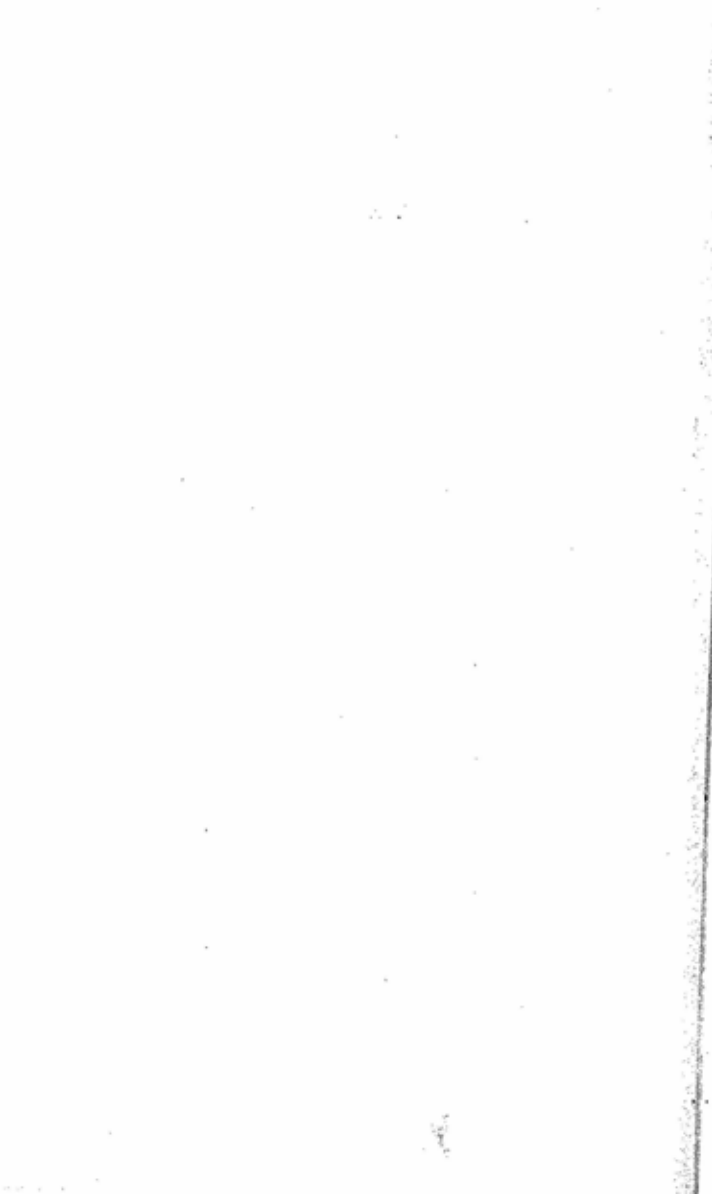
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TARA BAI AND HER TIMES



# TARA BAI AND HER TIMES

BRIJ KISHORE

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TO THE SACRED MEMORY OF  
SIR JADUNATH SARKAR





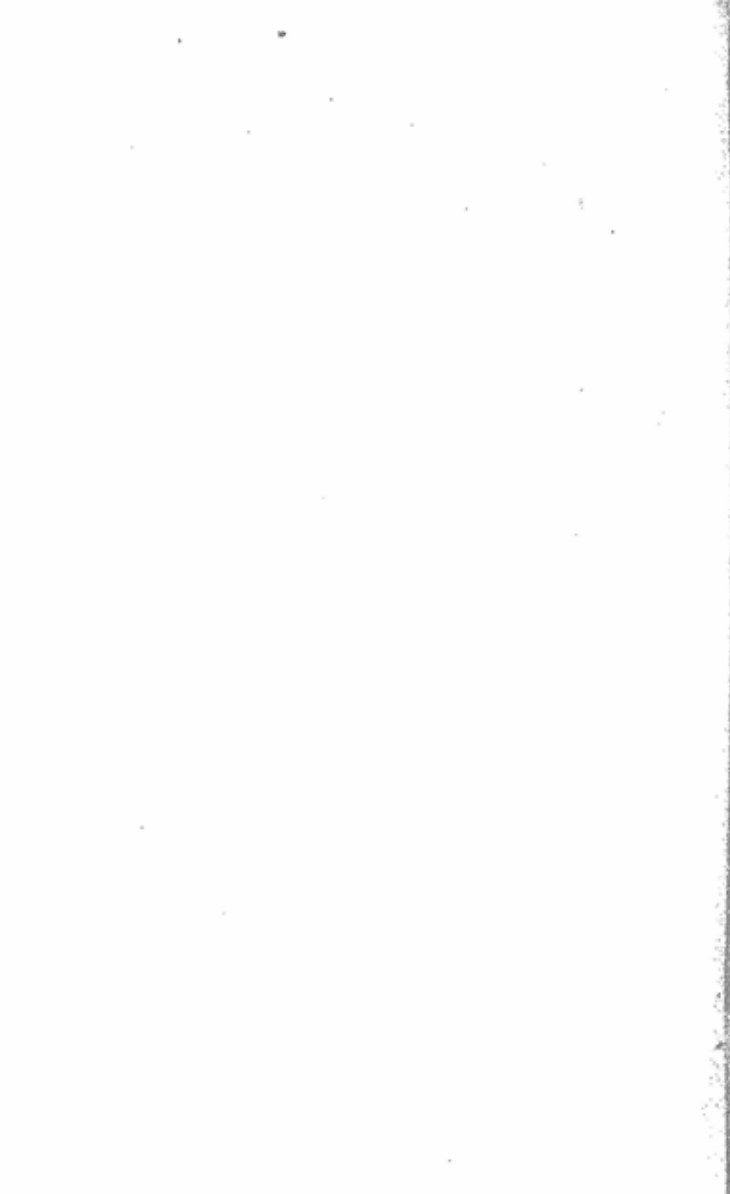
## FOREWORD

TARA BAI MOHITE, wife of Chhatrapati Rajaram, is one of the most unforgettable characters in Medieval Indian history. Her misfortune was that she lived too long to be useful for her country and her people. Had she died before the release of Shahu from the Mughal captivity, she would have gone down to history as the great Mother of Maharashtra. Tara Bai out-matched crafty Aurangzib in diplomacy and resourcefulness at a critical period of the War of Maratha Independence. She created armies out of the void as it were to fight the Mughals, and united the Marathas under her leadership into an invincible nation out for conquest and expansion. But her personal ambition when thwarted by the Brahman Peshwas took an unworthy turn. Had not her selfishness and blind obstinacy got better of patriotism, there would not have remained Nizams and Bhonsles to clog the wheel of Maratha Imperialism in the eighteenth century.

Dr. Brij Kishore has worked hard to give Tara Bai her due in Maratha history. It is some consolation to me in the sunset of life that a pupil of mine will live after me to keep up the tradition of historical research in the path of my lamented master, Acharya Jadunath Sarkar. May God give a long life to the author and unqualified success to his literary pursuits.

K. R. QANUNGO





## PREFACE

THIS BOOK contains the substance of a thesis successfully presented by me for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Lucknow. Late Sir Jadunath Sarkar and Rao Bahadur G. S. Sardesai, who read the work in manuscript form, strongly recommended its publication and were also kind enough to promise, one after the other, to write a foreword for it. It is a matter of great regret to me that I was not able to do this in their life time, and now console myself by making only a posthumous dedication to one of them.

Historians and biographers, both foreign and Indian, have spared no pains to popularise the deeds and misdeeds of the heroes of Indian history. Heroines, however, completely missed their notice. This glaring injustice required early rectification. Historical records are replete with the evidence that women played quite an important part in making the history of this country. Though the four walls of the house remained the main centre of their activities, a few of them came out in public life and contributed greatly to the political, social and cultural life of the country. Tara Bai, the wife of Shivaji's younger son, Rajaram, was such a one. When all seemed lost after the cruel murder of Shambhuji and the untimely death of her own husband, she successfully galvanised the nation for saving the legacy of Shivaji. During the critical period from 1700 to 1707, her leadership was in no way inferior to any other character, male or female, that passed across the screen of history.

Such a personality escaped notice for a long time till the author was entrusted with the task of preparing a biography of this remarkable woman by Dr. K.R. Qanungo, then occupying the Chair of History in the University of Lucknow. Once launched on the seas I rode on, up and down the surface; every stroke, meanwhile, was watched by the master swimmer from his point of vantage till I safe saw the shore. Kindly Providence has spared him to see me place my crown of weeds at his feet. This humble pupil stands with head bowed in gratitude and prays for his long life.

## PREFACE

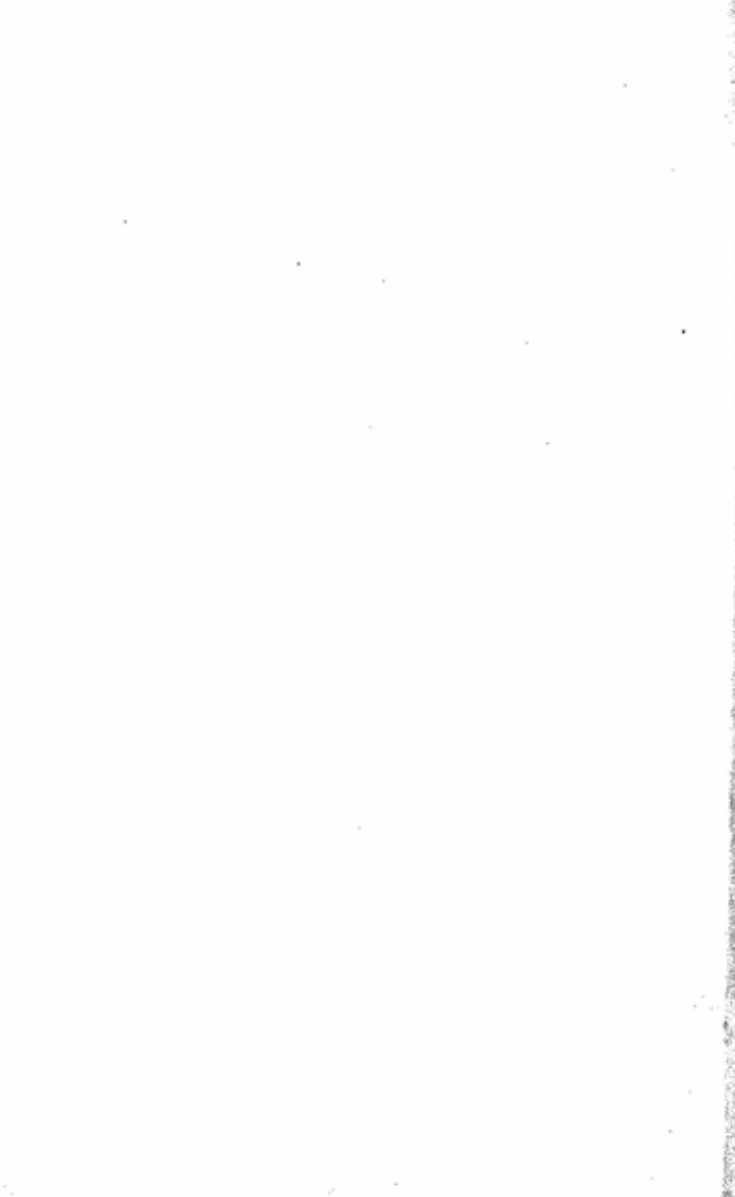
My thanks are also due to Dr. Radha Kamal Mukerjee, Sri Rajendra Lal and Sri Kehar Singh. My wife, Shantiji, and sons, Kaushal and Mukul, shared with me the arduous task of comparing the typed and printed sheets and preparing the sketches. Some work in connection with the preparation of the Index has been done by Sushilaji and by a dear pupil, Sri Rajendra Narain, now an officer in the Traffic and Superior Revenue Establishment of the Indian State Railways.

*29, Murlinagar, Lucknow*  
*November 13, 1962*

BRIJ KISHORE

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## INTRODUCTION

IF ONE wants to get a bird's eye view of the interesting story of the rise and fall of the Maratha power through the medium of a biography, one can do so by going through the life story of a single person, Tara Bai Mohite. Born five years before the death of the great Shivaji, she lived to see the national disaster at Panipat in 1761, and during the intervening 86 years much happened in the land of the Marathas in which she had a direct or indirect hand.

At the beginning of this period the Mughals and the Marathas were closed in a mortal combat; the Mughals strong and rich, the Marathas weak and divided. The one fought for the overlordship of the whole Hindustan, the other for the defence of his hearth and home. With dogged tenacity the Maratha held on and ultimately knocked out his adversary in the last round, and it must not be forgotten that this last phase of the tragic struggle was solely managed by Tara Bai when the chances for Maratha survival were one out of ten.

The exit of the enemy, however, heralded an era of another war—an internecine one for loaves and fishes with Shahu and Tara Bai arrayed on opposite sides. Ultimately, Shahu emerged successful with the general support of the nation. The erstwhile heroine then turned a traitress to the country, set up a rival house, and let loose forces which deluged the land with partisan blood for 23 years and gave the Nizam-ul-Mulk an opportunity to drive his roots in the soil of the Deccan, becoming thereby a thorn in the home territory of the Marathas. These mutual wranglings kept the Marathas tied at home, and meanwhile the rich harvest of the crashing Mughal Empire lay unreaped. The European traders took their position. When the Marathas appeared in the field they were rather too late; nevertheless, the lion's share went to them at the start.

For thirty-six years Tara Bai was held in check but never effectively rendered impotent. Her finger was found moving in places where

it was least expected and the seemingly extinct volcano was boiling within for an opportune eruption to shake the *Peshwa* regime. And the opportunity came with the death of the childless Shahu. But fate had turned against her and this time also there was nothing but a miscarriage of her plan to seize power as a virtual dictator. She made impure the line of Shivaji and the blood of many a Maratha noble family by introducing into it a person whom she foisted on the nation as her own grandson but later denounced him as an upstart impostor. The halo attached to Shivaji's descendants being thus removed the *Peshwas* came out into full glamour and became the fountain-head of all political power for all practical purposes. The *Peshwa* found it to his advantage to conciliate this implacable lady who knew no bending even when the odds against her were heavy. They both died in the same fateful year, 1761, but for good or for bad, Tara Bai had her influence, wholesome at the beginning but sinister and baneful ultimately, upon the destinies of her nation and the result is a heated and unending controversy raging round her as a historical figure.

The life of Tara Bai is an example of the complex nature of human character: how patriotism and treason, courage and baseness are placed side by side. Her career extended over seventy years of active but fruitless intriguing and shows how the perversity of a single individual can materially affect the course of history. Tara Bai is alleged to be responsible for the many "buts" and "ifs" of Maratha history. How can importance be then denied to a person who was an enigma for her friends and a constant source of anxiety for four generations of the *Peshwas*, for the country and for her own family? A political genius doubtless she was, with a capacity for good and no less for evil.

And yet no biography has so far been written either in English or in any other Indian language except the one in Marathi by a woman author. This book, however, ignores all canons of logic. No doubt, some eminent scholars, specially two of them—Sir Jadunath Sarkar and Rao Bahadur G. S. Sardesai—have thrown enough light on this interesting character in the course of their studies in Mughal and Maratha histories. Their verdict is unassailable, but one may doubt whether it is not the unerring instinct of masters rather than a

judgment based on enough historical matter. However, information about Tara Bai is so meagre in comparison with an active career of seven decades and so sparsely spread that it lacked the entertainment of a connected narrative. An effort has, therefore, been made to bring out a parallel study; but parallels have ultimately met, and yet may prove a useful supplement, more detailed and compact, to what these scholars have already written on the subject. The conclusions arrived at are not much different from theirs, but sometimes it was found necessary to differ from writers of eminence such as Grant Duff and Vasudev Vaman Khare. Whenever and wherever it has been done reasons have been given for it.

So far no biography of Tara Bai has been written on the basis of original sources available on the subject. The sparsely spread information in the original sources and in the works of modern writers has been carefully collected, sifted and then woven into a narrative. Some obscure points have been cleared and where material is lacking constructive suggestions have been offered. On the basis of an important Persian source, Khafi Khan, arguments have been offered to establish that Tara Bai played a part in the politics of the country even during the life time of her husband. A document, published both in *Rajwade*, Vol. VIII and *Bavda Daftar*, Vol. I, has been extensively quoted to confirm the positive assertion of Khafi Khan. In particular, two chapters, xiv and xv, have been designed to incorporate in them all the information that has come to light on account of the publication of the *Peshwa Daftar* papers by the Bombay government and other original papers like the *Purandaré Daftar*, the *Bavda Daftar* and publications of the *Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal*, Poona. A revised edition of the *Marathi Riyasat*—an admirable general history of the Marathas in Marathi by Rao Bahadur G. S. Sardesai—has come out. The mine of information, brought to light by the *Peshwa Daftar* and other publications on the period after Shahu's death, has been incorporated into it. For want of space he has not been able to give many details about the period in his latest work—the *New History of the Marathas*. Fresh materials have been gleaned from the contemporary State papers and incorporated in the two chapters



after careful scrutiny. The section on Ramraja's struggle for power is based entirely on *Peshwa Daftar* papers and is a topic on which not much was hitherto known to an average student of history.

The present work is a synthesis of the original sources available in Marathi and Persian aided by secondary sources and works of some eminent modern writers. It is singularly fortunate that a band of devoted pioneers like Rajwadé, Parasnis, Sané and Sardesai have made available to the public a vast amount of original raw material which was formerly in the difficult *Modi* script. These scholars collected the old papers and have published them in the *Nagri* or *Balbodh* script, thus making them available to Marathi-knowing research workers. They have classified them and have tried to arrange them chronologically. But on account of the inherent difficulty of the subject minor errors have crept in, in spite of the care bestowed by these scholars. It is only the official *sanads* and formal State papers which bear the date in three eras—the *Shuhur* or Muslim, the *Shalivahana Shaka* and the era introduced by Shivaji at his coronation in the year 1674. But the rest, such as private news-letters, which throw light on very important happenings all over the country, are as a rule without date and sometimes bear only the day and the month. Frequently, the addressees and the writer are not at all mentioned. In this book for the conversion of doubtful dates Swami Kannu Pillai's *Indian Ephemeris* has been consulted. As far as possible preference has been given to contemporary writers, who were active spectators of the events. Chronologies and chronicles have been put to historical test and their statements accepted only when supported by contemporary evidence. Enough use has been made of the *Peshwa Daftar* volumes but the dates have not been accepted without criticism. *Purandaré Daftar*, *Bavda Daftar*, collections of historical letters and other publications of original papers have frequently been consulted. Besides these new publications, the indispensable collections of old papers published by Rajwadé, Parasnis, Sané and others have been gone through afresh and bits of very useful information have been collected from them.

Of the Persian sources, Bhimsen Burhanpuri's *Nuskha-i-Dilkasha*, the *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, Khafi Khan's *Munt-Khab-ul-lubab* and the

*Akhbarat-i-durbar-i-Muala* have been greatly drawn upon. Of these, the unpublished Persian sources, such as the *Nuskha-i-Dilkasha* and the *Akhbarat* have been consulted in manuscript as translated by Sir Jadunath Sarkar. Some old and new journals—particularly the defunct *Itihas Samgraha* and *Bharatvarsha* of Parasnis and the *Trimasik* and the *Sammelan Vritis* of the Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal, Poona—have been consulted and they have yielded very valuable information.

Since the story of Tara Bai deals with 86 eventful years of Maratha history the information is naturally spread over a long period and lies buried under the debris of other material not relevant to the subject. As such it cannot be said with any amount of confidence that all that is available on the subject has been found, but what is already in hand is just enough to give a fairly accurate sketch of this important personality and the times she lived in. A detailed analysis of the source books has been relegated to the chapter on the Bibliography. Unless otherwise stated the number of the document is given and not the page. In the matter of spellings, usually the Marathi forms have been adhered to.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE LONG career of Tara Bai is based on a critical study of the original Marathi and Persian sources and other later works which are herein mentioned in detail.

The Persian records are mainly confined to the period from 1700 to 1707 when she was at the helm of the sinking Maratha State as the regent of her minor son, Shivaji III. Thereafter they yield no information or very little, which throws a direct light on her activities. The *Akhbarat* continue to mention now and then the activities of Daud Khan Pani, Chandrasen Jadhav and other conspirators with whom Tara Bai had diplomatic relations in secret. Of course, some use has been made of the Persian sources for the activities of her step-son, Shambhuji, which were nothing but a continuation of the policy of Tara Bai. Khafi Khan in particular yields very valuable information for the activities of Tara Bai during the early years of her career. Saqi Mustad Khan and Bhimsen and so also the *Akhbarat* give enough details about the sieges of Maratha hill forts the defence of which was organised by Tara Bai and the raids organised by her to create disturbance in the settled provinces of the Mughal Empire. Tara Bai's later career has been based on purely Marathi sources and due weight has been given to the testimony of both her friends and enemies. The dates of both these sources are not always very reliable. For the conversion of doubtful dates two books—Swami Kannu Pillai's *Indian Ephemeris* and G. H. Khare's *Samshodhak Mitra*, Vol. I—were found very useful.

### ORIGINAL SOURCES—PERSIAN

(1) *Nuskhah-i-Dilkashah* by Bhimsen Burhanpuri. He was born and brought up in the Deccan and belonged to a family of hereditary civil officials of the Mughal Empire. He had a good eye for topographical detail and also recorded what he saw from Mathura to Malabar. His history is an eye-witness account. It is written in simple prose free from all rhetoric. Since it was not meant for the Emperor's eye it gives a true picture of the times and of the many historical personages who took part in it. As the agent of

Zulfiqar Khan's right-hand man, Dalpatrao Bundela, he was present in the Emperor's camp for most of the time and owing to his intimacy with the court circle he had access to correct information from non-official sources. He throws considerable light on the period of Tara Bai's regency from 1700 to 1707. He is the only contemporary writer who mentions Karna; others call him Shivaji. He describes the movements of Aurangzib from fort to fort, his difficulties and the measures of Tara Bai taken for the defence of the forts and for raiding Mughal territory in Malwa. He is the only writer to mention the first Maratha raid into Malwa by Krishna Sawant. He gives his own estimate of Tara Bai's capacity as a ruler. His account finishes with the battle of Jajau (June, 1707) after which he retired to Orchha with Dalpatrao's son. It is yet unpublished and Sir Jadunath Sarkar has got a copy of it which he has translated into English. An abridged and incorrect translation of it was published under the title of *Journal of a Boondelah Officer* by Jonathan Scott.

(2) *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*. It is the official history of Aurangzib's reign from 1658 to 1707 completed within three years of that emperor's death by Saqi Musta'd Khan. The *Maasir* was written on the material provided by the State archives to which he was allowed access after the death of Aurangzib. These were official correspondence, despatches, news-letters, treaties and revenue returns. They are rich in accurate dates and topographical details. It is a very concise history and reads like the official gazetteer of our times but misses no fact of importance. It is invaluable for dates, names of persons and places, the proper sequence of events and official changes and administrative regulations. Enough details are given of the sieges of hill-forts and the raids organised by Tara Bai. Persian text has been translated by Sir Jadunath Sarkar and has been published by the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal.

(3) *The Akhbarat-i-durbar-i-mu'ala*. These are reports or manuscript news-letters of everything that was done or said in public at the court or camp where the Emperor was present in person. These were written daily and sometimes even twice a day. Such *Akhbarat* or manuscript news-letters were sent to the vassal princes, provincial governors and generals by their paid agents at the imperial

court. References are found in them to the campaigns against the hill-forts and the raids of Tara Bai. The information is sparsely spread over a mass of other details but names of places and persons are correctly given. The dates are sometimes not to be relied upon. Their information continues even after Shahu had ascended the throne and Tara Bai had set up a rival dynasty at Panhala. The desertion of Chandrasen Jadhav and the doings of Daud Khan Pani are found mentioned in them. They are preserved at Jaipur and in the library of the Royal Asiatic Society at London. Sir Jadunath Sarkar has got copies of more than two thousand sheets, some of which he has translated into English. These are till now in two typed manuscripts from June 3, 1695 to April 1, 1705, and from 1707 to 1712.

(4) *Fatuhāt-i-Alamgiri*. A history written by Ishwardas Nagar, a Mughal officer who hailed from the city of Patan in Gujrat. He was in the service of Shaikh-ul-Islam up to his 30th year. This Shaikh as the chief *Qazi* of the Empire used to accompany the Emperor Aurangzib in camp and court alike and Ishwardas in the train of his master got good opportunities of learning the facts from the chief officers of that time. On the retirement of Shaikh-ul-Islam, Ishwardas took service with Shujat Khan, the viceroy of Gujrat, who employed him as *Shiqdar* (revenue collector) in certain *mahals* of the Jodhpur *pargana*. His work is, therefore, chiefly important for Rajput affairs but becomes relevant to the subject-matter of this book from pages 146b to 159b, where the campaign against Shambhuji begins and then Rajaram flies to Jinji. He is the only writer to mention in detail the help rendered by the Rani of Bednur to Rajaram and his party. Only one copy of this work, viz., British Museum Pers. Ms. Additional No. 28884, is yet known to exist. Sir Jadunath Sarkar has got a copy of this work which he has translated into English. This work has not yet been published.

(5) *Muntakhabu-i-Lubab* of Muhammad Hashim Khafi Khan is a very important Persian source for the activities of Tara Bai. He has given enough details about the new counter-offensive launched by Tara Bai and the parallel government established by her. He was much impressed by her work as a civil ruler and

military leader. Since the work was written more than 25 years after the death of Aurangzib it is not as reliable as the *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* or the *Nuskha-i-Dilkasha*, but Khafi Khan himself having been in the imperial service was an eye-witness to many of the events and also had access to other State records. "His reflective style, description of the condition of society and characteristic anecdotes," writes Sir Jadunath Sarkar, "save his work from the dry formality of the court annals and he is specially informing with regard to Deccan affairs." The history on the whole supplies us with many of the facts suppressed in the court annals, though the dates and names are sometimes inaccurate and the descriptions meagre. A translation of it is to be found in Volume VII of Elliot and Dowson. At places it is not very accurate.

(6) *Tarikh-i-Iradat Khan*. It is a good history of the Deccan from the time of Shah Alam to Farrukh-Siyar by Mir Mubarak Ullah Iradat Khan Waza. It was translated by Captain Jonathan Scott and has been incorporated in the second volume of his *History of the Deccan*. The author belonged to a noble family and held appointments from the time of Aurangzib to Farrukh-Siyar. It provides useful information about the career of the Nizam-ul-Mulk and Sayyid Hussain Ali Khan in the Deccan.

(7) *Ahkam-i-Alamgiri* (anecdotes of Aurangzib). Sir Jadunath Sarkar has published the text with variants and also an English translation. It gives a few hints about the events and historic personages of the period of the Maratha War of Independence. It mentions the capitulation of Parli, the arrest of Kam Bakhsh and the humiliation of Nusrat Jang. It is deficient in dates.

(8) *Chahar Gulshan* by Chatarman Saksena. A portion of it has been translated by Sir Jadunath Sarkar in his *India of Aurangzib*. It is very useful for the topography and statistics of the Deccan.

(9) *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* is a good history of Gujrat by Ali Muhammad Khan written in 1748. The author was the *Diwan* of the province. Maratha raid in Gujrat organised in the time of Tara Bai has been mentioned in sufficient detail.

(10-11) *Hadiqatu'l-Alam* by Mir Alam and *Maathiru'l-Umara* by Shah Nawaz Khan are important for the career of Nizam-ul-Mulk

and his successors. The treasonable activities of Chandrasen Jadhav and other Maratha deserters are mentioned in these works.

(12) *Siyar-ul-Mutakhkharin*. It is a later and derivative work completed in 1782 by Sayyid Ghulam Husain Tabatabai, a Muslim nobleman who used to reside at the court of the Nawab of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. It throws some light on the period when Shahu was engaged in a civil war with Tara Bai, and Maratha dealings with the Nizam and the Sayyid brothers. It makes a reference to Tara Bai's peace proposals to Aurangzib and to her negotiations with Bahadur Shah for the grant of *sardeshmukhi* to her son and to Shahu. Being a later work it has no independent value. It was translated into English by one M. Raymond, a French Creole, who had assumed the Mohammedan name of Haji Mustafa. He published it in three large volumes under the pseudonym of Nota Manus.

#### MARATHI

(13-36) *Selections from the Peshwa Daftar* edited by Rao Bahadur G. S. Sardesai and published by the Bombay Government in 45 volumes. It contains a variety of absolutely contemporary records including despatches, news-letters, private letters, *Sanads*, etc. The original papers were in the difficult *Modi* hand but they are now printed in the *Devnagri* or *Balbodh* script with a brief summary in English at the foot of each paper. Obscure points have been annotated by the learned editor. There are very few papers in it which throw light on the royal period; the information on the early *Peshwa* period is also meagre. They, however, provide the most authentic contemporary source for the reconstruction of Maratha history. They are classified subject-wise but sometimes a very important paper for one subject is to be found in another volume. The dates of some of these perhaps require further scrutiny. The following volumes have been chiefly used:

- |         |   |   |
|---------|---|---|
| Vol. VI | <i>Ramraja's Struggle for Power</i>                               | 1 |
| " VII   | <i>Early Activities of Shahu and Balaji Vishwanath, 1707-1720</i> |   |
| " VIII  | <i>Shahu in his Private Life</i>                                  |   |
| " IX    | <i>Bajirao and his Family, 1720-1740</i>                          |   |
| " X     | <i>Early strife between Bajirao and the Nizam</i>                 |   |
| " XI    | <i>Shahu's relations with Sambhaji of Kolhapur</i>                |   |

- Vol. XII *The Dabhades and the conquest of Gujrat*  
 „ XIII *Bajirao's entry into Malwa and Bundelkhand*  
 „ XVII *Shahu and Bajirao—Administrative*  
 „ XVIII *Private life of Shahu and the Peshwas*  
 „ XX *The Bhonsles of Nagpur (1717-1774)*  
 „ XXI *Balajirao Peshwa and the events in the North, 1741-1761*  
 „ XXII *Extracts from the Peshwa's Diaries*  
 „ XXIII *Balaji Bajirao—Administrative*  
 „ XXV *Balaji Bajirao Peshwa and the Nizam (1740-1761)*  
 „ XXVI *Tara Bai and Sambhaji (1738-1761)*  
 „ XXVII *Balajirao Peshwa and the events in the North (1742-1761)—  
 Supplementary*  
 „ XXVIII *Peshwa Balajirao—Karnatak affairs (1740-1761)*  
 „ XXX *Bajirao I—Miscellany*  
 „ XXXI *Papers selected from the Jamav section*  
 „ XL *Miscellaneous Papers of Peshwa Balajirao*  
 „ XLIII *The Social and Religious matters under the Peshwas (1727-1797)*  
 „ XLIV *Some Historical Families*  
 „ XLV *Documents illustrating Maratha Administration*

(37-45) *Marathanchi Itihasanche Sadhanen* (Original Materials for the History of the Marathas) in 22 volumes published by V. K. Rajwadé. It is a very valuable collection of old papers which Rajwadé collected by a laborious house-to-house and village-to-village search. Rajwadé devoted his whole life time to the work of collecting these papers which were lying unnoticed in most unexpected quarters. He was one of the founders of the *Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal* where most of the originals are stored. The papers published by Rajwadé are of a miscellaneous character—*Sanads*, letters, *bakhars*, State papers, petitions, etc. He has tried to arrange them subject-wise but in view of the fact that the papers came to his hands gradually and after long intervals they are naturally printed in a haphazard manner. The chronology is also somewhat confused and the dates of many papers are doubtful. In many of the volumes Rajwadé has written very learned introductions but sometimes they are inordinately lengthy and not quite relevant. His volumes otherwise provide excellent material for the study of Maratha history from absolutely original sources.

In the present work Volumes I, II, III, VI, VIII, XI, XV, XX and XXII have been chiefly used. Volume I contains 304 historic letters dealing with the post-Shahu period from 1750 to 1763 and has a



long and learned introduction. Volume II is a chronology of the first three *Peshwas*. Volumes III and VI contain miscellaneous correspondence from 1700 to 1761 and yield some very valuable information. Both contain an introduction by the author. Volume VIII is chiefly valuable for the papers of the *Amatya* family of Bavda (Gagangarh). Volume XI contains papers of a miscellaneous character onwards of 1750. Volumes XV, XX and XXII contain papers and correspondence of some of the old historic families. The last volume contains some papers of the Mohit family to which Tara Bai belonged.

(46) *Purandaré Daftar*. It is a collection of the old papers of the Purandaré family which was so closely connected with the family of the *Peshwas* since the days of Balaji Vishwanath. Only the first volume has been used. Some of the papers published in this volume have brought to light new facts hitherto unknown. Considerable use has been made of these papers in reconstructing the history of the period from 1750 to 1761. Papers Nos. 225-364 of the first volume provide a graphic account of the triangular fight for power between Tara Bai, Ramraja and the *Peshwa*. Damaji Gaikwar's activities have been fully described in Nos. 333 to 343. The first volume contains 426 documents and has been edited by K. V. Purandaré who has also written a detailed introduction.

(47) *Bavda Daftar*. It is a collection of the old papers of the *Amatya* family of Bavda the most famous member of which, Ramchandra Nilkanth, was the virtual dictator of Maharashtra for several years. Most of these papers were published by Rajwadé in his Volume VIII. The two volumes edited by K. G. Sabnis contain in all 201 papers most of which are either *Sanads* or letters concerning local affairs, but some of them are of the utmost importance for history.

(48-50) *Selections from the Peshwa's Diaries*. The selections were prepared by Rao Bahadur Ganesh Chimnaji Vad from the original Marathi records and an English summary is given below each item. The selections cover a period of over a hundred years (1708 to 1816) and furnish most valuable material for reconstructing the history of the Marathas. In them are to be found not only political events but also much needed light on the condition

of the people; how they lived and thrived, their morals, manners and customs. They tell us how the government machinery functioned, how the revenue was raised, how the forts were guarded and how justice was dispensed. They tell us of political movements, of the hopes and fears, and of the strength and weakness of the people for over a century. These diaries are, however, not exhaustive. The extracts of diaries given by Rao Bahadur G. S. Sardesai in *Peshwa Daftar* Volume XXII and others usefully supplement the information given in these diaries.

*Shahuchi Rojnishi* edited by Vad is very valuable for some of the historical events of the period and appointments of some of the high officers of the State and so is his *Balaji Bajirao Rojnishi*, Volumes II and III. Only these books have been used.

(51) *Marathi Rumals* I and II edited by Bhavé. No important information is available from them. A paper in *Rumal* I discloses that Shahu had a son from his junior wife, Sagunabai, who was named Shambhuji and who died three years old.

(52) *Kaifiyats Yadis, -etc.* Rao Bahadur Ganesh Chimnaji Vad selected certain records from the Alienation Office, Poona, about families of historical renown in the Deccan. They were later edited by Purshotam Vishram Mawjee and D. B. Parasnis. Since these papers did not form part of the original records of the Peshwa's government, they do not possess any independent value but they contain interesting and useful information regarding the historical houses in the Deccan. The *Kaifiyats* are divided into five parts: the first pertains to the Maratha Sardars, the second to the Brahman and other Sardars, the third to the *Swamis* and other religious personages, the fourth to the Muhammadan Sardars and the fifth to the district hereditary officers. It has been very little consulted.

(53) *Sanads and Letters*. Selected from the government records, in the Alienation Office, Poona, by Rao Bahadur Ganesh Chimnaji Vad and edited by Purshotam Vishram Mawjee and D. B. Parasnis. It contains *sanads* which have been classified under five heads: (1) *sanads* by Hindu kings before the Muhammadan period, (2) papers of the Muhammadan period, (3) papers containing reference to ancestors of Shivaji Maharaj, (4) papers of

the period of Shambhuji, Rajaram and Shivaji III. The last chapter has proved indispensable for this book.

(54) *Treaties, Agreements and Sanads*. The selection was made by Rao Bahadur Ganesh Chimnaji Vad and they were later edited by Purshotam Vishram Mawjee and D. B. Parasnis. It contains almost all important and original *sanads*. Much use has been made of this selection. This selection contains the agreement between the *Peshwa* and Tara Bai in which the latter openly declared Ramraja to be an impostor. Since the selection has been made from original papers it has great historical importance.

(55) *Aitihasik Patravayavhara*. It is a collection of 447 original letters most of which were published in the *Kavya Itihas Samgraha* and the *Bharatvarsha*. They have been chronologically arranged and edited by Rao Bahadur G. S. Sardesai and others. The dates of most of these letters have been corrected and finally settled and obscure points have been annotated by the editors.

(56) *Aitihasik Patren Yadi Waghairé*. It is a collection of 501 original letters which appeared from time to time in the now defunct *Kavya Itihas Samgraha* of late Rao Bahadur Kashinath Narayan Sané. In editing these, Sané did his best but considering the haphazard growth of the series and the publication of each letter immediately as it came into his hands, it was only natural that he has given no dates to many letters and failed to identify the persons and interpret correctly events mentioned in some of them. A chronological arrangement of the papers was out of the question in his publication. These were annotated, chronologically arranged and dated by Rao Bahadur G. S. Sardesai, assisted by Y. H. Kalé and V. S. Vakaskar. These two volumes—*Kavya Itihas Samgraha Patren Yadi Waghairé* and *Aitihasik Patren*—have now been brought abreast to the latest research and provide absolutely reliable original sources for the study of Maratha history.

(57) *Rajaram Charitam*. The work was composed in Sanskrit by Keshav Pandit who seems to have accompanied Rajaram on his perilous journey to Jinji. Keshav Pandit belonged to the Sangameshwar Taluka in the Ratnagiri district. The work was found in the Saraswati Mahal Library at Tanjore and has been translated both into Marathi and English by V. S. Bøndrey and

published by the Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal, Poona. It gives a graphic account of Rajaram's journey to Jinji.

(58) *The Jedhé Shakavali*. The Jedhé Shakavali was found by late B. G. Tilak with the Jedhé Deshmukhs of Kari near Bhor whose ancestors frequently changed sides during the War of Maratha Independence. The chronology as it has come to us runs from 1618 to 1697. In the words of Sir Jadunath Sarkar, "Its correctness depends upon three conditions, viz. (a) the Jedhés' personal knowledge of what they wrote down, (b) their promptness in recording every event after its happening, instead of trusting to a dim and distant memory, and (c) the accuracy of the transcriber of the only manuscript of it. . . . The dates in the Jedhé chronology are often demonstrably wrong." The dates of the Jedhé are, therefore, not to be relied upon unless supported by some other authority. The text has been edited by D. V. Apte and S. M. Divekar and has been published by the Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal, Poona, in the *Shivacharitra Pradip*.

(59) *Gadadhar Prahlad Shakavali*. This chronology was found in the papers of the Atré family which was closely connected with the family of Shahu's *Pratinidhi*, Gadadhar Prahlad. The *Shakavali* begins with the *Shake* year 1619 and ends with the *Shake* year 1629. The text has been published in the *Shivacharitra Pradip* published by the Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal, Poona, and it has been edited by K. V. Purandaré. It mentions some important facts such as the coronation of Shivaji III and the raids organised by Tara Bai in Malwa.

(60) *Shiv Digvijaya*. It was published by P. R. Nandurabarkar and L. K. Dandekar. It abounds in historical anachronisms and is, therefore, not very reliable. It mentions Tara Bai's marriage and says that she was very beautiful. A translation of it has been published by Dr. S. N. Sen.

(61-63) *Bakhars*. The *Chitnis Bakhar* was written by Malhar Ramrao Chitnis under the orders of Shahu Maharaj the younger *alias* Aba Sahib in 1810-1811. The dates of the *bakhars* are mostly wrong. No reference has been made to the documents on which this work was based. Sometimes events are wrongly narrated, and names of places and persons are wrongly given. But they

provide a connected narrative of most of the important events and cannot, therefore, be completely ignored. The following *bakhars* have been used:

*Thorley Shahu Maharaj Yanche Charitra, Sambhaji ani Rajaram Yanchi Charitren and Dhakte Ramraja Va Dhakte Shahu Maharaj Yanchi Charitren.*

(64) *Selections from the Historical Records of the Hereditary Minister of Baroda consisting of letters from Bombay, Baroda, Poona and Satara Governments.* Collected and translated into English by Rao Bahadur B. A. Gupte and published by the Calcutta University, it contains mostly *Sanads* granting village Kalambe in the Wai district which were renewed by Tara Bai. It contains a historic anachronism in as much as it says that when the original *Sanads* from Shahu Maharaj were burnt, fresh ones were secured from Tara Bai and Rajaram. Document No. 52 of this selection is a chronicle. It makes a mention about the intrigues for succession which preceded the death of Shahu. Mention is also made of Damaji Gaikwar's invasion. Since it is a later compilation, it is of no independent historic value.

#### MARATHI JOURNALS

(65-69) The *Kavya Itihas Samgraha* was started by Kashinath Narayan Sané and others in 1878 and it continued for 11 years. It published the *Chitnis Bakhar* in instalments and also some historic letters, petitions etc. of very great value. These letters, petitions, etc. have since been incorporated in the two volumes of historical letters edited by Sardesai and others — *Aitihāsik Patren* and *Aitihāsik Patren Yadi Waghaire*. Other important items of this journal are *Peshwanchi Bakhar*, *Peshwanchi Shakavali*, *Marathi Samrajyachi Chhoti Bakhar*.

Two journals devoted purely to history were started by Rao Bahadur D. B. Parasnis. The *Bharatvarsha* continued for only two years (1899-1900) but its 24 numbers contain many original records and learned reconstructions of Maratha history. The *Shahu Maharajchi Bakhar* published in it is attributed to his *Chitnis*, Govindrao. It gives important information about the intrigues

and the final choice of Ramraja. The *Pant Amatyaichi Bakhar*, the *Pant Pratinidhichi Bakhar*, the *Pant Pratinidhichi Bakhriyar Tippanen*, the *Pant Pradhan Yanchi Dusri Shakavali* and the articles on the Maratha War of Independence after the death of Shambhuji have been fully utilised. Most of the original letters of historic importance given in it have been incorporated in the *Aitihāsik Patren* of Rao Bahadur Sardesai and others.

The other Parasnis journal, the *Itihas Samgraha*, was still more important. It was started in 1908 and continued for 7 years. It contains original material of first-rate importance. The portion most utilised in the present work is *Peshwa Daftaratil Mahiti*, *Aitihāsik Tippanen*, *Prachin Marathe Sardar*, *Aitihāsik Goshti*, *Aitihāsik Sphutik Lekh* and *Aitihāsik Charitren*.

Another old journal of some historic importance was *Ramdas ani Ramdasi* and *Itihas ani Aitihāsik* published by the Dhulia Society. They were mainly devoted to the literature of that sect, but now and then some articles or original papers appeared in them which throw light on events and persons of historic importance. It has been very little used.

#### OTHER LANGUAGES

(70) *Storia do Mogor*. Books I-IV by Niccolao Manucci who came to India in January, 1656, and took service under Prince Dara Shukoh and later under Shah Alam. He lived in India for 60 years, travelled all over the country and died at Madras in 1717. His bulky work has been translated by William Irvine. Volumes III and IV of the English translation give full information about the Deccan campaigns of Aurangzib and the counter-offensive launched by Tara Bai. Detailed information is given about the Maratha raids in Malwa. Manucci tells us that the force which Nimaji Sindhia led into Malwa in 1703-04 was divided into two divisions—one went towards Sironj and the other towards Mandu. Sir Jadunath Sarkar's critical observations on the extent of the reliability of the accounts of European travellers are, however, worthy of attention. "Their works are of undoubted value as throwing light on the condition of the people, the state of trade and industry. . . . Moreover, the criticism of Indian institutions by foreign

observers has a freshness and weight of its own. But with regard to the political history of India, apart from the few events in which they took part or which they personally witnessed, their reports merely reproduced the *bazar* rumour and the stories current among the populace and cannot be set against the evidence of contemporary histories and letters in Persian. From their position these foreign travellers had no access to the best sources of information; the State archives were closed to them. They visited the makers of Indian history only occasionally and as suppliants for favours; hence they could not derive the oral information which only familiar intercourse with the highest personages in camp and court would have given them. Finally, their imperfect knowledge of literary Persian prevented them from using the written annals of the time and checking the reports they had received orally." These remarks of the veteran scholar are applicable to Manucci in a smaller degree as he was in the Mughal service for some time. When he was thrown out, he practised as a doctor. He was an eye-witness to the devastation caused by Aurangzib's campaign in the Deccan and has vividly described the dirty condition of his camp.

(71) *Madras Diaries and Consultation Minutes* (Fort St. George). They are absolutely reliable records maintained by the English factory at Madras. The English merchants kept themselves fully informed of the activities of the rulers of the land under whose jurisdiction they carried on their trade and on whose lands they built their factories. Such information was promptly recorded. Their dates are absolutely correct. Rajaram while at Jinji constantly came into contact with them. The port of Tevenapatam (afterwards Fort St. David) was sold to the English by Rajaram with a gun shot of land.

(72) *Memoirs of François Martin* for the period 1665-1694 in 3 volumes. Only the portion for the last four years is relevant to the subject. Martin as the chief of the French settlement at Pondicherry came in direct contact with Rajaram's government at Jinji. He has written from personal knowledge about the siege of Jinji and the treacherous conduct of Zulfiqar Khan during the siege of Jinji.

(73) *La compagnie Indes et François Martin* by Paul Kaeppelin

(Paris, 1908) is an extremely valuable narrative with exact citations of original documents and sometimes even extracts from them. He mentions the fact that Zulfiqar Khan wrote to the French not to give shelter to Rajaram or allow him to escape in an English ship.

#### SECONDARY SOURCES AND LATER WORKS—MARATHI

(74) *Marathi Riyasat* by Rao Bahadur G. S. Sardesai is the most comprehensive and reliable general history of the Marathas. A revised edition of it has come out in handy parts. In it is incorporated the latest research, but the dates of it have been revised in some cases by the author in his latest work in English—the *New History of the Marathas*.

(75) *Inchalkaranji Samsthache Itihas* by Vasudev Vaman-Shastri Khare. It has been written on the basis of original papers found with the chiefs of the *Jagir* of Inchalkaranji. The Inchalkaranji chiefs were the relations of the *Peshwas*. Balaji Vishwanath's daughter, Anubai, was married to Vyankatrao Ghorpadé, and they consequently took a great part in the activities of the *Peshwas*. This book throws considerable light on many episodes of Tara Bai's career.

(76) *Kolhapurcha Arvachin Itihas* by B. P. Modak. It is a history of the Kolhapur State from its foundation. Only the earlier portion dealing with Tara Bai's activities has been used.

(77) *Nagpurkar Bhonslyanchi Bakhar* by K. R. Gupte. As a later compilation it possesses no independent value, but is useful for giving a connected account of the Nagpur family. It can be profitably used, supplemented by No. XXII of the *Peshwa Daftar* volumes. A revised edition of this *Bakhar* has come out.

(78) *Jadhav Gharanyachi Kaifiyat* by O. D. Dalvi. It throws sufficient light on Chandrasen Jadhav's activities against Shahu in collusion with the Nizam and other Mughal officers.

(79) *Shivacharitra Pradip* edited by D. V. Apte and S. N. Divekar. It contains the *Jedhe Shakavali* and the *Gadadhar Prahlad Shakavali*. The rest of it is not of much use for Tara Bai.

(80) *Mughal Mardani Tara Bai* by Rangubai Jadhav. It is a bulky *apologia* of Tara Bai.



(81) Index of places and names occurring in the volumes of Rajwadé's *Marathanchi Itihasache Sadhnen* published by the Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal, Poona, is a good compendium for research workers.

(82) The *Aitihasik Sankirna Sahitya* series published by the Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal, Poona, has published historical letters and learned discourses having some bearing on the subject. It mentions the appointment of Shankraji Narayan to the office of *Sachiv* and also makes a reference to the conversion of Khandoji in the place of Shahu.

#### ENGLISH

(83) *History of the Marathas* by Captain James Grant Duff in 3 volumes. It is a pioneer work written in 1826, seventeen years after Scott Waring's *History of the Marathas*. As the second of Mount Stuart Elphinstone, the last Resident at the *Peshwa's* court at Poona, Duff had access to original Marathi documents. Grant Duff's resources were greater than Scott Waring's and Orme's. He primarily used the papers found with the *Chhatrapati* at Satara, in the office of the *Peshwa* at Poona, and made considerable use of Khafi Khan's account. With the progress of research his work has become partly out of date and requires to be re-written. Only the first and second volumes have been used.

(84) *Rise of the Maratha Power* by M. G. Ranadé is also now of antiquarian value from the point of view of facts but its analysis of the general features of Maratha history is masterly. Only the chapter on Jinji and the following chapters have been consulted.

(85) *Historical Fragments of the Mughal Empire* of Robert Orme are not of much value to the subject.

Volume III of his other work is important in as much as it contains maps and plans to accompany his *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*. This volume contains a detailed plan of the fort of Jinji. The map of Coromandal is also useful for the location of places covering the activities of Zulfiqar Khan in that region.

(86) *History of the Deccan* by J. Scott, Vol. II, contains the useful *memoirs* of Iradat Khan in translation.

(87) *Annals of the East India Company* by J. Bruce. It is also a history of some interest as a pioneer work from 1600 to 1708. One or two facts have been taken from the last portions of it.

(88) *Travels in India* by Tavernier edited by Ball in two volumes. It is useful for old names and places and roads in the Mughal period.

(89) *History of the Maratha People* by C. A. Kincaid and D. B. Parasnis, Vols. I and II. It is a general history of the Marathas like that of Grant Duff. Both Marathi and Persian sources have been made use of in the compilation of this work, but on account of the progress of research many facts have come to light which are not to be found in these volumes. The counter-offensive launched by Tara Bai has been mentioned in glowing terms.

(90) *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Volume VII, contains the translation of Khafi Khan's history, *Muntakhab-i-Lubab*. At places the translation is wanting in accuracy.

(91) *History of Aurangzib*, Vols. IV and V by Sir Jadunath Sarkar. It is the most valuable work for the period. The dates have been revised in the Hindi edition of the *Shorter History*.

(92) *Fall of the Mughal Empire* by Sir Jadunath Sarkar. It is a masterly work but very little has been taken from it. Tara Bai had become too insignificant for the Mughals to deserve notice.

(93) *The India of Aurangzib*, (topography statistics and roads) compared with *The India of Akbar* with extracts from the *Khulasat-t-tawarikh* and the *Chahar Gulshan* translated and annotated by Sir Jadunath Sarkar. It is invaluable for old Mughal roads and names of places.

(94) *House of Shivaji* (studies and documents of Maratha History—Royal period) by Sir Jadunath Sarkar. It is the most useful supplement to his monumental work on Aurangzib for the early period of this book. It also contains a translation of the letters written by Aurangzib to Ramchandra Nilkanth and Parashuram Trimbak.

(95) *Later Mughals* in 2 volumes by William Irvine and edited by Sir Jadunath Sarkar. It is exclusively based on Persian authorities and is indispensable for Mughal affairs after the death of Aurangzib. The first volume from 1707-1720 has been considerably

drawn upon, particularly Chapter IV, dealing with the affairs of Farrukh-Siyar. When Irvine wrote, much was not known about the Marathas. For his information about Maratha affairs he mostly relied on Grant Duff. Sir Jadunath Sarkar has utilised Marathi sources in his notes so far as they were available to him in 1920.

(96) *Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah I* by Dr. Yusuf Hussain Khan is the history of the founder of the Haidarabad State. It loses much of its value as it has completely ignored Marathi sources. Use has been made of it to study the Mughal side of the Maratha-Mughal relations.

(97) *Rise of the Peshwas* by Dr. H. N. Sinha. It was the first attempt to use original Marathi sources in a modern English work on Maratha history.

(98) *History of Gujrat* by Khan Bahadur Commissariat is a useful compendium for tracing Maratha raids in Gujrat during the early period and also for studying the activities of the Dabhadés, who were partisans of Tara Bai.

(99) *Malwa in Transition or A Century of Anarchy—The First Phase (1693-1765)* by Dr. Raghubir Singh. It is a good history of Malwa based on original Persian and Marathi sources. The early Maratha raids in Malwa are given in considerable detail.

(100-102) *Bombay Gazetteer* and the *Poona and Satara Gazetteers*. They are rich in topographical detail but their facts are no authentic history after all.

(103) *Main Currents of Maratha History* by Rao Bahadur G. S. Sardesai is a collection of Patna University Readership Lectures in 1926 which were enlarged, re-written and published by him in 1933 in the form of a small book. As its title shows, it touches only the main features of Maratha history. Much new material has come to light since its publication.

(104) *The New History of the Marathas* in 3 volumes by Rao Bahadur G. S. Sardesai incorporates in it the latest research. Enough use has been made of the first two volumes. It naturally does not contain as many details as his *Marathi Riyasat*, but it shall remain the last word on Maratha history for some years to come.

(105) *The Sardesai Commemoration Volume* edited by R. Tikekar is a good collection of articles on history. Use has been made of

the article by Jaichand Vidyalkar showing how the activities of Tara Bai against the Mughals had their repercussions in other parts of Hindustan.

### *Journals*

#### *MARATHI*

(106-108) The *Trimasik* of the Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal, Poona, and its annual numbers and proceedings of the Research Conferences have been utilised. In some of them, original letters, *Sanads* etc. of considerable historic importance and also some learned dissertations are to be found.

(109) *The Kesari* had also sometimes published articles and papers of considerable historical importance.

#### *ENGLISH*

(110) *Modern Review*. Some articles of Sir Jadunath Sarkar have been published in it from time to time which provide matter for history. A translation of the *Tarikh-i-Shivaji*, a Persian version of the *91 Qalmi Bakhar*, appears in the volumes of this magazine in 1907. It mentions Rajaram's first marriage.

(111) *The Islamic Culture*. In the columns of this magazine have also appeared from time to time articles and other papers of historical value. The text and translation of Nizam-ul-Mulk's letter detailing his activities against Shahu in collusion with Shambhuji of Kolhapur has been published in it by Sir Jadunath Sarkar.

(112) *Proceedings of the meetings of the Indian Historical Records Commission* have brought to light many new finds. A detailed account of the siege of Satara by Aurangzib based on original sources has been given by Sir Jadunath Sarkar in the Proceedings of 1922.

## CHAPTER I

### THE EARLY CAREER OF TARA BAI

#### 1. *Tara Bai's Parentage, Birth and Marriage*

THE DEATH of Senapati Pratap Rao Gujar at the battle of Nesari<sup>1</sup> brought into prominence a comparatively less eminent soldier Hansaji Mohité, a resident of the small village of Talbid (Karad, District Satara). It was a problem to fill up the void created by Pratap Rao's untimely death. On April 8, 1674, Shivaji held a grand review of his troops at Chiplun, and his choice fell on Hansaji Mohité, on whom he conferred the title of Hambir Rao and appointed him as his commander-in-chief.

To Hambir Rao was born a daughter<sup>2</sup> in the year 1675, a few months after the epoch-making coronation of Shivaji. This daughter was given the name of Sita Bai, which was changed to Tarau Saheb or Tara Bai in her husband's household when she was married to the captive prince, Rajaram, by his dreaded brother, Chhatrapati Shambhuji. This change of name, says the author of the *Shiva-Digvijaya*,<sup>3</sup> was a compliment to her shining beauty and charms that veiled her masculine virtues and imperious temperament.

No chronicler records the date of Tara Bai's marriage with Rajaram at the prison fortress of Raigarh; but it is known that she was eight at the time of her marriage and about five years younger than Rajaram. This places her marriage in 1683 or 1684. Shivaji had already married Rajaram to Janki Bai, a daughter of his *Senapati*, Pratap Rao Gujar, on March 7, 1680, just twenty-five days before his death. That was the last paternal duty performed by Shivaji, and since he loved Rajaram dearly he celebrated the occasion with great pomp and show and spared no expense. The *Brahmans* who came from the North got so much money as they had never received

<sup>1</sup> Nesari is 45 miles south of Kolhapur. Here Pratap Rao Gujar was killed on February 24, 1674.

<sup>2</sup> Rangoji Rao Mohite was her brother.

<sup>3</sup> *Shiva-Digvijaya*, p. 28.

on such occasions in their own part of the country.<sup>1</sup> But this marriage, over which there was so much rejoicing and so much money spent, did not prove very auspicious and did not last long. Barely twenty-five days after it, died the great Shivaji and then followed at the Maratha court unprecedented scenes of intrigue and bloodshed. By June, 1680, Rajaram was a prisoner in the fort of Raigarh along with his mother, Soyra Bai, and his wife, Janki Bai. On a charge of conspiracy Shambhuji put Rajaram's mother to a cruel death in October, 1681. Janki Bai, the first wife of Rajaram, also died perhaps about this time leaving behind a daughter, Savitri Bai. Rajaram was only a security prisoner with freedom of movement within the four walls of the Raigarh fort. To remove his pining loneliness after the death of his wife, Janki Bai, and also perhaps to provide a diversion from politics and intrigue Shambhuji gave two brides to Rajaram. The first of the two was Sita Bai *alias* Tara Bai, the daughter of the veteran Hambir Rao, to whom Shambhuji was greatly indebted; and a junior one, Rajas Bai, of the Ghatgé family of Kagal. Rajaram later also married a third wife, Ambika Bai.

## 2. *Conjugal Life of Tara Bai*

The conjugal life of Tara Bai was anything but happy. The prison of Raigarh was her bridal chamber and, while in the bloom of life, she found herself a helpless fugitive flying from fort to fort, and sometimes separated for long periods from her husband.

Tara Bai and Rajas Bai, who lived to play a considerable part in Maratha history, were opposites in character as their later life indicates. Both possessed the untutored genius of their sex for intrigue and dissimulation—the indispensable weapons of defence and offence in the arena of a harem. In spite of her shining beauty Tara Bai seems to have been less lovable and less feminine; she was respected and feared by her husband and his ministers for her domineering personality and political sagacity. Rajaram was no worthy husband of Tara Bai either in morals or strength of character. He was an indifferent mediocrity in comparison with Tara Bai, and equally inferior to her were her other co-wives.

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Shivaji*.

Tara Bai was all brains and no heart, and if she had any of the latter it was less responsive to nobler sentiments running counter to her narrow self-interest. Though "a thing of beauty", Tara Bai could hardly "be a joy for ever" either to her husband or to her co-wives, and in later life even to her country. Her married life was unsettled on account of the uncertainty of life and fortune of her husband and of her own future. Her mother-in-law's cruel fate had been an object lesson to her as regards her own lot in the event of a political failure, and she knew well that her safety and lease of power lay in raising to the throne a child of her womb. There was, however, always the fear of the birth of a first legitimate son by any of her co-wives before her own. Besides, Rajaram had already got an illegitimate son named Karna (born of his concubine, Saguna Bai), and he loved him to the extent of making no secret of his intention to make him his heir. These were thoughts distressing enough to make a young girl in her teens break down helplessly; but Tara Bai was made of sterner stuff.

Tara Bai with her husband left Raigarh for Pratapgarh on April 5, 1689, to elude capture when Zulfiqar Khan tightened the siege of Raigarh. The fugitives fled from Pratapgarh to Panhala in August, and a month later Rajaram bade farewell to his family and started in disguise for Jinji which he reached on November 15, 1689.<sup>1</sup> There he set up a regular court within the besieged fortress and recruited a fresh army as well as a new harem of concubines to forget clean the devotion and sufferings of his poor wives left behind in Maharashtra. The Maratha chiefs were scandalised by Rajaram's irregular life, and Yesu Bai, from her captivity in the Mughal camp, is also said to have written to Rajaram to call his three wives from their hiding at Vishalgarh to Jinji. At last they were conveyed partly by sea and partly by land route to Jinji, at great risk early in 1694. There, in the beleaguered fortress of Jinji, Tara Bai gave birth to her first and only child, a son, on June 9, 1696. About two years after that her younger co-wife, Rajas Bai Ghatge, bore another son to Rajaram at Panhala on May 23, 1698, after the hair-breadth escape of himself and his family from Jinji. Ambika Bai had only

<sup>1</sup> Rajwade, Volume XV, Doct. No. 347, announces Rajaram's arrival at Jinji. The document is dated April, 1690. Martin gives the correct date.

a daughter who died in her infancy. Tara Bai's son was named Shivaji and that of Rajas Bai, Shambhuji.

Tara Bai as the mother of the heir-apparent to the shadowy throne of Shivaji had to reckon with Rajaram's beloved mistress, Saguna Bai, and her promising son, Karna. From this time Tara Bai thoughtless of her husband's future than that of her own child, less of love and more of war and court intrigue against this illegitimate pretender. In fact the birth of Shivaji marked the end of the conjugal life of Tara Bai, and the beginning of her active diplomatic and political career.

It is necessary, therefore, to take stock of the political situation of the Deccan during the last two critical decades of the seventeenth century that forms the background of the life of Tara Bai in her role as the guiding genius of the Maratha struggle for sheer existence against the grim determination of Aurangzib to stake the whole resources of his empire in destroying the Maratha nation root and branch.

It was, however, her destiny to outlive her husband; to outlive the last flare of Maratha glory of the whole Peshwa regime; to be hailed at one stage as the guardian deity of Maratha independence against the mighty Aurangzib, and turn thereafter a traitress to her country's best interest, and die in hoary old age, unsung, unwept, nay, even accursed.



## CHAPTER II

### TARA BAI IN THE LIMELIGHT OF POLITICS

#### 1. *Aurangzib and his Mission in the South*

AURANGZIB BREATHED free in the North after the death of Mirza Rajah Jai Singh and Maharajah Jaswant Singh, the twin pillars of infidelity in Hindustan. But brave Durgadas Rathor appeared as a comet in the political sky of Hindustan and roused the Rajputs to arms for shaking off the Mughal yoke. He had drawn to his side Aurangzib's favourite son, Muhammad Akbar, by dangling before him the prospect of making a Shah Jahan of his own father. When worsted in fight and diplomacy by the astute Aurangzib, Durgadas pushed the storm-centre to the South by escorting the rebellious prince Akbar to the court of Shambhuji in June, 1681. Aurangzib made peace with Marwar and hurried across the Narmada with the intention of giving a finale to his project of making India a *dar-ul-Islam* by crushing the *Kafirs* and the schismatic Shias of Bijapur and Golconda.

Victory followed upon victory. Bijapur fell in September, 1686, and a year after, Golconda ceased to exist. The Maratha kingdom under the headstrong, cruel and vicious Shambhuji showed signs of final collapse. With an enemy like Aurangzib in front he waged a fruitless war against the Portuguese of Goa. He alienated by his vicious character the old council of eight ministers of his father's regime, and raised to the highest position a poet and flatterer from the North, Kavi Kalash, contemptuously called Kalusha, to the utter disgust of the Maratha nobles. Everyone trembled for his fate on account of his cruel and vindictive nature. Of the old nobles only Senapati Hambir Rao Mohité managed to keep his head on his shoulders. His daughter, Tara Bai, married to the captive prince, Rajaram, remained a sort of hostage for her father. He died in a battle with Aurangzib's Bijapuri General, Rustam Khan, near Wai in October, 1687. Shambhuji felt utterly helpless after the death of his commander-in-chief. Instead of taking the field in person, he,

under the influence of his evil genius, the Kanaujiya Kavi Kalash, began drinking the cup of voluptuous pleasure to its lees, away from the reach of the Mughals. But his days were numbered.

Meanwhile, Aurangzib had been drawing his net closer around Shambhuji and ravaging the Maratha country most mercilessly. The lynx-eyed old Emperor had espied all the rents and holes of the Maharashtra polity and had taken full advantage of the inherent defects of the Maratha character. Maratha national unity brought about by Shivaji proved only a passing phase in their political career. Almost every Maratha calculated the interest of the nation only in terms of his own loss and gain. He had no scruples in going over to the side of the Mughals for good pay and handsome *jagir*. His love for his religion had not that totalitarian hold and appeal which Islam had upon the followers of the Prophet. By 1688, Aurangzib had as many Marathas fighting for him as those against him. Many of them cared more for their immediate deliverance from the tyranny of Shambhuji than from the political servitude under the Mughals. But Aurangzib overshot his mark in the very hour of triumph.

## 2. *Fate of Shambhuji and his Family*

Disaffection and treason stared at Shambhuji on all sides throughout his short and inglorious reign. Many leading Maratha chiefs had been put to death by him and more were behind the prison-bars of his hill fortresses. Though in the grip of a life-and-death struggle with the Mughal Emperor, the Maratha nation headed by Shambhuji seemed indifferent or helpless in the face of the enemy. After having taken vengeance on the Shirkes for their attack on the devilish Kalusha, Shambhuji retired with his favourite to the beautiful retreat of Sangameshwar with only a few companions of his debauchery. Aurangzib's general, Shaikh Nizam, got the news at Kolhapur, and making a swoop on the unsuspecting Shambhuji captured him and Kalusha on February 1, 1689.

The son of Shivaji recovered his true self under the torture of the Mughal prison. Aurangzib as usual offered him the choice of a cruel death or a comfortable vassalage on the condition of his conversion to Islam. Shambhuji fell foul upon the Prophet of Islam

and demanded a daughter of Aurangzib in marriage, having been determined to court death which alone could expiate for his sins against his people and deprive Aurangzib of the fruits of his triumph. Shambhuji's limbs were torn to pieces and given to dogs, but his spirit laughed at the fury of Aurangzib. No worse character in history was made a greater martyr, nor courted death for a better cause. Aurangzib was for a while deceived by appearances and thought that he had killed a nation by cutting off the head that wore its crown. There was rejoicing in the Mughal camp, and gloom and despair at Raigarh which sheltered the surviving members of Shivaji's family.

Thick clouds of evil omen descended on the land of Maharashtra when the news of the terrible fate of Shambhuji spread like wild fire to every Maratha home. "It seemed as if Shivaji, and the men whom he had led to victory, had lived and died in vain. The great deluge, against which Shahji and Shivaji had struggled to protect the country for over sixty years, now swept over the land, carrying everything before it, and there seemed no sign of any possible resistance."<sup>1</sup> However, the unappeased spirit of Shambhuji seemed to cry for blood, more blood—blood of the children of Maharashtra as oblations at the altar of liberty which no tyrant dare overthrow. Old enmities were forgotten and though everything was lost, there was hope in every brave heart stirred up by the call of their country to fight the Mughal Empire to its finish.

Prompt decisions were taken at the fort of Raigarh. Eight days after the capture of Shambhuji, Changoji Ketkar, the *Qiledar* of Raigarh, and another official, Yesaji Kank, released Rajaram from prison and seated him on the throne in consultation apparently with Yesu Bai, widow of Shambhuji and the mother of the infant Shahu. Prahlad Niraji, Manaji Moré and other political prisoners were set free. They formed the council of the new sovereign to decide on the future line of action. The Mughal army laid siege to Raigarh on March 25, 1689, and its fall was only a question of days. Of resources for resistance there were hardly any; the field army was scattered like atoms over a wide area and broken down in morale under the shock of the calamity; forts out of repairs and without provisions; the public treasury was empty, and the new king

<sup>1</sup> Ranade: *Rise of the Maratha Power*, p. 177.

was without any territory beyond the walls of some of his forts which had not so far fallen to the Mughals. In short, Shivaji's kingdom was a thing of the past, and a new one was to be created out of the wreckage of the old. At such a crisis came forward a Brahman, Prahlad Niraji, son of the deceased *Nyayadhish* and diplomat Niraji Ravji, to attempt the impossible. Everything would have come to a deadlock but for the noble self-sacrifice of the heroic Yesu Bai, widow of Shambhuji. She offered to remain with her son at Raigarh and court a fate perhaps worse than death should the fortress fall. She insisted that Rajaram should assume full regal powers and headship of the national struggle and escape from Raigarh for her sake and the future of her son. The emergency council at Raigarh further decided that should Maharashtra become unsafe for Rajaram, he should fly to Karnatak on the east coast and make the Mughals fight on two fronts. They "planned their measures with wisdom, unanimity and firmness" at this terrible national crisis.

Before the death of Shambhuji, Aurangzib had already taken the forts of Salhir and Trimbak. By the end of May of the fateful year 1689, Rajgarh, Rohida, Torna, Kalyan and Mahuli had also fallen to him. Thus, in the words of Saqi Must'ad Khan, the author of the *Maasir*, "the forts taken by the imperialists in 1689 were too many to be named."<sup>1</sup> In north Konkan his able agent, Matbar Khan, was on the high tide of success, taking fort after fort.<sup>2</sup> Aurangzib pressed the siege of Raigarh with great vigour but since food and fodder could be grown within this massive fort it could hold out for long. The treachery of man, however, opened its door to the enemy much earlier than expected. Although Aurangzib had provided Itiqad Khan with all that he wanted, the Khan knew the gravity of his position and hence had taken resort to diplomacy to expedite his success. One of the defenders, Suryaji Pisal, cared more for his personal aggrandisement than for the national cause. He opened the gates of the fort on the condition that he was given the *Deshmukhi* of Wai by the Emperor.<sup>3</sup> The inevitable befell the lot of

<sup>1</sup> *Maasir*, p. 311.

<sup>2</sup> Sarkar: *Aurangzib*, Vol. V, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Itiqad Khan, on whom his gratified master conferred the title of Zulfiqar Khan, secured for Pisal the *Deshmukhi* of Wai. Curiously enough Chitnis does not make a mention of Suryaji Pisal's treachery.

Yesu Bai and her son. Raigarh fell to the arms of Zulfiqar Khan on November 3, 1689, and the royal prisoners were carried to the camp of Aurangzib in honour and safety. Better sense and political wisdom had dawned on Aurangzib who regretted the frustration of his policy by the execution of Shambhuji. Yesu Bai and her child were kept in honourable captivity as pawns of diplomacy against the fugitive Rajaram and his partisans.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. *The Beginning of Tara Bai's Political Career*

Rajaram and his wives bade their last farewell to noble Yesu Bai at Raigarh on April 5, 1689, and started on a new journey, a life of suffering but of freedom. They first went to Pratapgarh and thence to Panhala for safety. With Rajaram had come away Ramchandra Nilkanth, Prahlad Niraji and Shankaraji Malhar to rouse the country to arms. Their desultory fighting lessened the pressure on Raigarh which held out bravely till Rajaram was safely beyond the reach of the Mughals on his way to Jinji.

Before his departure from Maharashtra, Rajaram invested Ramchandra Nilkanth with almost dictatorial powers for the administration of the home territory and for carrying on warfare with the Mughals on the western front. Such assumption of absolute authority by Ramchandra over his equals was sure to cause heart-burning among the Maratha chiefs. So, in order to disarm their jealousy, Tara Bai, the senior-most free member of the *Chhatrapati's* family left behind in Maharashtra, seems to have been associated with the *Hakumat-Panah* in the work of administration in nominal capacity. She was only fourteen at the time but she was after all the daughter of the deceased *Senapati*, Hambir Rao Mohité,

<sup>1</sup> The Emperor took kindly to Shahu and his party through the intercession of Zinat-un-nisa surnamed Padishah Begam, his second daughter. Shahu was given the rank of a 7-Hazari and the title of *Rajah*. The tents of Shahu, his mother and other near relations were pitched within the *Gulal-bar* and suitable arrangements were made for their maintenance. Chitnis, and following him other writers, attribute Zinat-un-nisa's good treatment of Shahu and his party to the tender feelings cherished by that lady first for Shivaji and then for Shambhuji. There is no solid historic evidence to support all that romantic nonsense. What seems probable is that Aurangzib's daughter was not so bigoted and vindictive as her father was. She seems to have been a kind-hearted and, broad-minded lady who did not see eye to eye with the practice and policy of her father and wanted to do a good turn to all in difficulty.

and, as her later career also shows, was far above the average in intelligence and capacity. Without having interfered with the measures of Ramchandra Nilkanth, she seems to have obtained a fairly wide reputation for her knowledge of civil and military matters. Unfortunately, no documents throw light on this period of Tara Bai's first experiments with politics and diplomacy.<sup>1</sup>

Rajaram left Panhala with a picked following in September, 1689, to take shelter in the strong fortress of Jinji, 60 miles south-east of Madras and 40 miles inside from the coast of Pondicherry. The party travelled under various disguises, and a vivid description of the perilous journey is given in the *Chitnis Bakhar* and also by Kesho Pandit, who seems to have been an eye-witness, in a small Sanskrit tract, *Rajaram Charitam*,<sup>2</sup> lately discovered in the Saraswati Mahal Library at Tanjore. Hotly pursued by the Mughal officers, whose vigilance was commanded by the emperor, he safely reached Jinji on November 15, 1689. He was well received in the Karnatak, and received special attention at the hands of the Rani of Bednur<sup>3</sup> and his cousin, Shahji II of Tanjore.<sup>4</sup> At Jinji he had to snatch power from the unwilling hands of his step-sister, Harji Mahadik's widow.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the discussion of this topic—Tara Bai's role in politics during the life-time of her husband—see Appendix to this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> An English and Marathi translation of the Sanskrit text with an introduction has been published by the Bharat Itihas Shamshodhak Mandal, Poona.

<sup>3</sup> Iswardas Nagar: *Fatuh-i-Alangiri*, p. 173; also *Maasir*, pp. 329, 331 and 332. Bednur is now in the Shimoga division of Mysore.

<sup>4</sup> *Madras Diary*, September, 1690.

<sup>5</sup> François Martin: *Memoirs*,

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER II

### *Tara Bai's Role in Politics during her Husband's Lifetime*

"The chiefs", says Khafi Khan, "then made Tara Bai, the chief wife, and mother of one son, regent. She was a clever, intelligent woman, and *had obtained a reputation during her husband's lifetime for her knowledge of civil and military matters.*" (Khafi Khan, 468; Elliot and Dawson, p. 367.)

Khafi Khan is positive in his assertion that she had obtained this reputation *during her husband's lifetime*, and so this remark has nothing to do with the period of her regency after the death of her husband. The remark thus relates to the period between March, 1689, and March, 1700. During this period she was first in Maharashtra, then at Jinji and then again in Maharashtra. This reputation must have been quite widespread before it reached Khafi Khan in the Mughal camp and postulates her taking part in the administration.

The version of Khafi Khan has been adopted by Sir Jadunath Sarkar: "Already in her husband's lifetime she had displayed masculine energy and intelligence, and begun to draw the threads of the administration into her own hands." (Sarkar: *Aurangzib*, Vol. V, p. 200.)

This view that she had taken part in the administration in the lifetime of her husband also finds support at the hands of a Marathi writer:

"तेव्हे राजा राम संजावरां लढत असतां ताराबाईने महाराष्ट्रांत एकाद्या प्रसिद्ध रानी प्रमाणें भ्रमल चालविला। नवरा जिवत असतां ही हिने रामचंद्र पंता सारखा जरब बसविनी, शिवाजीचो खरी मून।" (*Bharat Varsha* No. 8, Year 1, *Pant Pratidinidhichi Bakhrivar Tippian.*)

If the date of Document No. 23 of the *Bavda Daftar*, Volume I, be correct then it provides evidence on which this reputation was based. This document suggests that Tara Bai had some part in the administration in 1690, i.e. when she was in Maharashtra with Ramchandra Nilkanth. The relevant portion of the text is:

यादी चंदीच्या मुकामाहून धर्मादाय व इनामती व इसाफती व नूतन बतने कारकीर्दी महाराज राज श्री छत्रपति साहेबांनी दिली होती त्यांचा विचार मनास प्रणिता राज्यचा बंदोबस्त न होता देश्या सनदा ये ऊा दाखल जाहल्या ते समई श्रीमान महाराज मातु श्री ताराबाई साहेब या सर्व राज्य मंडळे मिलोन निर्णय केला येणे प्रमाणे बीतपशील सू ॥ इहदे तीसेन अलफ सु ॥ इहिदै तीसेन अलफ ।

The *Shuhur* or Arabic year given in the body of the document as it is printed in the *Bavda Daftar* volume is इहदी तीसेन अलफ which means 1091. The corresponding Christian year is 1690. (1091 + 599 = 1690.)

This very document is printed as No. 52 in Rajwadé's Volume VIII and the *Shuhur* year given in the body of the document is "इहदी अलफ" which is meaningless. This means 1001 of the Arabic year and 1600 of the Gregorian calendar. Tara Bai was not even born then. So evidently through the printer's devil "तीसेन" has been left out in Rajwadé volume. Of the two publications—the *Bavda Daftar* and Rajwadé's volume—the *Bavda Daftar* volume is a later publication and the editor of it is supposed to have had knowledge of the date assigned to this document by Rajwadé in his volume. In the *Bavda Daftar* the Arabic date given in the body of the document has been twice repeated as "इहदी तीसेन अलफ". The Christian year given in the *Bavda Daftar* volume corresponds to the Arabic year given in the document itself but this is not the case with Rajwadé. The Arabic year given in Rajwadé's volume is "इहदी" "अलफ". The corresponding Christian year is 1600 and not 1700. It is not known on what basis Rajwadé assigns the document to 1700. Rajwadé was probably guided by the general belief that Tara Bai came to power only in 1700 after the death of her husband. But if the date of this document be correct then it would dispel this general belief. It is admitted that this document is not a State document in the strict sense of the word but being a contemporary one its authenticity can be relied upon.

The document is a copy of a memorandum of a decision arrived at in the Royal Council in 1690 and Tara Bai is also said to have taken part in the proceedings. In 1690 Rajaram was at Jinji and Tara Bai was in Maharashtra. A large number of people repaired to Jinji in quest of *inams*, *vatans* and *saranjams*. At Jinji, Rajaram was a king without any territories, but in order to enlist a following



he distributed *jagirs* and *saranams* with a free hand. Most of the granted lands were in Maharashtra and so it was the local authority of that region which was to put in force the grants. The recipients of these grants came back to Maharashtra and applied to the local authority for the enforcement of their grants. Since, according to this document, the decision with regard to the enforcement of these grants was given by Tara Bai and the Royal Council in 1690, it seems that there was a Royal Council of which Tara Bai, being the senior-most free member of the Chhatrapati's family left behind in Maharashtra, can safely be presumed to have been at least the nominal or constitutional head. The functions of this council might have been only advisory because Rajaram had ordered that the orders of Ramchandra Nilkanth could not be set aside even by himself.

There is one more thing which stands in the way of this document being assigned to 1700 or thereafter. In view of Rajaram's order dated February 19, 1699, there was no need for the Royal Council headed by Tara Bai to deal with the matter which forms the subject matter of the document. In this order (published as No. 144 of Rajwade's Vol. III), Rajaram on his return to Maharashtra announced that all new *sanads* granted by him were to be considered as cancelled. Dues would be paid to the persons who held their *sanads* from the time of Shivaji. All the new *sanads* would be scrutinised by the *Nyayadhish*, Konher Shastri. Probably the suggestion made by the Royal Council in 1690 made Rajaram adopt this course on his return to Maharashtra. When the *Nyayadhish* was the competent authority for the scrutiny of these *sanads* why should the Royal Council have wasted its time about this matter.

### CHAPTER III

## THE MARATHA RECOVERY OF INITIATIVE

### 1. *Maharashtra after Rajaram's departure for Jinji*

THE COMBINED exertions of the statesmen and the generals brought into being a force of 40,000, which though too small to face Aurangzib in the open field, was big enough for creating mischief and for waging a hit-and-run sort of warfare with the Mughals. Establishing their base at Phalton they issued forth in small and highly mobile batches to harry the Emperor's march. One such raid, organised by Santa, aimed at killing Aurangzib in the midst of his army at Koregaon.<sup>1</sup> Although the raid failed to compass the death of Aurangzib, it gave to the Mughals the foretaste of what was to come next and also went a long way in rehabilitating the lost morale of the Marathas. Shaikh Nizam, the captor of Shambhuji, was routed when he was going to besiege Rajaram at Panhala. Dhanaji repelled an attack on his base at Phalton.<sup>2</sup> But these brilliant raids could not hide for long the pitiable state to which the Maratha State was reduced. After Rajaram's departure, the position was very bleak. The country's fortune was at its lowest ebb. The civil and military arrangements of Shivaji's time had collapsed; the soldiers were not paid regularly; the hill forts were not properly garrisoned or provisioned; and district revenues were farmed out to the highest bidder. Most of the forts and practically all the open country was in the Mughal hands. The child king, Shahu, and his mother were prisoners in the Mughal camp. Resourceless and penniless how were they to drive Aurangzib's grand army back to Hindustan?

<sup>1</sup>*Amatya Bavdekar Yanchi Kafiyat* in *Bharatvarsh*, year I, No. 10, p.16; *Kavya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi*, Document No. 9, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>For these exertions the three Ghorpade brothers, Santaji, Bahirji and Maloji were rewarded by Rajaram with the respective titles of Mamulkat-madar, Hindurao and Amir-ul-umrao. Dhanaji was given the title of *Jaisinghrao* and Vitthoji Chavan that of *Himmat Bahadur*.

## 2. *The New Maratha Court at Jinji*

Rajaram reached Jinji as a fugitive and as a lack-land prince with the twin purpose of diverting the Mughal army from his kingdom of Poona and re-taking the Bijapur and Golconda kingdoms with the help of the Nayaks.<sup>1</sup>

In obedience to the instructions of Yesu Bai, Rajaram assumed the ensigns of royalty and appointed the Council of Ministers, the *Ashta Pradhan*, with an additional member added to its original strength in Shivaji's time. This new post, the ninth one, that of the *Pratinidhi*, was created for Prahlad Niraji who continued to be the principal counsellor of Rajaram. People from all parts flocked to Jinji in quest of titles and grants of *vatan*-lands and Rajaram being anxious to add to his following obliged everybody as best as he could. From the financial point of view, this liberality was ill-advised. Rajaram had fled from Maharashtra with bare life; no regular revenue was coming to his exchequer and so his financial difficulties were great. In their extreme penury the Maratha government sold the fort of Tevenapatam (afterwards Fort St. David) with a gun-shot of land around it to the English.<sup>2</sup>

Rajaram had left his wives behind in Maharashtra and was living at Jinji with concubines. One of them, Saguna Bai, gave birth to a son, who was given the name of Karna. The child being very handsome, Rajaram was greatly attached to him and it was feared that he might even be nominated Rajaram's successor. Martin, who was in close and constant touch with the court at Jinji, says that Prahlad Niraji threw Rajaram into a life of debauchery and kept the young king constantly intoxicated by the habitual use of *ganja* and opium.

## 3. *The Mughal Policy of Terrorisation, Massacres, Bribery and Forced Conversions*

The wily Aurangzib could not fail to take the utmost advantage of this psychological hour when the Maratha nation was badly in the

<sup>1</sup>*Madras Diary*.

<sup>2</sup>According to a Madras consultation Minute of 4th December, 1689, the Maratha Ministers made some personal gain out of this transaction; Prahlad Niraji's share being Rs. 4,000.

grips of despair. This was, thought he, the time when he could give the final blow to the nascent Maratha State already tottering on its feet and thereby crush once for ever the urge for national liberation so carefully nursed in the Maratha heart by Shivaji. To this end he directed all the resources of war and diplomacy at his command. His keen eye could not miss the rent and holes of the Maratha polity and he had put his finger on the weakest point of the Maratha character. Bent upon crushing the newly created sense of nationality in the inhabitants of the Peninsula, he began a virtual reign of terror in the Deccan. Mass massacres, forced conversions, arson and loot became the order of the day. Most of the Maratha country was turned into barren land where a tree or blade of grass could not be seen for miles.

Side by side with force he tried diplomacy and bribery as well. He knew the raging unscrupulousness of the Maratha character and their greed for *vatan*-lands or hereditary rights of revenue collection in land. With a lavish hand he distributed *jagir*-lands among them and employed other means to win over to his side as many of them as he could. The skin-deep patriotism of many of them easily succumbed to his temptations and by the time the first round of the war of national liberation began as many Maratha leaders were fighting for him as against him. His gold, dresses of honour and *sanads* for *vatans* had worked havoc on the patriotism of the Maratha *Sardars*.

The *Akhbarat* and the *Maasir* make brief references to the Maratha *sardars* who were in the Mughal camp for various reasons. The Jadhavs of Sindhkhed were Mughal nobles since the time of Shah Jahan. Persecuted by Shambhuji, Kanhoji Shriké and his sons had fled to the Mughals where they were eagerly received and given high posts. Nagoji Mané (the *Thanadar* of Mhaswad), Avji Adhal (*Thanadar* of Khanapur), Ram Chandra (*Thanadar* of Khatau), Baharji Pandhré (for sometime *Thanadar* of Kashigaon), Kanhoji of Utroli, the Jagdalé of Masur *Thana*, Manaji, and Subhanji (the ex-commander of Satara) and his son were some of the Maratha *Sardars* who rendered long and meritorious services to the Mughals. Another important Mughal partisan, who was frequently mentioned in the court bulletins, was Satva

Daflé of Athni. He had a very chequered career; sometimes he was in this camp and sometimes in that. The other turncoat like Daflé was Amrit Rao Nimbalkar. The *Akhbarat* and the *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* also mention two close relations of Shivaji—Achalji and Madhaji Narayan—who joined Aurangzib. The treacherous behaviour of Suryaji Pisal has already been mentioned. The anti-national activities of persons such as these evoked from Rajaram those bitter remarks which he made in a letter addressed to Baji Sarzarao Jedhé Deshmukh of Kari on March 22, 1690. "In fact," writes Rajaram, "the enemy is nothing of himself: it is people like you who have raised him into that importance; if our Marathas had not joined him, he would have been nowhere. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Aurangzib followed a calculated policy of terrorisation and forced conversions. He converted Netaji and Sabaji Ghatgé, Janoji Rajé and several *Brahmans* to Islam.<sup>2</sup> The sword of conversion always hanged loose on the head of Shahu, and later on when the Emperor was in his camp at Poona, Shahu's conversion, to the great dismay of himself and his mother, was almost decided upon. Shahu was saved with great difficulty through the intercession of Zinat-un-Nisa Begam but only when two sons of *Senapati* Pratap Rao Gujar—Khandoji and Jagjiwan—offered themselves for conversion in place of Shahu.

#### 4. *The Reversal of the Administrative Policy of Shivaji*

This was the situation which the leaders of the newly launched movement for national liberation had to face. Tara Bai and Ram Chandra in Maharashtra and Rajaram and his *Ashta Pradhan* at Jinji were busy forging the weapons with which to strike the mighty Mughal. The Maratha State was in the melting-pot; feudalism was too deeply ingrained in the Maratha character. The under-current of discontent against the centralised despotism of Shivaji and Shambhuji was coming to the surface. Rajaram and his advisers found the wise arrangements of Shivaji unworkable, and so making virtue of a necessity they initiated the system of feudal

<sup>1</sup> Rajwadé, Vol. XV, Document Nos. 347 and 348. This letter is in the handwriting of Khando Ballal Chitnis. The Jedhe Deshmukh himself was threatened with conversion by Aurangzib.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

decentralisation. Rajaram lavishly conferred *saranjams* and *vatans* on all those who went to him at Jinji. Sometimes the assigned lands were in the Mughal territory in Maharashtra or Karnatak and the recipients thereof were expected to turn their *de jure* grants into *de facto* possessions. It was no doubt an incentive to make people work for gain. The creation of *vatans* and the grant of *saranjams* worked a miracle. There sprang up out of the void as it were, a large army to fight the Mughals on their own account without any financial liabilities to the Maratha State. The State got, moreover, a stipulated share of loot and revenue. The authors of it were not altogether ignorant of the inherent defects of the system but they had no other means to combat Aurangzib's similar activities. Once the mischief was, however, done it could not be stopped or controlled and ultimately proved one of the main causes of the ruin of the Maratha State.

#### 5. *The Maratha Strategy and their Recovery in Maharashtra*

Having seen Rajaram safe at Jinji, the Maratha leaders had set about putting their plans of defence and offence in execution. They clearly saw that their only hope of survival lay in widening the area of their operations and in the decentralisation of their forces. "Decentralisation of authority was exactly suited to the situation in Maharashtra. The Maratha captains, each acting on his own account, carried on a guerilla warfare (as described in Chitnis, II, 43-45) and caused the greatest loss and disturbance to the Mughal territories. The imperialists did not know what point to defend, nor where to find a vital enemy position for their attack. The extremely mobile Maratha bands covered long distances and delivered attacks at the most unexpected quarters; and such roving bands were countless. The result was universal unrest throughout the Deccan."<sup>1</sup> The country between Maharashtra and Jinji was infested by free-lance marauders headed by Babaji and his brother Rupaji Bhonsle. Their depredations were popularly known as "Bhalerai" or spear rule. They were a menace to the country and were making the Maratha hated and unpopular. Ramchandra and Santaji tactfully absorbed

<sup>1</sup> Sarkar: *Aurangzib*, Vol. V, p. 196.

this mass of roving Maratha soldiery into their own armies and thus forged a double-edged sword to strike at the Mughals and strengthen their own hands against rivals.

The first fruits of this strategy were gathered in Maharashtra in May, 1690, when Ramchandra, Shankraji, Dhanaji and Santaji inflicted a crushing defeat on Sharza Khan *alias* Rustam Khan and captured him alive with his family, baggage, horses and elephants while he was reconnoitring near Satara with a large force. Aurangzib deputed Firuz Jang and Siddi Abdul Qadir to retrieve the lost position and to secure the release of Rustam Khan. The Siddi was looted and injured by Rupaji Bhonslé while going to join Firuz Jang.<sup>1</sup> Rustam had to secure his liberty by promising to pay ransom of a lakh of rupees and gave his mother and eldest son as hostages for the payment. In the course of the year 1690, Ramchandra and Shankraji recovered the famous forts of Pratapggarh, Rohida, Rajgarh and Torna.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after the defeat of Rustam Khan another officer, Lutfulla, was sent by Aurangzib as the *Thanadar* of Khatau (25 miles of Satara) charged with the commission of occupying and restoring order in the North Satara district. Immediately on arrival he was attacked by Santaji in July but the attack was repulsed with loss to the Marathas who, however, rallied round and led by Santaji, Dhanaji, Daflé, Moré and others again attacked the Khan with a force of over twenty thousand near Piliv (12 miles east of Mhasvad). A sharp but indecisive action took place in which both sides suffered heavily. The Marathas suffered a temporary set-back.

After a short period of inactivity the Maratha raids were revived in 1692. Their efforts gradually gained momentum and the first concrete result was the recapture of Panhala by Parashuram Trimbak in 1692. Santa also made constant raids on the vast and tempting plains of Bijapur from his base in the Mahadev hill.<sup>3</sup> The important Mughal outpost of Akluj was infested by the Marathas and when prince Muizz-ud-din, who was sent there to drive them away, could effect nothing, Lutfulla was sent to clear the country between Bijapur and the Bhima. The Marathas were also creating

<sup>1</sup> Ishwardas, 142b. <sup>2</sup> *Jedhg. Shakavali* and Chitnis.

<sup>3</sup> It is to the north-east of Satara.

disturbance in the Belgaon and Dharwar districts of western Kanara. It was reported on October 8, 1692, that Dhana and Santa at the head of a force of seven thousand had seized some forts near Belgaon, had infested the town itself and had ravaged the neighbouring countryside. The Emperor, therefore, with a view to stiffening the defence of Kanara sent three men of note—Hamid-ud-din Khan, Matlab Khan and Qasim Khan—to that region. The Mughals enjoyed a brief respite as both Dhana and Santa departed with their forces for the other front in the Karnatak. Muizz-ud-din had been sent against Panhala in October, 1692, but met with scant success and the siege dragged on with various vicissitudes for several years baffling the efforts of three top-ranking Mughal generals—Muizzud-din, Bidar Bakht and Firuz Jang.

The Maratha generals returned to their homeland in 1693 and immediately resumed their interrupted activities. With the opening of the campaigning season in October, Santaji sallied out of his retreat in the Mahadev hill and his bands swooped over the territory round about Bhupalgarh (65 miles northwest of Bijapur and 76 miles southeast of Satara). Himmat Khan rose equal to the occasion and chased and defeated Santa and his Berar allies at the village of Vikramhalli.<sup>1</sup> However, in the very hour of victory the Mughal generals—Himmat Khan, Hamid-ud-din Khan and Khwaja Khan—fell out among themselves and thus failed to gather the best fruits of their exertions. Santa roved about undaunted. He divided his force: his lieutenant, Amrit Rao, moved northwards towards Berar with a force of four thousand troopers and he himself marched towards Malkhed with six thousand horsemen. But he was ultimately driven back to Mahadev hill where he lay inactive for some time. Dhanaji, Shankraji and a few other officers in the meantime had a rub with the besieging force before Panhala and although Dhanaji was defeated and driven away he succeeded in throwing in provisions into the fort. Santa was reported to be out again in Haidarabad territory on November 26, 1694. Pursued by Himmat Khan, he turned towards Bijapur but was defeated and put to flight in three successive actions—near Panur, near Naldurg and ultimately in the Raichur district which he looted. He was then

<sup>1</sup>*Akhbarat* of November 19. The battle took place on November 14, 1693.



pushed back to his refuge in the Mahadev hill. The Marathas blockaded the Mughal outpost of Khatau in July, 1695, but were successfully chased back in September by Hammid-ud-din to the fort of Chandan Wandan, leaving a son of Dhanaji and another officer dead on the field. Most unfortunate was the desertion of Amrit Rao, a political turncoat, who had joined the nationalists and had raided the Mughal territory across the Bhima for some time. He went over to the Mughals with five hundred followers.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SIEGE AND FALL OF JINJI

#### 1. *The War in the Karnatak: Dissensions in the Mughal camp at Jinji*

SHORTLY AFTER the fall of Raigarh Aurangzib had despatched Zulfiqar Khan to Jinji. He left Maharashtra on November 30, 1689, and reached Jinji sometime in June, 1690, and began siege operations at the end of August or the beginning of September. The terror of Zulfiqar's name had created a flutter in the Karnatak even before he reached there. Rajaram looked out for refuge further south, near his ally the Rajah of Tanjore<sup>1</sup> and in October Zulfiqar Khan wrote to the French not to give shelter to Rajaram or allow him to escape by sea in some English ship.<sup>2</sup> Rajaram returned to Jinji in the following February.

Soon after his arrival Zulfiqar realised that the force at his command was totally inadequate for besieging the huge fortress of Jinji built on three contiguous hills. In the absence of heavy guns and sufficient quantity of ammunition, bombardment of the fortress was out of question and no breach could be effected.<sup>3</sup> In disgust the general simply sat down before it and begged the Emperor for immediate succour.

The Khan found himself in hostile surroundings and was also constantly harassed by the roving Maratha bands of Nimaji Sindhia, Mankoji Pandhre and Nagoji Mané, who stopped the supply of grain to the Mughal camp. The military superiority which the Mughals had enjoyed on their arrival was rapidly lost after April, 1691, and Zulfiqar Khan was in dire need of money to feed his huge army. A relieving force under Prince Kam Bakhsh and Zulfiqar Khan's father, the Prime Minister Asad Khan, reached the environs of Jinji only on December 16, 1691, when Zulfiqar had raised the

<sup>1</sup> *Jedheshakavali*, p. 19; *Sanda va Patren*; p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> Kaepelin: *La Compagnie Indes Orientales et Francois Martin*.

<sup>3</sup> About the 19th September, Zulfiqar is seen asking for guns, ammunitions and men from the English settlement and in November from the French also. About 100 white men joined his army tempted by offers of high pay.

siege and had turned to the more profitable work of levying contributions in the South Karnatak.

The arrival of reinforcements in no way improved the Mughal prospects. Fresh problems of a very complicated nature came to the forefront. Zulfiqar being officially superseded, he and his father in sullen resentment first became cold and indifferent and later took to intriguing and even to active sabotaging. Thus, the year 1692 did not open well for the Mughals. The siege was no doubt resumed, but no headway could be made partly because of the internecine strife and partly because of the excessively heavy rains and consequent scarcity of grain in the camp.

With clearer skies came a huge Maratha force of thirty thousand under the dreaded Dhana and Santa. On his way to the Karnatak Santa claimed Ali Mardan Khan, the *Faujdar* of Conjeveram, as his victim on December 20, 1692. Dhana bagged another important Mughal officer, Ismail Khan Maka,<sup>1</sup> in the vicinity of the Mughal camp at Jinji on January 9, 1693. The victorious Maratha generals proclaimed Maratha sovereignty over the whole of the Haidarabadi Karnatak and Keshava Ramana was appointed its *subahdar* on behalf of the Maratha government. The condition of this marooned Mughal force, so vividly described by Manucci, was really pitiable. The besieging force was besieged in its turn by the Marathas, who cut off all supply and lines of communication with the Emperor.<sup>2</sup> In the absence of news from the Emperor's camp rumours spread that the old monarch had died and this threw the entire camp at Jinji in a state of turmoil.

Alarmed by the news, which the Marathas spread and exaggerated even if they did not originate it, as Khafi Khan asserts, the Prince opened a clandestine intercourse with them which, however, leaked out in time to the Khans. They put him under surveillance just when he was on the point of deserting to the enemy and thus restored unity in the Mughal ranks.<sup>3</sup> But that did not put an end to all their troubles. There was great scarcity of grain in the Mughal

<sup>1</sup> Martin: *Memoires*, III, 266-69.

<sup>2</sup> *The Madras Diary* of January 8, 1693, has recorded a letter from Conjeveram which gives a graphic account of the destitute condition of the Mughal army. Also *Ferishta* (translated by Scott), Vol. II, p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> *Dilkasha*, 107a; *Maasir*, 357.

camp. With considerable difficulty Zulfiqar Khan brought some grain from Wandiwash in the teeth of Maratha opposition; but for how long could it last? The Marathas were in a dominant position, and annihilation faced the Mughals hard in the face. The shrewd Khans, however, obtained the connivance of Rajaram, much to the resentment of his generals, for the safe evacuation of the Mughal force to Wandiwash. This rupture between Rajaram and the Maratha generals has been graphically described by the Governor of Pondicherry: "The commanders of the reinforcements, which has come to Jinji (from Maharashtra in December 1692) were extremely irritated that without their participation Rajaram, by the advice of his minister alone, had made a treaty with the Mughals. They bore a particular grudge against the latter (i.e., the minister) whom they accused of having received a large sum for leaving to the Mughals a path open for their retiring in safety to their own territory. It was quite evident that the Marathas could have held them all at their discretion—namely, Sultan Kam Bakhsh, the wazir Asad Khan and his son and a large number of persons of rank who were in that army. They (the Maratha generals) represented that they could have extracted large sums as their ransom, besides being able to secure an advantageous treaty with the Mughal Emperor by restoring to him men of such importance."<sup>1</sup> In sullen resentment Santaji left for Maharashtra<sup>2</sup> but before leaving Karnatak he attacked Conjeveram and besieged Trichinopoly.

## 2. *Tara Bai rejoins her Husband at Jinji and gives Birth to a Son*

It has already been noticed that Rajaram had left his three wedded wives—Tara Bai, Rajas Bai and Ambika Bai—behind in Maharashtra under the care of Ramchandra Nilkanth. Although they usually lived with the Pant at Vishalgarh, he shifted them from place to place in order to hide their whereabouts from the Mughal officers, who were commanded by the Emperor to round up every member

<sup>1</sup> Sarkar: *House of Shivaji*, pp. 238 and 239.

<sup>2</sup> *The Jedheshakavali* (p. 20) says that Rajaram removed Santaji and nominated Dhanaji to the post.

Santaji's brother Bahirji also quarrelled with Rajaram in June, 1693, but he was pacified and returned to his master in February, 1694.

of the *Chhatrapati's* family.<sup>1</sup> After Rajaram had established his court at Jinji he was desirous of calling his family there and was also being pressed to do so by Yesu Bai. But how could their safe travel be arranged through the net-work of Mughal military outposts from Maharashtra to Karnatak? At last the resourceful Khando Ballal hit upon a plan. His two maternal uncles Lingo Shanker and Visaji Shanker were in sea-faring trade at Rajapur and possessed some cargo ships engaged in coastal trade. Ramchandra sent the royal ladies down the ghats. They boarded the ship at Vengurla and reached the port of Honavar on the west coast. From there they travelled by land to Jinji through the Bednur territory, attended throughout by Rambhat Patwardhan, Ganoji Jedhé and the two Prabhus—Lingo Shanker and Visaji Shanker. They reached Jinji safely some time in 1694.<sup>2</sup>

A son was born to Tara Bai at Jinji on June 9, 1696. So far no wife in the regular wedlock had borne a son to Rajaram. Ambika Bai, no doubt, gave birth to a daughter who died shortly afterwards. Tara Bai must have felt greatly satisfied but her son was not without a rival. Tara Bai as the mother of the heir-apparent had to reckon with Rajaram's beloved mistress, Saguna Bai, and her handsome son, Karna,<sup>3</sup> for whom Rajaram had made separate provision and had appointed Nilo Ballal, the Chitnis's brother, as his *Divan*. That must have excited Tara Bai's jealousy which must have been doubled when Rajaram sent Karna, attended

<sup>1</sup> In fact their further stay in Maharashtra had become dangerous because the Mughals were making strenuous efforts to capture them. The *Jedheshakavali* for the year 1694 (p. 21) makes a mention about the capture of the small fortress of Kari (west of Poona) by Ali Beg, *Faujdar* of Junnar. Sardesai says that the family mentioned in the *Shakavali*, which escaped through the vigilance of Yado Samraj and Mahadaji Baji, may have been Rajaram's family. After the fall of Punhala his family had been shifted to Kari (*Rajaram*, p. 54). Ali Beg failed in his mission. Shankaraji recaptured the fort and punished one Rayaji through whose treachery it had fallen.

<sup>2</sup> Rajaram rewarded Visaji Shanker for his services in a *sanad* dated October 19, 1694 (*Sanda va Patren*, p. 176; also *Peshwa Daftar*, 31, 60).

<sup>3</sup> Document No. 167 of Rajwade's Volume III is a *sanad* dated April 1, 1691, given on the occasion of the birth of a son to Rajaram. Karna is probably the son referred to in this *sanad*. Rajaram had reached Jinji late in 1689. No woman had accompanied him to Jinji from Maharashtra. Saguna Bai certainly came in his keeping at Jinji and the earliest that a child could be expected from her was at the end of 1690 or beginning of 1691. This Saguna Bai had also a daughter who was married to the son of Suryaji Pisal.

by Khando Ballal, as his representative to the camp of Zulfiqar Khan at Wandiwash in 1697 to seek terms of peace from the Emperor. Tara Bai had the ambition of making her son fulfil the death-bed prophecy of her father-in-law and, therefore, purposely gave him the name of Shivaji.<sup>1</sup> From this time Tara Bai thought less of her husband's future than that of her own child; less of love and more of politics and court intrigue against the illegitimate but formidable pretender, Karna. In fact, the birth of Shivaji III marked the end of the conjugal life of Tara Bai and the beginning of her diplomatic and political career.

### 3. *Brilliant Exploits of Dhana and Santa*

The siege of Jinji was renewed towards the close of the year 1694, but it was a mere show intended to deceive the Emperor.

On the Maratha side Ramchandra Nilkanth had called a conference of the national leaders at Vishalgarh on the occasion of the *Dashera* celebrations in October, 1695. "They planned fresh grand operations: two main parties were formed, one to devastate the northern portions of the Mughal territories, and the other to operate in the region of the Tungabhadra, so as to overcome Qasim Khan and relieve the pressure against the *Chhatrapati* at Jinji. Santaji agreed to execute the latter portion of the scheme, and Dhanaji was asked to remain in the region of Bijapur keeping an eye on the Emperor's move as well as being ready to support Santaji if any danger threatened him."<sup>2</sup>

Apprised of these plans, Aurangzib sent Himmat Khan to chase Santa who, however, eluded pursuit and successfully looted the Bijapur district. Santa then turned south and conveyed the rich store of plunder to his own estate in north-west Mysore. Qasim Khan had also been ordered by the Emperor to intercept the raiders and for his help he had despatched a choice corps under some of the highest young officers of his court—Khanazad Khan, Saf

<sup>1</sup> He should be correctly called Shivaji III because Shahu's name was also Shivaji. Rajwadg in an article in the *Bharatvarsha* has unsuccessfully tried to establish that Shahu's real name was not Shivaji but Shahji. Three of Shahu's letters dated May 5, 1709, described him both as "Shiva Narpati" and as "Shahu Chhatrapati." *Satka* 9, 199-201; also Rajwadg, Vol. XX, Document No. 194.

<sup>2</sup> Sardesai; *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. I, p. 334.

Shikan Khan, Asalat Khan and Muhammad Murad. By clever manoeuvring Santa beat Qasim Khan and his allies completely. Qasim committed suicide at Dodderi<sup>1</sup> on November 20, 1695, to avoid disgrace by the enemy and censure by the Emperor. Khanazad secured his liberty on a promise to pay a ransom of rupees twenty lakhs in addition to all the belongings of the camp worth about thirty lakhs. "The lean woe-begone and bedraggled remnant of the imperial army filed out of the fort (of Dodderi) 13 days after entering it. The enemy gave them bread from one side and water from the other."<sup>2</sup>

Santaji's fame reached its highest water-mark when in less than a month from this stroke he ambushed and killed Himmat Khan at Basavapatan on January 20, 1696. The eye of Nemesis now fell on Santa. After months of campaigning his force was too tired to face the third wave of fresh Mughal troops under Hamid-ud-din. Santa was defeated on February 26 at Chakargola (22 miles north of Basavapatan). Bidar Bakht had been ordered to proceed to Basavapatan, but before he could arrive there, Santa had left for the Karnatak and reached there in March, 1696. Dhana had preceded Santa in that region and on his arrival there had made Zulfiqar Khan to raise the siege of Vellore; but when Dhana besieged Tiruvadi the Khan drove him away from that place. Already hampered by extreme want of money Zulfiqar had now to face the combined might of Dhana and Santa. The Maratha bands spread over the whole land and the depleted and ill-fed forces of Zulfiqar Khan could not defend so many places. After defeating Santa at Arni in April, 1696, he retired to the fort of Arcot and stood there on the defensive. The Marathas hovered round him; his financial and other difficulties continued to be as acute as ever, and while he was brooding upon the dark forces closing round him a ray of hope cheered him when he heard the news of a final rupture between Dhana and Santa. It is important and interesting to study the background of the feud of these two brilliant soldiers of Maharashtra.

<sup>1</sup> Dodderi is in the Chitraldurg division of Mysore and is 22 miles from Chitraldurg.

<sup>2</sup> Sarkar: *House of Shivaji*, p. 345.

#### 4. *Internal dissensions of the Marathas: The cold-blooded murder of Santaji*

When Tara Bai rejoined her husband at Jinji all was not well in the Maratha camp. Internal strife and mutual jealousies were sapping the Maratha war effort. Rajaram had no capacity to take bold and prompt decisions. The real power was, therefore, wielded by the ministers of Rajaram who, being corrupted by power, were mutually jealous of each other and had formed factions which disturbed the peace of the land. Ramchandra Nilkanth wanted a free hand in Maharashtra while Prahlad Niraji had the ambition of concentrating all authority in his own hands and to wield it from Jinji in the name of Rajaram on whose weak mind he had acquired a complete hold.

Apart from this jealousy existing between the principal ministers and diplomats there were cross-currents of local politics both in Maharashtra and at Jinji. Ramchandra Nilkanth had raised to prominence two of his able partisans—Shankraji Narayan and Parashuram Trimbak—but they were becoming his active rivals. At the time Rajaram left for Jinji he had given the title of "Rajajna"<sup>1</sup> to Shankraji Narayan. His patron, Ramchandra Nilkanth, in recognition of his excellent work in the *mavals*, got him raised to the ministerial rank when Shankraji Malhar Sachiv resigned his post and retired to Kashi in 1690.<sup>2</sup> This partiality of the Pant excited the jealousy of Parashuram Trimbak who formed a faction of his own and drew Santaji Gorpade into it.<sup>3</sup> At first, Ramchandra Nilkanth had supported Santaji wholeheartedly and in recognition of his meritorious services had induced Rajaram to appoint him *Senapati* on the death of Mahadaji Gomaji Pansambal in 1691 and also got him the *Deshmukhi* of Miraj.<sup>4</sup> But, then there came about a rift in their relations. Some acts of insubordination committed by Santaji alienated Ramchandra Nilkanth

<sup>1</sup> Rajwadé, Vol. XX, p. 379.

<sup>2</sup> *Aitihāsik Sankirna Sahitya*, Document No. 76.

<sup>3</sup> *Dilkasha*, 122a.

<sup>4</sup> Ramchandra Nilkanth's letter to Santaji dated July 29, 1692 (*Kavya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi*, Document No. 4, p. 6).



from him. Thereupon, Shankraji Narayan Sachiv<sup>1</sup> took Santa under his wing in October, 1694, and formed a plan of cooperation and division of spoils with him and sent him to the Karnatak with an earnest request to serve the king more faithfully than he had done in the west. Thenceforth, Ramchandra Nilkanth began backing Santaji's rival, Dhanaji.

At Jinji also there seems to have been lack of cooperation among the ministers and their integrity was also suspected. The army leaders were furious when Rajaram allowed the hapless Mughal army to retire in safety to Wandiwash in 1693 and thought that the ministers had touched Mughal gold and had given Rajaram advice which was not in the best interest of the country.<sup>2</sup> Two of the ministers at Jinji—Prahlaḍ Niraji and Shankraji Malhar—had vacated their offices before the arrival of Tara Bai at Jinji. Shankraji Malhar had retired to Kashi some time in 1690 and Prahlaḍ Niraji died at Jinji in 1694.<sup>3</sup> The circumstances leading to Shankraji's resignation and retirement to Kashi are not known but his subsequent career during the regime of Sayyid Hussain Ali Khan in the Deccan shows that he was a highly ambitious person and wanted to dictate his own policies. This could not be possible so long as Prahlaḍ Niraji at Jinji and Ramchandra Nilkanth in Maharashtra held the supremacy in the affairs of State. In frustration he not only retired from politics but left the country altogether. Mystery also surrounds the last days of Prahlaḍ Niraji. Although the suicide story given by Chitnis is not quite correct, it seems that Prahlaḍ Niraji had gradually lost that hold on the mind of Rajaram which he at first had had. On his death his family dwindled into insignificance.

In the absence of unimpeachable documentary evidence nothing can be definitely said about this ministerial reshuffling at Jinji which first threw out Shankraji Malhar and then Prahlaḍ Niraji, but it was surely the triumph of the policy of Ramchandra Nilkanth over that of his rivals and it may be that young Tara Bai had some hand

<sup>1</sup> It cannot be Shankraji Malhar who was not even in Maharashtra then. Shankraji Narayan was appointed to the office of *Sachiv* on October 23, 1690 (*Airithasik Sankirna Sahitya*, Document No. 76).

<sup>2</sup> Martin: *Memoires*, III, 286.

<sup>3</sup> Sardesai: *Rajaram*, p. 72.

in it. She had worked for four years with Ramchandra Nilkanth in Maharashtra and naturally must have fallen in line with him in matters of State and warfare rather than with the ministers at far off Jinji. Ramchandra Nilkanth's dominance both in Maharashtra and in the Karnatak after the exit of Prahlad Niraji and Shankraji Malhar shows that his policies had triumphed over theirs. There was apparently no difference of opinion between Ramchandra Nilkanth and Tara Bai till the question of succession came to the fore after the death of Rajaram. During the life-time of Rajaram both Ramchandra Nilkanth and Tara Bai had accepted the claim of Shahu as the legitimate successor to the Maratha throne. Womanly weakness and inordinate ambition induced Tara Bai later on to change her attitude when a son was born to her. Thereupon, there was a parting of ways between her and Ramchandra Nilkanth. It is quite possible that Tara Bai for a time temporised with Ramchandra, and Ramchandra was in equal need of Tara Bai's support in keeping the weak-minded Rajaram firm in support of Ramchandra's activities. Though both of them united in action, their motives were different. Tara Bai thought of making a tool of Ramchandra and Ramchandra wanted *vice versa*.

The open clash of arms between the two foremost generals, Dhanaji and Santaji, was partly the result of this under-current of intrigue. So long as Prahlad Niraji had a hold on the mind of Rajaram he was able to induce the Regent to maintain an attitude of neutrality in the mutual quarrel of Dhanaji and Santaji, but as soon as the hand of that prudent monitor was withdrawn Rajaram began to favour Dhanaji. A large number of letters that passed between Santaji and Ramchandra Nilkanth have been published and these clearly show how difficult Ramchandra found the task of handling Santaji. In these letters the general is repeatedly admonished to be tactful and accommodating towards his co-workers and polite and loyal to superiors and particularly towards the *Chhatrapati*. It is true that God had not blessed Santaji with a genial temperament and a suave tongue and he had committed many an act of insubordination which had given offence both to Rajaram and Ramchandra Nilkanth, but this weakness of his character was only one of the causes of his final dismissal and

subsequent murder. All circumstances taken together it seems that he became a victim of the party politics at the Maratha court.

Flushed with victory over two first-rate Mughal generals, Santa repaired to Jinji and there demanded an adequate reward for his services. His method of approach was, however, anything but desirable. The swollen-headed general had the impolitic impertinence to say to Rajaram some such thing as "your position is all due to me. I can make and unmake the *Chhatrapati*".<sup>1</sup> This was too much even for the easy-going Rajaram. His wives also could not tolerate such an insult, particularly the proud Tara Bai. Here was the opportunity for his opponents to inflame Rajaram's mind to white heat. Prahlad Niraji was dead and Ramchandra Nilkanth was far away in Maharashtra. The Mughals did not fail to fan the flames of rivalry and mutual discord between the two generals. This is clear from Lutfullah's letter to Nagoji Mané dated July 9, 1697.<sup>2</sup>

Santaji not only failed in his objective but also incurred the wrath of his master who encouraged his rival Dhanaji to arrest him or to kill him.<sup>3</sup> Three battles were fought between them, Dhana being supported by the king's authority. The first encounter was a mere demonstration; in the second, which took place at Aiwardgudi in 1696, Santa was victorious; but in the last one, fought on the soil of Maharashtra, Dhanaji gained a decisive success. After his defeat Santaji fled to the Mahadev hill with a few personal followers. Dhanaji's men pursued him hard and so also of Firuz Jang's. One hot noon while taking his bath in a small rivulet in the Mhasvad region his enemies pounced upon him and cut off his head in June, 1697.<sup>4</sup> The sad exit of this brave soldier was a great loss to the nation and a matter of great jubilation to the

<sup>1</sup> According to Wilkes he even entertained the idea of deposing Rajaram.

<sup>2</sup> Mawji and Parasnis: *Santa va Patren*, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> A letter dated October 27, 1696, addressed to Ramchandra Nilkanth by Rajaram announces Santaji's dismissal (*Peshwa Daftar*, 31, 60).

<sup>4</sup> There are conflicting versions about this episode. Both *Jedheshakavali* and Khafi Khan say that Santaji was beheaded by Nagoji Mane. Sardesai in his *New History of the Marathas* (p. 338) says that "...some armed men suddenly fell upon him, cut off his head and brought it to Nagoji Mane, who immediately rode with it to the Emperor's camp...."

Sir Jadunath Sarkar attributes this crime to Nimbalkar, brother of Nagoji Mane's wife, Radha Bai (*Aurangzib*, Vol. V, p. 127; also *House of Shivaji*, p. 254).

Mughals to whom he was a nightmare. More unfortunate is the fact that Ramchandra Nilkanth did not see through the move of the Mughals. He ought to have held the balance between Dhana and Santa. However, the right arm of Maratha resistance was broken for ever. Dhana and Santa, if only they could act in concert, would have proved a formidable combination but that was not to be. As a matter of fact the Maratha house was so badly divided against itself that the accurate observer Bhimsen remarked about the year 1697, "among Marathas not much union was seen. Everybody called himself a *Sardar* and set out to raid and plunder (for himself)."<sup>1</sup>

### 5. *The Fall of Jinji: Rajaram escapes to Maharashtra*

The split in the Maratha camp gave Zulfiqar Khan breathing time and a chance to complete his work at Jinji. He was not much interested in the enterprise of an old and obstinate master fast approaching the end of his life and fame. His eye was set on the future. He had conceived the ambition of carving out for himself an independent principality in the Deccan during the turmoil of a war of succession that was sure to follow the death of Aurangzib. He, therefore, could hardly afford to make mortal enemies of the Marathas. The rumour of Zulfiqar Khan's collusion with the Marathas was not altogether unfounded.<sup>2</sup> His principal officers such as Daud Khan Pani, Kishore Singh Hada and Dalpat Rao Bundela looked with disapproval upon his treasonable activities.

Rajaram's affairs were also not in a satisfactory state. He had spent eight years in exile and was hard pressed for money. He was virtually a prisoner in Jinji. He sent his favourite natural son Karna to Zulfiqar Khan's camp at Wandiwash in August, 1697, to sue for peace. But Aurangzib was inexorable. He rejected the terms and ordered Zulfiqar to take Jinji without further delay. Friends at court had advised the Khan that if he wanted to avoid disgrace he must reduce Jinji immediately. His hands were forced and he

<sup>1</sup> *Dilkasha*, 122a.

<sup>2</sup> Martin: *Memoires*, III-286. The English merchants recorded the same opinion (*Madras Diary* of November 5, 1696); Bhimsen, the right-hand man of Dalpat Rao Bundela, a staunch adherent of the Khan, frankly charges Zulfiqar Khan with treasonable neglect of duty (*Dilkasha*, p. 123a).

had no option but to send back Karna to his father in October and resume the siege of Jinji in right earnest early in November 1697.<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with a plan cleverly arranged by the resourceful Khando Ballal Chitnis,<sup>2</sup> Rajaram managed to escape with his chief followers and join the waiting army of Dhanaji fifteen or twenty miles away from Jinji. Zulfiqar Khan was not averse to connive at the plan provided the blame for it did not come upon him. Evading the vigilance of all Mughal officers, Rajaram safely reached Vishalgarh on February 22, 1698. Thus, the entire work of the Emperor's long siege of Jinji was undone. "The bird had flown away." It did not take long to reduce Jinji and it was taken sooner than expected (on February 7, 1698) on account of the exertions of Daud Khan Pani and Dalpat Rao Bundela.

<sup>1</sup> *Madras Diary and Consultation Book*, 1697, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> Rajaram had given the *Sardeshmukhi Vatan* of Dabhol to Khando Ballal who handed it over to Ganoji Shirke as the price of his help in Rajaram's escape from Jinji (Parasnis: *Itihas Sangraha-Khando Ballal*).

## CHAPTER V

### VICISSITUDES OF FORTUNE

#### 1. *Tara Bai in Mughal Captivity*

RAJARAM HAD escaped with bare life and could not take away with him his family which consisted of four wives, three sons and two daughters. Besides these, 4,000 other men, women and children, mostly non-combatants, fell into Zulfiqar's hands. The condition of Tara Bai and her son and of the other wives and children of Rajaram was as pitiable as Yesu Bai's had been at the time of the fall of Raigarh. But Zulfiqar being favourably disposed, he handed over the helpless family of the fugitive Rajaram to the Shirke and the Mohite officers in the Mughal camp. They were ultimately conveyed with safety to Maharashtra travelling through Vellore<sup>1</sup> and Arni.

The *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* mentions that after Rajaram had left the fort, four wives, three sons and two daughters fell into Zulfiqar's hands. He sent them in captivity to the Mughal Emperor who lodged them near the camp of Shahu. In January, 1704, he married the daughters to Shamsheer Jang and to Raja Neknam of Deogarh. A daughter of Shambhuji was also under detention. He married her to Muhi-ud-din, son of Sikandar Adil Shah. Bhimsen, an eye-witness, also mentions it. Contemporary Maratha sources make no mention of it. Sir Jadunath adopts the version of the *Maasir* and of Bhimsen. Sardesai asserts that Rajaram's family safely reached Maharashtra.

The truth seems to be that Rajaram had some married wives and some concubines—the latter constituted his *Natyashala*. Zulfiqar had probably undertaken not to molest Rajaram's family which he left behind in the fort. On the other hand, he was afraid of the *Padishah* who, being already annoyed on the escape of Rajaram,

<sup>1</sup>Vellore was a stronghold of the Marathas in Karnatak. The fort was under the charge of Mansingh More. Both Rajaram's party and Tara Bai's party reached Vishalgarh travelling through Vellore, and Mansingh did his best for their comfort and safety.

would have been furious had he known that Zulfiqar had deliberately allowed Rajaram's family to depart. To avoid this delicate situation what he must have done was that he quietly handed over to his Maratha officers the custody of the married wives and legitimate children of Rajaram, and in order to appease the Emperor he sent to him the same number of mistresses and illegitimate sons and daughters. The four wives to reach Maharashtra safely were Tara Bai, Rajas Bai, Ambika Bai and Saguna Bai. Saguna Bai, though not in regular wedlock, was more than a mere mistress. Her position had much improved since the birth of the handsome Karna, who became a favourite of Rajaram.

## 2. *Aurangzib decides to reduce the Maratha hill forts*

With the return of Rajaram to the homeland the centre of political gravity shifted again to Maharashtra. This necessitated a change in the strategy of Aurangzib. He saw that his generals had failed to force a decision because they were not putting their heart into their business and sometimes acted even in collusion with the enemy. Anxious to finish off the Maratha business speedily, he decided to conduct the war in person against the Maratha hill forts which provided shelter and the sinews of war to them.

He divided his army into two grand divisions—one, to pursue the Maratha forces in the open field; the other, to reduce their hill forts. The command of the former division was entrusted to Prince Bidar Bakht with Zulfiqar as his second in command while the Emperor himself took the command of the latter division. The strategy was no doubt sound but it came to be adopted rather too late when the initiative had slipped into Maratha hands. Much to the regret of many indolent Mughal nobles, Aurangzib wound up his camp and on the fateful 19th October, 1699, moved out of Brahmपुरi.

Bidar Bakht and Azam Shah joined the Emperor on the way. Bidar Bakht was later sent to pursue Rajaram. Zulfiqar, after finishing his work in the South, where he beat Dhanaji and other Maratha leaders several times, was ordered to move northward and join Bidar Bakht at Charthanah, 45 miles east of Jalna. He was later given a roving commission for chasing the Maratha field

forces, threatening the siege camp or the base camp at Brahmapuri left under the care of the *wazir*. Yet another division headed by Hamid-ud-din and Ruhulla Khan was sent to ravage the country between Satara and Panhala.

### 3. *Rajaram's last Expedition and Death*

Rajaram was not in the dark about the changed Mughal strategy, and his advisers thought out plans to cope with the new threat. On his return to Maharashtra he had found the Maratha spirits at a very low ebb. Whatever money and material he was able to collect during the last eight years was lost at Jinji and he was again virtually a homeless fugitive, always in peril of being captured. A greater part of the country was in Mughal hands. His ranks were thinning through desertion to the enemy. To continue the war seemed an uphill task and Rajaram made yet another effort to obtain terms of peace. He sent a personal letter through one Anaji, but Aurangzib was obdurate and insisted upon unconditional surrender.

The situation was in fact as grave as in 1689. Ramchandra Nilkanth and Dado Malhar suggested a return to Karnatak but Rajaram did not agree to it. The year 1698 was a period of lull but early in 1699 Rajaram set out on a tour of inspection of his country, established contact with local officers and the guardians of forts; and cheered up by his personal presence the drooping spirits of his despairing partisans. During this tour of inspection he had an opportunity to study the political situation at close quarters and discovered immediately the rot that had begun in the Mughal Empire. The Emperor was already too old to hold tight the reins of government of a far-flung Empire. One generation of old officers and soldiers were already dead; the next generation born in camps were tired of the war. Still the Emperor obstinately persisted in efforts in which no Mughal had any heart.

Rajaram returned to his new capital of Satara in June, 1699, and there he received envoys from Buland Bakht, the Gond Rajah of Deogarh, suggesting a joint invasion of the northern provinces of the Mughals. He visited Basantgarh (near Khed) on July 20, 1699, and completed his plans for raiding Khandesh and Berar in



September, 1699. Rajaram sent Nimaji Sindhia and other officers to raid Mughal territory in Khandesh and to levy *chauth* there. Hussain Ali Khan, *Thanadar* of Talner, offered resistance but was soon compelled to purchase his safety by paying a ransom of two lakhs of rupees.

Rajaram himself started on his northern expedition from the fort of Chandan-Wandan on October 31, 1699, accompanied by several young leaders of future fame such as Khanderao Dabhadé, Parsoji Bhonslé, Haibatrao Nimbalkar, with Dhanaji Jadhav at their head. They gave out that they were marching upon Surat. The Emperor despatched a strong body of troops against them. Bidar Bakht pursued them hard and overtook them at Parenda. The Marathas were driven towards Ahmadnagar on November 13 and 14. The Maratha king's raid into Berar thus met with a rebuff, but one Maratha division under Krishna Sawant<sup>1</sup> crossed the Narmada for the first time and plundered some places near Dhamuni. Several other battles took place in which Dhanaji, Ranuji Ghorpadé and Hanumant Rao defeated the Mughal officers, but they had ultimately to bend before Zulfiqar Khan, the only Mughal general of whom the Marathas stood in any awe. Stopped from advancing northward, Rajaram crossed the Bhima at Tenbhurni and made an unsuccessful surprise attack on the royal camp at Brahmapuri with the object of releasing Shahu.<sup>2</sup>

These failures did not damp the spirit of Rajaram as is evident from his letter addressed to Vithoji Bahar on December 22, 1699: "We have arrived at Singharh and have launched the full force of our armies against the Emperor. The *Senapati* Dhanaji, Nimaji Sindhia, Persoji Bhonslé and other leaders have led a furious attack upon the imperial camp of Brahmapuri and captured the Emperor's own daughter along with several prominent families. Thereafter they fell upon a convoy of ten thousand pack animals carrying supplies to the imperial forces which were marching upon Satara. The enemy has lost all courage, and can make no effect against fort Satara. We now take no account of this powerful Emperor whom, God willing, we shall soon put to rout...."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Dilkasha*, 129a.

<sup>2</sup> Sardesai: *Rajaram*, pp. 89 and 90.

<sup>3</sup> *History of the Pratidinhs*, Vol. 3, p. 451. No daughter of Aurangzib was taken.

These exertions proved too much for the frail constitution of Rajaram. He was already suffering from a disease of the lungs and could not stand the fatigue of the expedition. Hotly pursued by the Mughals, the dying monarch was carried to Singhgarh in a palanquin and there passed away on March 2, 1700, barely 30 years old. The loyal Ramchandra Nilkanth stood by his deathbed, and it was to him that Rajaram communicated his last wish—the release of Shahu and the liberation of the motherland. One of his wives—Ambika Bai—became *sati*, but the other two—Tara Bai and Rajas Bai—were more interested in the future of their respective sons than in their husband. They lived for long to play their parts in the future politics of Maharashtra. Rajaram could little suspect that history would remember him more as the husband of Tara Bai than as a son of Shivaji.

#### 4. *Political Situation in Maharashtra at the Death of Rajaram*

The untimely death of Rajaram at this critical period brought to the fore some very complicated problems. The enemy stood in force before Satara, the new metropolis of Maharashtra; someone was needed to galvanise war efforts and to keep in check the fissiparous tendencies of the Maratha leaders. That there was no solidarity in the Maratha ranks was a fact which was notorious in the country and Bhimsen remarked about it in 1697.<sup>1</sup> The blood of Santaji had failed to quench the thirst of the partisan Maratha leaders. On his death his son, Ranuji, and brother, Bahirji, were driven into an armed conflict with Dhanaji. The Ghorpadés were defeated in two actions. Dhanaji ultimately visited Ranuji near Firuzabad (20 miles south of Kulbarga), made up their quarrel and formed an alliance for the future.<sup>2</sup> Krishna Malhar and Dado Malhar were on the side of Dhanaji. Hanumant Nimbalkar, formerly an ally of Dhanaji, fell out with him and was made prisoner by Dhanaji. Other refractory leaders like Nimaji Sindhia little cared for any government and behaved like independent princes. Fully supported by Rajaram, Ramchandra Nilkanth with superior tact had succeeded in keeping peace among the

<sup>1</sup> *Dilkasha*, II, 122a.

<sup>2</sup> *Dilkasha*, 130b.

intractable and mutually jealous Maratha generals. Ramchandra Nilkanth was after all only a *primus inter pares* and could not command that respect which he hitherto did under the shadow of Rajaram. On the death of Rajaram a new chapter of intrigue and counter-intrigue began at the Maratha court. Ramchandra Nilkanth was contemplating a change in his policy. He considered the growth of feudalism as a subversive influence and wanted to curb it.

The wily Aurangzib could not fail to fish in the troubled Maratha waters. He had always tried to weaken the Marathas by sowing the seeds of dissension among them. With this object in view he had got two letters written to Ramchandra Nilkanth and to Parashuram Trimbak respectively and managed the affair in such a clever way that the letter meant for the one was received by the other.<sup>1</sup> The trick did its work and a sort of mutual suspicion sprang up between the two leaders.

The most important task before the Marathas was the selection of a successor to Rajaram. He had left behind three sons, two legitimate and one illegitimate. The oldest legitimate son, Shivaji III, was a little less than four years while the other, Shambhuji II, was nearly two years old (born of Rajas Bai Ghatgey at Panhala on May 23, 1698). Older in years than both was an illegitimate son named Karnaraja or Karna. This handsome boy had become a favourite with his father who probably wanted to make him his successor. But public opinion could hardly give precedence to an illegitimate child over legitimate ones. In a normal case and in normal times the rule of primogeniture would have operated and on the death of Rajaram his eldest child, Shivaji III, would have succeeded him. But the case of succession to Rajaram was not a normal one. Rajaram's status was not that of a king by his own right. After the murder of Shambhuji his only son, Shahu, was looked upon as the rightful heir, but since he was an infant and a prisoner, Rajaram was, by common consent, appointed his Regent. Thus, he was at best only a stop-gap king. The exigencies of the time required that somebody who could organise the war effort should succeed

<sup>1</sup>The translation of both the letters is given in Sir Jadunath Sarkar's *Houses of Shivaji*, pp. 257-58. Both letters are dated October 31, 1699.

Rajaram irrespective of the fact of prior birth or legitimacy. Some of the leaders knew Rajaram's partiality towards Karna and were willing to respect it. The orthodox Ramchandra Nilkanth could not, however, make up his mind all at once. Dhanaji and his partisans took the initiative and raised Karna to the vacant place. Their view seems to have been that since Rajaram was but only a Regent anybody having capacity to manage affairs could fill up his post and in choosing a successor to him legitimacy of birth was no criterion. But why was Karna chosen? Was he of a grown-up age and was he capable of leading the country at this critical period? It is clear that it was intrigue rather than capacity or mature age which helped Karna in gaining the throne. He was at the most five years older than Shivaji III. It may be that Dhanaji and his partisans foresaw that they could not get on well with the imperious Tara Bai and hence tried to exclude the succession of her son. This arrangement did not last long as Karna died of smallpox only three weeks after and the question of succession remained open. The Marathi sources make no mention of Raja Karna's succession, but Persian sources say that Rajaram was succeeded by his son Shivaji who died of smallpox. Shivaji III did not die after 3 weeks and so the reference is to Karna. It is only Bhimsen who names him Karna; others call him Shivaji.<sup>1</sup>

#### 5. *Tara Bai captures Power: Coronation of Shivaji III*

By now Ramchandra Nilkanth had finished all the customary rites in connection with the death of his master and could give his thought to the problem of succession which had been agitating the minds of his colleagues. He at once repaired to Panhala where the two widowed queens of Rajaram, Tara Bai and Rajas Bai, lived with their infant sons. Tara Bai was 25 and Rajas Bai was junior to her by 2 to 4 years. Ramchandra Nilkanth had written letters to some of the prominent leaders and generals and had made a touching appeal to them to continue the work of national liberation with the same zeal, if not more, which they had hitherto displayed. He had received good response from many of them.

<sup>1</sup>*Dilkasha*, p. 130a. According to the *Akhbarat* of 1st and 4th April, 1700, Karna died of smallpox on March 24, 1700; also *Maasir*, p. 420.

Thus encouraged, he had gone to make the two Ranis aware of his future plans and to get their approval for them because Yesu Bai and Shahu having been in enemy hands and the infants, Shivaji and Shambhuji, too young, Tara Bai and Rajas Bai were the only members of the *Chhatrapati's* family to whom he could turn for counsel and command.

After the customary condolences Tara Bai suggested to him that the sacred thread ceremony and the coronation of her young son, Shivaji III, be performed without further delay. Ramchandra Nilkanth was taken unawares because since the return of Tara Bai from Jinji he had not come much in contact with her. There was little need for it because Rajaram himself had come back to Maharashtra. When Ramchandra Nilkanth and Tara Bai had worked together from 1689 to 1694, they had no difference of opinion about the succession issue. Tara Bai like others had always accepted the claim of Shahu. The change in her attitude had taken place on the birth of a son to her at Jinji and Ramchandra Nilkanth had failed to take notice of it so far. That Shahu was the legitimate successor was a fact which Ramchandra Pant had never doubted and both he and Rajaram has made strenuous efforts to get Shahu back from the Mughal camp. Besides, this was not the time to fritter away energy in internecine quarrels. So, to Tara Bai's suggestion his reply was that there was no hurry about the sacred thread ceremony of Shivaji III. His elder cousin Shahu was nearly twenty and he was still without a sacred thread. According to astrological prediction Shahu was to come back home before long and then the sacred thread ceremony of both the cousins would be performed together. Shahu would be crowned king and the young Shivaji will take his place as the heir-presumptive. The office of the monarch was not vacant; it was only of the Regent's and for filling that office no coronation was necessary. Rajaram himself had no coronation and he did not sit on the throne out of respect for Shahu's claim.<sup>1</sup>

This honest reply infuriated the ambitious Rani who suspected that Ramchandra Nilkanth was in collusion with the Mughals.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kincaid and Parasnis: *History of the Maratha People*, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> Sardesai: *Rajaram*, p. 107.

In her scheme of things Shahu found no place. Shahu's father, argued she, had lost the kingdom. Shivaji's father had regained it with his own efforts and so Shivaji III was the real successor of his father's lawful legacy. Her ambition was to rule Maharashtra in the name of her infant son and she wanted to make of him what Jija Bai had made of the great Shivaji. Had Tara Bai combined the noble character, patriotism and spirit of sacrifice of Jija Bai with her undoubted abilities, she would have gone down to posterity as the greatest woman of India. But her intentions were not pure and selfishness blinded her political acumen. Tara Bai, however, had her problems to solve and rivals to subdue. There were three factions at the Maratha court: the first, pursuing Rajaram's honest policy, recognised Shahu as the legitimate sovereign and wanted to continue the war in his name; the second, favoured Tara Bai and her son not out of loyalty but for bettering their prospects; and the third one, intent on playing the same game, stood for Rajaram's junior wife and her two-year old son, Shambhuji II.<sup>1</sup> Resourceful in device, prompt in decision and unscrupulous about means, Tara Bai carried the day, though after a hard struggle. She won over to her side the rising soldier and politician Parashuram Trimbak and Shankraji Narayan and they both advised Ramchandra a compromise with Tara Bai for the sake of national interests.

Old Ramchandra Nilkanth found that his game was up and days of power numbered because Tara Bai had now tools of her own to meet him on more than equal terms. Though nominally the head of the executive and principal adviser of the Rani, he became henceforth an indifferent and passive onlooker of events. He no doubt continued to serve but not with that ardour and honesty of purpose with which he had defended Maharashtra during the life time of Rajaram. He had not much weight in the counsels of the domineering Tara Bai and though he even led out armies sometimes, it was clear to all that he was relegated to a back place.

After having won her first round in the diplomatic contest against old *Amatya*, Tara Bai performed the sacred thread ceremony and the coronation of her son, Shivaji III, at Vishalgarh. The exact date of his coronation is not available but it was a few weeks after

<sup>1</sup> Chitnis: *Life of Rajaram*, p. 70.

the death of Rajaram and the intervening period was crowded with intrigues and counter-intrigues.<sup>1</sup>

Shivaji being a child of only four, "a second regency ensued in the Maratha kingdom; but it was of a different kind from the earlier regency of 1689-1697. There was no longer a grown-up king or regular court, as a final authority and source of reference, even in distant Jinji. The new king was a minor, a mere child; nor was his right undisputed among his subjects, as his half-brother, Shambhuji, was set up as his rival for the throne. The supreme direction of affairs in Maharashtra now rested not with any minister but with the dowager Queen Tara Bai Mohite."<sup>2</sup> She concentrated all power in her own hands and personally looked to such important affairs of State as the appointment and change of generals, cultivation of the country and the planning of raids into the Mughal territory.

Tara Bai chose her own men to carry on the war and to conduct the administration of the country. Her relations with her generals and other civil officers were not always very cordial. Some of them obeyed her while others did not. But, on the whole, she was not as great a judge of men as Shahu was. Ramchandra Nilkanth continued to be her *Amatya* but having failed to see eye to eye with her, he became indifferent to the affairs of the State. Dhanaji also continued to serve her but he was also in the same resentful mood in which Ramchandra was. Out of sheer patriotism these two leaders submitted to the dictatorship of imperious Tara Bai. The

<sup>1</sup>सं० १७०० च्या चैत्र-वैशाखांतच शिवाजी ची मुंज व राज्याभिषेक हे दोन ही प्रसंग पार पडले असले पाहिजेत. नक्की काळ उपलब्ध नाहीत. तथापि राजा राम चे मृत्यू बरोबरच 'त्याचे पुत्र शिवाजी राज्य करू लागले'. अशी नोंध शके १६२१ चे पोटी गदाधर प्रल्हाद शकायली ची आहे. फाल्गुन व. ६ स राजा राम वारला आणि पुढे सातच दिवसांनी शके १६२१ संपून १६२२ चा विक्रम संवत्सर लागला. इंग्लंडांत नवीन राजा यादीवर बसवून मग मयताचे दफन होतें असा प्रकार आपले कडे नव्हता. म्हणून शिवाजीचें राज्या रोहण लगेच श. १६२१ त झालें नाही हें उघड आहे. "सनदा पत्रे" पुस्तकाच्या पृ. २०४ वर पुढील वाक्य आहे. "शिवाजी राजे दाजी विक्रम संवत्सरी विशाळगडी राज्यासनासुद्ध झालें. ताराबाई साहेब राज्य कार भार चालवीत". यावरून उघड होतें की राजा रामचे. मृत्यूनंतर काहीं महिने वाटाघाटीत गेल्यावर विशाळगड येथें ताराबाईने आपल्या पुत्रास सिंहासनस्थ केले। (Sardesai : *Rajaram*, p. 108.)

<sup>2</sup>Sarkar: *Aurangzib*, Vol. V, p. 200.

two new favourites of Tara Bai were Parashuram Trimbak and Shankraji Narayan. The former was appointed *Pratinidhi*<sup>1</sup> and the latter, who was already holding the post of *Sachiv* since the retirement of Shankraji Malhar to Kashi from Jinji, was confirmed in that office. They were both tried officers and had risen to power under Ramchandra Nilkanth of whom they were now active rivals for power. Parashuram Trimbak, according to Chitnis, enjoyed the Queen-mother's favour most.<sup>2</sup> Girjoji Yadav, the *Qiledar* of Panhala, was her confidential adviser and all orders of Tara Bai were issued through him. This man of shallow loyalties deserted her in the days of adversity. She lived with her son at Vishalgarh till its fall in 1702 and from then till 1705 she had her headquarters in the difficult fort of Rangna or Prasidhgarh. She shifted her headquarters to Panhala on its recapture by the Marathas in 1705.

<sup>1</sup> Chitnis, *Bharatvarsha*, Year 1, No. 3, pp. 31-40; *Kaifiyats*, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Chitnis, II, p. 71.



## CHAPTER VI

### TARA BAI AND AURANGZIB IN WAR AND IN DIPLOMACY

#### 1. *Fall of Satara and Parli*

THE NEWS of Rajaram's death reached the Imperial camp on March 5, 1700,<sup>1</sup> and "the Emperor ordered the drums of rejoicing to be beaten, and the soldiers congratulated each other, saying that another prime mover in the strife was removed, and that it would not be difficult to overcome two young children and a helpless woman. They thought their enemy weak, contemptible and helpless...."<sup>2</sup> Finding the spirits of the Marathas very low on account of their king's death Aurangzib re-doubled his efforts to give the knock-out blow.

Tarbiyat Khan was carrying on his job cool-headedly before Satara. The brave garrison held on for longer than could be expected but their king's death took the heart out of them and the battle of endurance came to an end one and a half months after Rajaram's death on April 21, 1700, when Satara was taken and renamed Azamtara.<sup>3</sup>

Pressing his advantage home, Aurangzib despatched Fathullah Khan the very same day to open trenches before Parli which was only 6 miles west of Satara and served as the temporary seat of Maratha government during the siege of Satara. Parashuram the Trimbak was in charge of the fort of Parli. He was busy in securing his own position in the reshuffling which followed Rajaram's death. He escaped from Parli and opened negotiations with Aurangzib. Then followed a keen tug of war over Parashuram's allegiance. He was ultimately won over by resourceful Tara Bai who made him her *Pratinidhi* and the virtual head of administration which

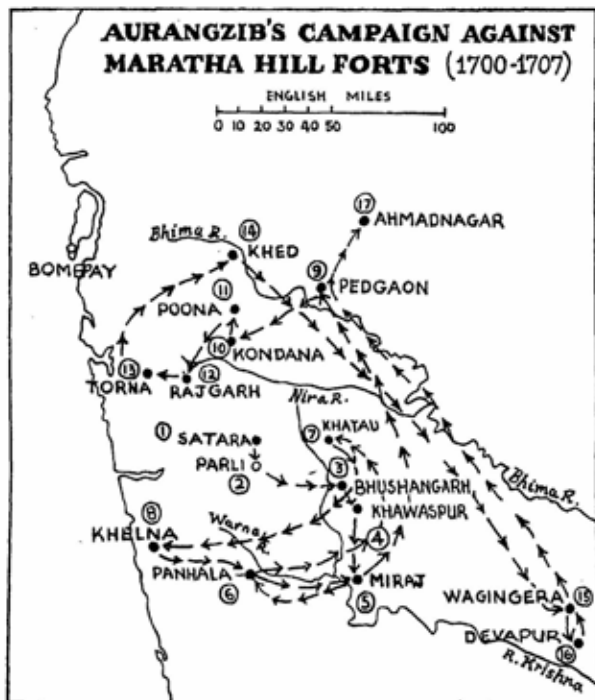
<sup>1</sup>*Maasir*, p. 419.

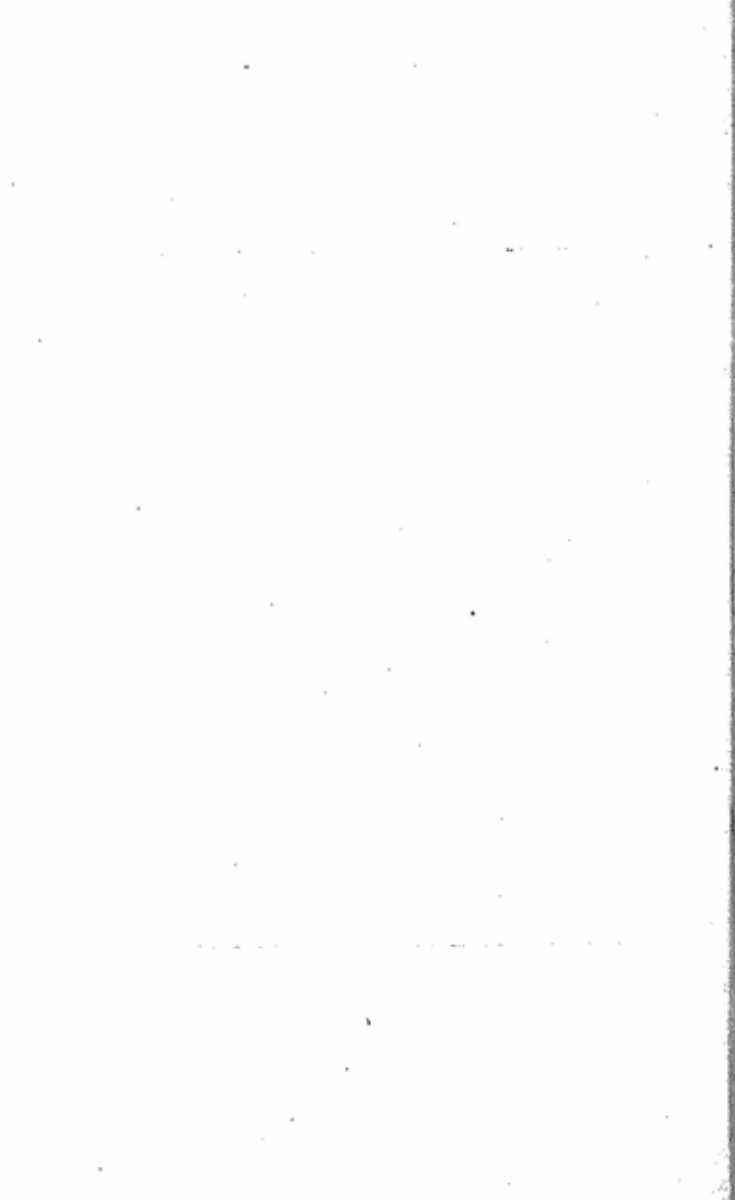
<sup>2</sup>*Khafi Khan*, Vol. II, p. 468.

<sup>3</sup>An authentic and vivid account of the siege of Satara is given by Sir Jadunath Sarkar in the *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission*, 1922.

# AURANGZIB'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST MARATHA HILL FORTS (1700-1707)

ENGLISH MILES  
0 10 20 30 40 50 100





Parashuram coveted. The weak garrison continued its resistance but on June 9, 1700, the *qiledar* of Parli evacuated the fort for a bribe.<sup>1</sup> The fort, sacred to the Marathas as the seat of Ramdas Swami, was re-named Nur-e-Satara indicative of Aurangzib's pious wish to Islamise even the landscape of Maharashtra.

## 2. Tara Bai, the Defender of Maharashtra

Tara Bai had by now consolidated her position and came to the forefront to fill with dignity and ability the void created by the death of her husband. Aurangzib had thought that the widows and the infant sons of Rajaram would soon come to their knees. When he felt that he had virtually turned his dream into a reality, fate conspired to pit against his failing energies a woman stronger than any man he had hitherto fought after the death of the great Shivaji.

So ably did Tara Bai conduct the war and the administration of the State as to extort from the hostile Muslim historian, Khafi Khan, nothing but high praise. "The Chiefs," writes Khafi Khan, "then made Tara Bai, the chief wife, and the mother of one son, regent. She was a clever intelligent woman and had obtained a reputation during her husband's life-time for her knowledge of civil and military matters.... Tara Bai, as the wife of Rajaram was called, showed great powers of command and government, and from day to day the war spread and the power of the Marathas increased."<sup>2</sup> In short, out of the ashes of Shivaji's kingdom, she raised to life a new and greater Maharashtra within the next few years.

Though determined to maintain the integrity and independence of the newly created Maratha State at all costs, she would not at the start break the bridge behind. To gain time and humour the old Emperor, she started negotiations for peace. The motive behind her move was to avail herself of a national reaction in her favour, should her terms be rejected. What she asked for was a *7-hazari mansab* and the *deshmukhi* rights over the Deccan for her son, Shivaji III, and in return proposed to supply a contingent of five thousand men for service under the imperial viceroy of the Deccan.

<sup>1</sup>According to *Dilkasha* (p. 133a) it was Prince Azam who negotiated the surrender.

<sup>2</sup>Khafi Khan, Vol. II, p. 468.

and to cede 7 forts.<sup>1</sup> But Aurangzib thus befooled, became more adamant and insisted upon unconditional surrender. Aurangzib, in fact, had under-rated the Maratha power and was dreaming already of a quick return to Delhi.

War having been decided upon, in sheer self-defence the talented daughter of *Senapati* Hambir Rao Mohit<sup>2</sup> threw herself heart and soul into it. "With the tireless vigour with which Hera strove to rouse against Priam, the Princess of Hellas, the Maratha queen flew from camp to camp and from fortress to fortress, sharing the hardships of a trooper, exposed to the sun, sleeping on the ground. Tara Bai seemed to multiply herself to be everywhere and always, encouraging her officers, and planning campaigns on a wider front. So clear was her vision, so unerring her judgement, that she was equally welcome on the battle-field and in the council chamber by the war-worn soldiers and astute politicians of the older generation. Within a short time the Maratha counter-offensive, at first halting and ineffective, assumed alarming proportions and began to threaten the very heart of the Mughal Empire."<sup>3</sup>

How she planned campaigns and encouraged her officers is to be seen from a letter dated November 17, 1700, to Kanhoji Jujhar Rao telling him to join Malhar Rao who was being sent against the Siddi of Janjira with 7,000 troops.<sup>3</sup> Another such letter is to Pratap Rao Moré written in January 1702. In this letter Tara Bai praises the addressee and Santaji Pandhré for taking a Mughal outpost near Malkapur and encourages them to harass the Mughals constantly so that they do not succeed against Vishalgarh and other Maratha forts. She describes Aurangzib as treacherous and warns Pratap Rao to be always on his guard.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The terms were offered through Ruhulla Khan. Another condition was that the Maratha king was to be exempted from personal attendance on Emperor (*Akbarat* of 12th March, 1700).

Two Maratha agents—Ramaji Pandit sent by Ramchandra Nilkanth and Ambaji sent by Parashuram Trimbak—also met Prince Azam in May, 1700, for securing terms.

<sup>2</sup>Kincaid and Parasnis: *History of the Maratha Peoples*, p. 180; *Bharat-varsha*, No. 5, Year 1, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup>Rajwade, Vol. XVI, Document 35.

<sup>4</sup>*Altihasik Patren*, January, 1702, p. 2.

Her strategy consisted in widening the area of operations. She had decided to carry war to the settled provinces of the Mughal Empire in the North and in the West in order to relieve pressure on the Deccan. Her field armies and free-lance captains were over running Khandesh, Berar and Malwa. In Berar Sharza Khan *alias* Rustam Khan became their captive for the second time. He procured his liberty on paying a ransom of three lakhs of rupees. Several raids were made into the province of Malwa.<sup>1</sup> Ranuji Ghorpadé, Dhanaji Jadhav and other leaders were constantly harassing the Mughal forces besieging the Maratha hill forts. Rajaram's death thus made no difference. In fact, under the influence of a greater personality the war effort gained momentum.

### 3. *The Movements of Aurangzib: The Miserable Plight of his Armies*

Satara and Parli had been costly victories for the Mughals. A large number of men and animals had perished and the reduction of these two forts had told heavily upon their striking power and caused financial bankruptcy to Aurangzib. Soldiers were in arrears for the last 3 years and the sufferings of these ill-fed and unpaid fighters were aggravated by the inclemency of weather. There were unusually heavy rains and most of the transport animals had perished.<sup>2</sup> Hence many persons of noble birth had to wade their way through mud and mire for miles together.<sup>3</sup> The movement of the force was so slow that sometimes only three miles could be covered in a day and each march was followed by two days' halt. With the utmost difficulty the flooded Krishna was crossed and Bhusangarh<sup>4</sup> was reached, and a halt was ordered for a month. Orders were sent to the provincial governors to send fresh troops to the Emperor.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sardesai: *Rajaram*, pp. 124-125. According to Manucci, the Marathas mustered a huge force of 50,000 horse and raided Mughal territory right up to Calabad. The Calabad mentioned here is Kalabagh on the old road from Sironj to Narwar, 16 miles north of Shahdura. (Sarkar: *The India of Aurangzib, topography, statistics and roads*, p. cxv.)

<sup>2</sup>"The gypsies willy nilly had to load their household goods on cocks," thus humorously remarks Saqi Mustad Khan, the author of the *Maasir* (p. 429).

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*; Khafi Khan, p. 472-73; *Dilkasha*, II, 133b.

<sup>4</sup>It is 30 miles south-east of Satara. It was re-named IslamTara (*Dilkasha*, 133b).

<sup>5</sup>*Maasir*, p. 429.

On August 30, 1700, the Mughal camp shifted to Khawaspur<sup>1</sup> on the river Man where a greater misery awaited the Emperor and his followers. One dark night the whole camp was flooded by the waters of the river, causing much loss to life and property. The Emperor himself had a knee dislocated while running about in alarm and became a little lame for the rest of his life.<sup>2</sup>

These misfortunes of the Mughals did not escape the keen eye of Tara Bai who was bent upon turning their misfortunes to her own advantage. Encouraged by her, the Maratha captains intensified their efforts. Ramchandra, a Maratha, whom the Mughals had left in command of the *thanah* of Khatau, was attacked and killed by Hanumant Rao on August 18, 1700. Hanumant Rao's son died of wounds received in this battle.<sup>3</sup> Ranuji Ghorpadé looted and killed another Mughal *thanahdar*—that of Bagehwari<sup>4</sup>—and looted as well the outpost of Indi.<sup>5</sup> Other Maratha leaders organised raids in different parts of the country but their main concentration was in the Bijapur district where their Berad ally, Pidia Nayak, had posted his infantry. On November 15, 1700, the daring Marathas plundered up to the very tank of Shahpur on the outskirts of Bijapur city.

The next Mughal objective was the fort of Panhala which was the principal seat of Tara Bai.<sup>6</sup> The Mughal camp reached Miraj on January 1, 1701, on its way to Panhala. The Emperor himself arrived at Panhala on March 9, 1701, and formed a complete circle of investment, 14 miles in length, round Panhala and its sister fort of Pavangarh. The work of the siege was greatly handicapped on account of the notorious strife amongst the Mughal Generals. Firuz Jang and Nusrat Jang could not be employed at one place. Neither the entreaties nor even the frowns of Aurangzib could set matters right.

<sup>1</sup>Khawaspur is in the Sangola Taluqa of the Sholapur district.

<sup>2</sup>Curiously enough *Maasir* does not mention this tragedy. According to the *Akhbarat* the Emperor took his bath of recovery on November 30, 1700.

<sup>3</sup>*Akhbarat*.

<sup>4</sup>30 miles south-east of Bijapur.

<sup>5</sup>North-east of Bijapur City.

<sup>6</sup>Tara Bai and her son lived both at Vishalgarh and at Panhala. Shivaji III was crowned at Vishalgarh and the throne was never removed from Vishalgarh to Panhala.

While this was taking place in the Mughal camp, the Marathas were planning an all-out effort to save Panhala. On January 23, 1701, Dhanaji attacked the besieging army and a bloody battle followed 2 miles away from Panhala. Pressed by the enemy the Mughals had to entrench their position against surprises and night attacks. Two days later when Dhanaji heard that Nusrat Jang was coming from Panhala to chastise him he withdrew four miles. Hamid-ud-din gave him a chase, but the fleeing Maratha force suddenly wheeled round, fought the pursuing Mughals and inflicted on them serious losses and drew in pursuit the Mughal force 22 miles away from its camp. The following day a pitched battle was fought in the vicinity of Raibagh and yet another fierce battle on the day following. Finding it difficult to face the Mughals in the open field the elusive Maratha disappeared beyond reach.<sup>1</sup> Nusrat Jang followed Dhana's trail and again defeated him 12 miles beyond Chikodi<sup>2</sup> and then rejoined the Emperor at Panhala. Dhana again made a bid to intercept some heavy Mughal guns at Kararabad while Krishna Malhar, whom he had sent with 10,000 horse to attack the Mughal lines of communications with a view to cutting off their supplies, attacked the outpost of Khatau.

Two brave officers of Tara Bai, Ramchandra and Dado Malhar, were doing their job in the Konkan. They fought a battle with Siddi Yaqut of Janjira, a vassal of the Mughals, on February 4, 1701. Having finished his job in the Konkan, Ramchandra moved towards Panhala. In the way he tried to intercept at Kolhapur a party of *banjaras* carrying grain to the siege camp but Nusrat Jang came in time to rescue them and escorted them safely to the Imperial camp.<sup>3</sup> Later when Ramchandra was commissioned to convey provisions to the beleaguered garrison of Panhala with an escort of 2,000 musketeers he had again to give way to Nusrat Jang who looted the provisions and killed many of his men. But Ramchandra ultimately succeeded in entering the fort on February 24, 1701.

It was, indeed, a hard job for Nusrat Jang to pursue the elusive Dhana here, there and everywhere and the forced marches which he had to undertake every now and then resulted in much loss of

<sup>1</sup> *Dilkasha*, 134b, corroborated by *Akhbarat*.

<sup>2</sup> Chikodi is 40 miles south-east of Panhala.

<sup>3</sup> *Dilkasha*, 135a.



men and horses to him. Dhana also felt fatigued and halted for some time in Singhgarh, but his main army of about fifteen thousand strong raided the Mughal territory under Dado Malhar. It was rumoured that Bahirji Ghorpadé was taken by the imperialists, and Ranjuji Ghorpadé was reported to be heading towards Panhala at the head of twenty thousand men.

The fort ultimately surrendered on May 28, 1701,<sup>1</sup> not through any successful feat of arms on the part of the Mughals but through the usual means of bribery. Tarbiyat Khan successfully conducted negotiations with Trimbak, the *qiledar*, who delivered the fort for a bribe of rupees fifty thousand.<sup>2</sup> Ramchandra took Trimbak to task and ultimately imprisoned him at Vishalgarh for treachery. Panhala was re-named Nabishah Durg.<sup>3</sup>

The very next day, on May 29, 1701, the Emperor ordered return for the duration of the rains to the safer and more fertile region of Khatau but the monsoon having already broken out the Mughal army had to undergo great hardships. During this period of forced idleness Fathullah added to his laurels by taking Wardhangarh on June 5, Nandgir on July 6, and Chandan and Wandan on October 6.

As soon as the campaigning season re-opened in October, 1701, Aurangzib set out for Khelna, thirty miles west of Panhala. On January 16, 1702, the royal tent itself moved to a place only one mile from Khelna or Vishalgarh. The Maratha field forces were busy in a different theatre of war, far from Khelna, and were creating havoc in Khandesh, Berar and Telingana where with the help of sympathetic local zamindars they were said to have mustered some 60,000 men.<sup>4</sup> They looted Burhanpur and the defeated Mughal officers had to purchase their liberty. They also raided Golconda and brought back much booty. The roving armies of Nusrat Jang which were said to have covered 6,000 miles and fought 19 big battles, were not very effective against them.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Norris, the English Ambassador to the Mughal court, witnessed the scene of surrender. According to the *Akhbarat* of June 7, he had come to Aurangzib in April.

<sup>2</sup> The *Qiledar* was Trimbak Vitthal Mahadkar, son of Vitthal Trimbak, appointed *Qiledar* of Panhala by Shivaji.

<sup>3</sup> *Dilkasha*, 136a.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 137a.

<sup>5</sup> *Dilkasha*, 129a-138b, 141a.

Fathullah showed great energy during the siege but did not meet with much success on account of the stiff opposition offered by the garrison under the inspiring guidance of Parashuram Trimbak. Just as at Satara, they rolled huge stones on the Mughal trenches which caused great loss of men and material. Fathullah himself was so badly hit that he had to be confined to bed for a month. The Marathas also made sallies at night. Bidar Bakht, who had taken Fathullah's place, delivered an assault led by Swai Jai Singh, the young Raja of Amber, on April 27. Having no hope of taking it by force, Aurangzib resorted to the usual means of bribery. He himself wrote a letter to Parashuram on May 27, 1702.<sup>1</sup> On June 4, the Maratha commandant of the fort, Parashuram, planted the Mughal banner on the fort and the garrison passed out of it on the night of the 7th.<sup>2</sup> It seems that the surrender of the fort was an isolated act on the part of Parashuram; there were people in the garrison who did not see eye to eye with him. "Spies report," says a court news-letter, "that Parashuram, the head assistant (*Peshdast*) of Ramchandra, is in Khelna and wished to cede the fort to the Emperor. Having heard of it Trimbak Inglé (Dinglé) and other officers of the enemy have arrested and imprisoned him."<sup>3</sup> The loss of man power on the Mughal side was great.<sup>4</sup> The name of the fort was changed to Shakhkharalana<sup>5</sup> and Udit Singh was appointed its Mughal *Qiledar*.<sup>6</sup>

The famished Mughal force had to undergo the usual sufferings on account of the heavy monsoon. Aurangzib, anxious to cantone in safety, hurriedly wound up the affairs of Khelna (Vishalgarh) and left it only 3 days after its capture. Covering 30 miles in 38 days he arrived at Panhala on July 17, 1702. After a brief sojourn of only 5 days he left the place for Vadgaon where he rested for a month. Crossing the Krishna at Miraj under very distressing

<sup>1</sup> *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, pp. 448-457; Sardesai: *Rajaram*, p. 118; Sarkar: *House of Shivaji*, pp. 260-61 (English translation).

<sup>2</sup> Bidar Bakht gave Parashuram a bribe of rupees two lakhs (Sardesai: *Rajaram*, p. 118).

<sup>3</sup> Sarkar: *Aurangzib*, Vol. V, p. 186.

<sup>4</sup> *Manucci*, III, p. 419, says that 6,000 *mansabdars* were killed. It seems a much exaggerated account. This may have been the number of ordinary soldiers.

<sup>5</sup> *Bhimsen* says that it was named *Sakhar-ullah-tara* (p. 142a).

<sup>6</sup> Sardesai: *Rajaram*, p. 119.

conditions the war-worn army reached Bahadurgarh or Pedgaon on the northern bank of the Bhima on November 13, 1702.

The sufferings already undergone did not discourage the obstinate monarch. He pushed on to Kondana or Singhgarh (8 miles south of Poona) and reached the place on December 27, 1702.<sup>1</sup> For three months the Mughals struggled hard but with no success against the defence organised by Dhanaji and Balaji Vishwanath Bhat, the *Sar-Subedar* of Poona *Prant*.<sup>2</sup> Rains were about to set in and the Mughals were left no stomach to stand them. The same old story of bribing the *Qiledar* was repeated and the fort surrendered on April 8, 1703.<sup>3</sup> Overcome by a feeling of gratitude to God, Aurangzib re-named it *Bakhshenda Bakhsh* or the gift of God though for a bribe. His officers shortly after took Purandar which was re-named Azamgarh. The Marathas had become very strong in Khandesh and in Berar and in order to stem the rising tide of their power, Bidar Bakht was appointed to the government of that region in February 1703.

From Kondana Aurangzib marched back to Poona which was selected for passing the rains. There the Mughal army enjoyed a comparatively comfortable sojourn for 7 months.<sup>4</sup>

For two years, 1703 and 1704, Maharashtra was in the grip of a severe famine and pestilence owing to lack of rain. A large number of poor people and cattle died of hunger and thirst. Manucci's estimate is two million. Unmoved by what happened around him, Aurangzib continued his campaign and left Poona (re-named Muhiabad) for Rajgarh which he reached on December 2, 1703. The brave garrison under Firangji and Hamanji kept up resistance for nearly two and a half months but ultimately surrendered on February 16, 1704. Aurangzib pushed on to Torna, only 8 miles from Rajgarh, and reached there on February 23, 1704. The fort was taken on March 10, 1704. This was the only fort against which the

<sup>1</sup> *Mazzir*, p. 469.

<sup>2</sup> Balaji's message to Kashi Vishwanath and Ambaji Pant Purandare is given in *Purandare Daftar*, Vol: I, Document Nos. 21-24.

<sup>3</sup> The negotiations were concluded by Tarbiyat Khan through one Gomaji Vishwanath Purandare. (Sardesai: *Rajaram*, p. 120) also *Khafi Khan*, p. 510; *Dilkasha*, p. 145a.

<sup>4</sup> Aurangzib reached Poona on May 1, 1703. (Sarkar: *Aurangzib*, Hindi Edition, p. 468).

Mughal arms succeeded under the brave leadership of Amanullah. The name of Fatuh-ul-Ghaib or "victory from the invisible" was given to the fort. On March 15, 1704, Aurangzib retired from Torna to Khed (25 miles north of Poona) on the Bhima and stayed there for 6 months from April 17 to October 21, 1704. During this time his officers reduced Lohgarh.

#### 4. *A Battle of Nerves and Diplomacy.*

The task of Tara Bai was doubly difficult. On the one hand, she had to enlist allies in her crusade against the alien enemy; on the other hand, she had to keep her own mutually jealous and warring officers pacified. The energetic Tara Bai not only equipped and sent armies to face the Mughals in the field and defended the forts against them; through clever diplomatic moves she created trouble for the Emperor all over the country. Wild rumours of all sorts were purposely circulated to mislead the Mughal generals and to create schism in the enemy ranks.

The Marathas gave out that they had taken out of prison, Abul Hasan Qutub Shah, the late ruler of Golconda, and would shortly restore him to his throne. Many Mughal officers, particularly the former Qutub Shahi nobles, believed the stunt and walked over to the Maratha camp. Aurangzib, in alarm, shifted the unfortunate Prince, in 1700, from Golconda to Gwalior.<sup>1</sup> Another act of audacity on the part of the Marathas was the release from prison, in 1701, of Bahadur Khan, a former officer of Daud Khan's contingent, who had been thrown into prison by the Emperor on suspicion of being in collusion with the enemy. He served the Maratha State faithfully ever after.

In fact, the Marathas "had now assumed the alarming character of being the ally and rallying point of all the enemies of the empire and all disturbers of public peace, and regular administration throughout the Deccan and even in Malwa, the Central Provinces and Bundelkhand." The Maratha diplomacy aimed at giving aid and encouragement to such adventurous chiefs as could muster a respectable number of followers and could harass the alien enemy. The Berad chief, Pidia Nayak, was an ally of the Marathas. Tara

<sup>1</sup> Manucci.

Bai's officers were on friendly terms with him and Dhanaji and other leaders, considering Wagingera, the stronghold of the Berad chief, more safe, had shifted their families and goods there when Aurangzib was threatening their country proper.

Pidia's efforts gained momentum when he received Maratha aid and his activities assumed such menacing proportions that the city of Bijapur itself was threatened. Aurangzib decided to march in person against the Berad chief. Leaving his work unfinished in Maharashtra, he disbanded his camp at Khed on October 22, 1704, and reached Wagingera, a distance of about 250 miles, by slow marches on February 8, 1705. The Maratha leaders, anxious to relieve pressure on Maharashtra, had actually brought about this situation through clever manoeuvring. From principals they now became auxiliaries, and when Aurangzib besieged Wagingera, Tara Bai sent a large force under Dhanaji Jadhav and Hindu Rao (Bahirji Ghorpadé) to harass the besieging Mughals.<sup>1</sup> By a clever ruse the Marathas succeeded in removing their families and their goods from the beleaguered fortress. The Marathas inflicted heavy losses on the Mughal army which was itself besieged. There was extreme scarcity and considerable hardship in the Mughal camp. The Emperor fretted and fumed in vain; his officers seemed cowed down by the combined Maratha and Berad effort.

Ultimately Nusrat Jang succeeded in driving Pidia away from his stronghold. But Pidia continued his depredations in alliance with his Maratha allies. He and Hindu Rao induced by bribe the starving *Qiledar* of the strategic fort of Penu-Konda, "the key to both the Karnataks," to surrender it to them, but they soon lost it to Daud Khan, the *Faujdar* of Karnatak.<sup>2</sup> The Marathas had already plundered some districts of the Bijapur Karnatak uplands in 1704; in 1706 they directed their attack at its capital, Sera. In another quarter they wounded, captured and ransomed Siadat Khan,<sup>3</sup> an officer of the court. Basantgarh was also taken by them.

Another Maratha ally was Chhatra Sal Bundela. He was doing

<sup>1</sup> This force of five to six thousand horse arrived near the fortress of Wagingera on March 8, according to the *Maasir* and on March 26, 1705, according to the *Akhbarat*.

<sup>2</sup> *Dilkasha*, p. 156b.

<sup>3</sup> *Dilkasha*, p. 157a.

the work of national liberation in Bundelkhand on the lines indicated by Shivaji. Tara Bai's government had included Malwa in the plan of counter-offensive against the Mughals and so they strengthened the ties of friendship with this chief. Early in 1703, "the Marathas crossed the Narmada again and caused disturbances up to the environs of Ujjain. Then, another band, shortly thereafter, plundered Burhanpur, came upon and ravaged the city of Khargaon within the part of the *subah* of Malwa lying south of the Narmada."<sup>1</sup> These minor raids were soon followed by another of great magnitude. After the rains of 1703 on the invitation of Chhatra Sal,<sup>2</sup> Nimaji Sindhia started for the north with a force of about 50,000 horse.

He first raided Berar in October where the Deputy Governor, Sharza Khan *alias* Rustam Khan, taken by surprise and completely overwhelmed by large numbers, was captured alive and ransomed:<sup>3</sup> The Marathas then proceeded towards Hoshangabad but before raiding that town they had divided themselves into two commands: one went down towards Mandu while the other, under the leadership of Nimaji Sindhia crossed the Narmada at Handia and marched down to Sironj plundering and burning many of the villages on the way.<sup>4</sup>

When the Emperor heard of these raids he became very anxious because the imperial treasure coming from the northern provinces was waiting for an escort at Sironj. He ordered both Bidar Bakht and Azam to proceed immediately to Malwa to punish the Marathas and to save the treasure. But having found that they could not do so, he ordered Firuz Jang, then campaigning in Khandesh, to chastise the Marathas. Firuz Jang overtook the Marathas in time when they were besieging Sironj. The raiders were defeated and the treasure was saved through the bravery of Gopal, the *Chaudhari* of Sironj.<sup>5</sup> The Marathas then ran towards Kalabagh,<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Akhbarat* of February 11, 1703; also *Dilkasha*, p. 144b.

<sup>2</sup>*Dilkasha*, p. 148.

<sup>3</sup>*Gadadhar Pahlad Shakavali* for the *Saka* year 1625.

<sup>4</sup>*Manucci*, III, p. 426.

<sup>5</sup>*Dilkasha*, II, p. 147a.

<sup>6</sup>Sironj is near Dipalpur and Ujjain.

The defeated Maratha force included several prominent chiefs such as Nimaji Sindhia, Parsoji Bhonsle, Keshopant Pingle and others. The *Gadadhar Pahlad Shakavali* for the *Saka* year 1625 has an entry about this raid. *Akhbarat* of March 11 and 13, 1704, also mention it.

<sup>7</sup>For location see Chapter VI, p. 59.

thinking of returning home by way of Dhamuni and Garh but were defeated again near the jungles of Dhamuni. The victorious Firuz Jang returned to Burhanpur on April 8, 1704, and was highly rewarded by the Emperor. Firuz Jang's victories once again opened the roads to the Deccan, and early in March, 1704, some three hundred and fifty bags of letters and fifty-five baskets of fruits reached the Emperor.

The second band of Marathas numbering about 20,000 horsemen had taken the route to Mandu from Bijagarh. Guided by Mohan Singh, the Zamindar of Barwani, this force had come to Sultanpur; they then crossed the Narmada and had moved towards Mandu. Nawazish Khan, the *Faujdar* of Mandu, in the absence of substantial help from the Governor of the province of Malwa, had found himself unequal to the task of facing the Marathas. He, therefore, hid himself at Dhar and posted his men to guard the hills and passes of Jahangirpur so that the Marathas might not be able to go towards Ujjain. There was some fighting but the Maratha force scattered, most probably on the news of the defeat of Nimaji Sindhia at Sironj<sup>1</sup>. Thereafter there was no major raid in Malwa; in 1705 one or two minor incidents took place.

The astute Aurangzib left nothing undone to weaken the Maratha solidarity. Every discontented Maratha captain was received with open arms in the Mughal camp. And of the discontented Maratha captains there was no dearth. The dynastic quarrel initiated by Tara Bai at a most inopportune moment was complicated by the cross currents of personal rivalry among the Maratha officers. Soon after the death of Rajaram, one of the supremely able officers, Parashuram Trimbak, then besieged in Parli, came out of the fort and out of jealousy for the other Maratha ministers at Satara offered to join the Mughals. Similarly, prompted by the temporary pressure of rivals at home, Ranuji Ghorpadé made an offer to join Mughal service and Dhanaji made a similar proposal in July, 1703.<sup>2</sup> When the anger of Tara Bai fell on Baharji Ghorpadé, she ordered

<sup>1</sup>On the basis of Inayatullah's letters Dr. Raghubir Singh is inclined to place this expedition in March-May 1704 (*Malwa in Transition or a Century of Anarchy*, footnote on p. 64.)

<sup>2</sup>Sarkar: *Aurangzib*, Vol. V, p. 203.

Dhanaji to arrest him. Dhanaji besieged him in fort Kurkal<sup>1</sup> and seized all his property and cattle. Pressed hard Bahirji looked round for help but no Maratha would help him for fear of provoking Tara Bai. In this predicament he begged help from Nusrat Jang, who was guarding the environs of Bijapur in January-February, 1707, while Chin Qilich Khan was recalled to court, and offered to enter the Emperor's service. The Mughals could not let go such a golden opportunity. Nusrat Jang readily responded to the call and crossing the Bhima and the Raichur Doab came to the bank of the Tungbhadra. Dhanaji being informed of his designs and finding himself too weak to face him in the open field had already marched away towards Mysore. Bahirji thus saved himself but having no desire to fulfil the pledge of entering the Mughal service he quietly retired to his home in fort Sindur.<sup>2</sup>

Tara Bai, surrounded as she was by greedy *sardars* anxious to add to their *vatan* lands and prepared to fight the enemy only on promise of rewards, herself fell into the vicious circle and continued the award of *jagirs*, although on principle she was averse to it. In fact, during her regime the evil became more prominent than ever before because the question of succession had given greater scope for bargaining to the Maratha *sardars*.<sup>3</sup> Through superior dash Tara Bai succeeded in counteracting the intrigues of Aurangzib in this battle of nerves and diplomacy.

<sup>1</sup> *Dilkasha* places this fort 14 *kos* from Adoni.

<sup>2</sup> *Dilkasha*, p. 158a.

<sup>3</sup> This tendency is noticeable in a marked degree in Sardesai: *Gharanyacha Itihas*, Nos. 74 to 80.



## CHAPTER VII

### TARA BAI TRIUMPHANT

#### 1. *Aurangzib returns to Ahmadnagar*

THE EMPEROR left the environs of Wagingera on April 27, 1705, and arrived at Devapur (8 miles south of that fort) where he pitched his tent for the rains.<sup>1</sup> His designs of conquest had not yet left him. He thought of going towards Mysore and got the depths of the rivers measured.<sup>2</sup> But a veritable storm of untoward events forced him to bow before them. He had defied old age so far and had struggled courageously with disease. He, however, received the first summons of death at Devapur, and anxieties of State and domestic bereavements quickened its pace. His work in Maharashtra was being undone by the Marathas. The fort of Kondana which had cost him so much blood and sweat was recovered by the Marathas who drove away its cowardly and negligent Mughal *qiledar*. On the failure of Hamid-ud-din Khan the task of retaking the fort was entrusted to Nusrat Jang, who did it in a month's time by completely cutting off the grain supplies.<sup>3</sup>

To add to his difficulties news of a very serious nature was pouring from the North. The king having been absent from Delhi for decades, all disorderly forces had raised their heads. In his attempt to crush the South, Aurangzib had lost his grip on the North; administration had practically broken down. Corruption, bribery and incompetence were the order of the day and nobody was interested in the preservation of law and order and the protection of the people.

Aurangzib could no longer close his eyes to these hard facts. On October 23, 1705, he marched for the North in a *palki*. He reached Ahmadnagar on January 20, 1706. His retreat from Wagingera to Ahmadnagar was not unmolested. Maratha hordes of 50 to 60 thousand men were pursuing the retreating Mughals

<sup>1</sup> *Maasir*, 507; Khafi Khan, II, 527.

<sup>2</sup> Sardesai: *Rajaram*, pp. 142-143.

<sup>3</sup> *Dilkasha*, 155b; also *Maasir*, 508 to 512.

with confidence, killing stragglers, cutting off supplies and even threatening to break into his camp. When Hamid-ud-din was sent against the Marathas he was defeated and captured and his baggage looted. In this pitiable state the worn out Emperor reached Ahmadnagar after an interval of 23 years during which period much water had flown down the Bhima and the Krishna and a complete change had taken place in the Mughal-Maratha affairs. Men could already see death firmly stamped on the face of the Emperor and he himself recognised Ahmadnagar as his "Journey's end."<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *The Marathas Dominant: Their Daring Raids*

With the advent of Tara Bai a vast change had come in the affairs of the Maratha State. She had infused new enthusiasm into the limping Maratha war effort and galvanised the nation for the last ditch stand. In the words of Khafi Khan she "showed great powers of command and government, and from day to day the war spread and the power of the Marathas increased."<sup>2</sup>

Although the Marathas had put up a good defence against the Mughal onslaught they were too weak and too ill-equipped to take the offensive. Rajaram on his return from Jinji had taken the bold design of raiding Malwa and Khandesh, but just when he had taken the initial steps he died too suddenly. Tara Bai took the cue from her husband's policy of carrying war beyond the Deccan and it developed so wonderfully in her able hands that she can virtually be called the originator of the policy of Maratha expansion. To quote Khafi Khan again, "she sent armies to plunder the six *subas* of the Dakhin as far as Sironj, Mandisor, and the Suba of Malwa...The daring of the Marathas increased, and they penetrated into the old territories of the Imperial throne, plundering and destroying wherever they went."<sup>3</sup>

Under the guidance of Tara Bai the Marathas became the masters of the situation and the initiative had now definitely slipped into their hands. Tara Bai brought about a complete transformation

<sup>1</sup> Khafi Khan, II, 541; *Ahkam*, 56.

<sup>2</sup> Khafi Khan, II, 468.

<sup>3</sup> Khafi Khan, II, 510.

in the nation's political outlook, military potential and morale. "They were no longer a tribe of banditti or local rebels, but one dominating factor in Deccan politics, the only enemy left to the Empire, and yet an enemy all-pervasive...elusive as the wind, without any headman or stronghold whose capture would naturally result in the extinction of their power...a nation was up in arms...against the officers of the Emperor and the cause of law and order in general."

A corresponding change was visible in the Maratha tactics and equipment. The Marathas, no longer half-naked light forayers, moved about with a confidence born of successive victories against the enemy. "These (Maratha) leaders and their troops," observed Manucci in 1704, "move in these days with much confidence, because they have cowed the Mughal commanders and inspired them with fear. At the present time they possess artillery, musketry, bows and arrows, with elephants and camels for their baggage and tents....In short, they are equipped and move about just like the armies of the Mughal...At the present time they move like conquerors, showing no fear of any Mughal troops."<sup>1</sup>

The Marathas took the maximum advantage of the difficulties of the Mughals and made a living out of this war by preying on the Emperor's misery and prayed for the long life of the Emperor and his perpetual stay in their midst. From small beginnings their power increased with rapid strides. They began as ordinary robbers and brigands, but gradually as their resources increased they even attacked and looted walled cities like Haidarabad, Bijapur, Aurangabad and Burhanpur. "When the Emperor," says Bhimsen, "was involved in the siege of Khelna, the Marathas became completely dominant over the whole kingdom and closed the roads." They plundered the imperial baggage near Bahadurgarh and set fire to what they could not carry off, in November, 1704, when the Emperor was marching from Khed to Wagingera.<sup>2</sup>

The Marathas spread like locust swarms throughout the length and breadth of the Deccan and reduced spoliation to a well-organised system. "In imitation of the Emperor, who with his army and enterprising *amirs*, was staying in those distant mountains, the

<sup>1</sup> *Storia*, III, 505.

<sup>2</sup> *Dilkasha*, 141a, 146a, 149, 138b.

commanders of Tara Bai cast the anchor of permanence wherever they penetrated, and having appointed *kamavishdars* (revenue collectors), passed the years and months to their satisfaction, with their wives and children, tents and elephants. Their daring went beyond all bounds. They divided all the districts (*parganas*) among themselves, and following the practice of the imperial rule, they appointed their *subadars* (provincial governors), *kamavishdars* (revenue collectors), and *rahdars* (toll collectors).

"Their principal *subadar* is commander of the army. Whenever he hears of a large caravan, he takes six or seven thousand horse and goes to plunder it. He appoints *kamavishdars* everywhere to collect the *chauth*, and whenever, from the resistance of the *zamindars* and *faujdars*, the *kamavishdar* is unable to levy the *chauth*, he hastens to support him and besieges and destroys his towns. And the *rahdar* of these evil-doers takes from small parties of merchants, who are anxious to obtain security from plunder, a toll upon every cart and bullock, three or four times greater than the amount imposed by the *faujdars* of the government. This excess he shares with the corrupt *jagirdars* and *faujdars*, and then leaves the road open. In every *subah* (province) he builds one or two forts, which he makes his strongholds, and ravages the country round. The *mukaddams*, or headmen of the villages, with the countenance and co-operation of the infidel *subadars*, have built forts, and with the aid and assistance of the Marathas they make terms with the royal officers as to the payment of their revenues. They attack and destroy the country as far as the borders of Ahmedabad and the districts of Malwa, and spread their devastations through the provinces of the Dakhin to the environs of Ujjain. They fall upon and plunder large caravans within ten or twelve *kos* of the imperial camp, and have even had the hardihood to attack the royal treasure."<sup>1</sup>

Even at Ahmadnagar Aurangzib had no peace. He was surrounded on all sides by the Marathas and his territory was being ravaged before his very eyes. In April or May, 1706, a large Maratha force under such big leaders as Dhanaji Jadhav, Nimaji Sindhia, Dado

<sup>1</sup> Khafi Khana, II, 510.

Malhar, Rambha Nimbalkar and others hovered round only four miles from the camp. Khan-i-Alam could drive them away only after a bloody contest.<sup>1</sup>

Affairs had taken a rather serious turn in Gujrat. A brewer had brewed trouble in that quarter for the Emperor. The Marathas were led into Gujrat by Inu Mand, a former brewer of Khandesh, who had taken to a very profitable course of brigandage and highway robbery. Before Bidar Bakht could reach there to take Azam's place,<sup>2</sup> a large force of Marathas, led by Dhanaji Jadhav, took advantage of the defenceless condition of Gujrat and raided it. The rich trading centre of Baroda was sacked for two days in March, 1706. The weak opposition offered by its *Faujdar*, Nazar Ali, was soon overcome and he himself was captured with his men. A force sent by the deputy governor of the province was routed at Ratanpur near Rajpipla, the camp was looted and two high officers were held to ransom on March 15, 1706. Another force led by Abdul Hamid Khan, the deputy governor, was also defeated near the Baba Piara ford. The camp was plundered and the deputy governor himself was taken prisoner. The victorious Marathas then looted the rich cities at their pleasure and levied *chauth*.<sup>3</sup> In 1706 they also raided Burhanpur.

The province of Aurangabad being nearer home was subjected to more frequent raids than such distant provinces as Gujrat and Malwa. Nusrat Jang, however, acted successfully here and several times defeated the Marathas under Dhanaji and other leaders. He ultimately pushed them back to their refuge in the Mahadeva hills in the Satara district. Unable to make much headway in this region, Dhanaji diverted his activities to the environs of Miraj, but when things were made too hot for him even there by Nusrat Jang, he crossed over to the other bank of the Krishna, outside the range of the indomitable Khan.

<sup>1</sup> *Dilkasha*, 155b.

<sup>2</sup> Prince Azam left Gujrat on November 25, 1705, and Bidar Bakht reached there on July 30, 1706.

<sup>3</sup> *Dilkasha*, 156a; *Minat-i-Ahmadi*, 378-388; Khafi Khan gives a very brief and confused account and wrongly places the event before the siege of Wagingera.

Maratha activities greatly intensified as soon as the skies were clear after the rains in 1706. Dhanaji made a dash for Berar and Khandesh, but before he could go far Nursat Jang issued from his Miraj camp and drove away Dhanaji to the Bijapur region and thence beyond the Krishna. A long train of caravans coming to the Imperial camp from Aurangabad was completely plundered at Chanda, 24 miles from the camp.<sup>1</sup> According to Manucci, the Marathas attacked Daud Khan Pani in 1704 while he was on his way to Adoni. He saved himself by paying rupees seven lakhs.

### 3. *The Diplomatic Discomfiture of Aurangzib*

With growing age and infirmity Aurangzib had become anxious to return to his capital to restore order in the affairs of his Empire and to ensure a peaceful succession to himself before he finally closed his eyes. When he saw that the Mughal arms were ineffective against the Maratha resistance even when he led the armies in person and the Maratha tangle seemed insoluble, he re-doubled his efforts in the diplomatic sphere and thought of coming to a settlement with the Marathas by making use of Shahu. The acute observer, Manucci, remarks that Aurangzib tried to sow the seeds of a civil war among the Marathas by releasing Shahu and by granting to him the *chauth* of the Deccan.<sup>2</sup> Prince Kam Bakhsh was authorised to start negotiations with the Maratha leaders. The services of Raibhanji,<sup>3</sup> an illegitimate son of Shahji Bhonslé, were secured by creating him a six-*hazari* Mansabdar on June 9, 1703, and he was to serve as intermediary. Raibhanji visited Shahu on July 10 and on November 27, 1703, the tents of Shahu were shifted from the *Gular-bar* to a place near the tents of prince Kam Bakhsh. The prince was anxious to conciliate the Marathas in order to fulfil his ambition of creating an independent principality in Bijapur and started negotiations with Dhanaji Jadhav.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Dilkasha*, 157b.

<sup>2</sup> *Storia*, III, 499.

<sup>3</sup> Shambhuji and Rajaram used to call Raibhanji *kaka* or uncle and hence he was known as Bhanji Kaka. He was formerly an Adilshahi *Mansabdar* but later lived at Tanjore. He entered Mughal service on purpose. He became a sort of adviser to Aurangzib on Maratha affairs. He died on August 23, 1709.

<sup>4</sup> Khafi Khan wrongly says that Dhanaji proposed terms of peace (p. 376).

Dhanaji on behalf of all the Maratha generals made the demand that the Emperor should grant the *chauth* and the *sardeshmukhi* of the six *subahs* of the Deccan to the Marathas in return for which they would keep the peace in the Deccan. He also demanded the issue of *farmans* to all the officers of Tara Bai re-assuring them and inviting them to meet him and Shahu. After their acceptance of the Mughal sovereignty they would take back Shahu with them. The procedure suggested was that when these *sardars* arrive, Prince Kam Bakhsh should meet them with Shahu at a place ten miles in advance of the Imperial camp; after paying their respects to Shahu and the Prince they were to be conducted to the Emperor who should grant robes to seventy of them. The Emperor at first reluctantly agreed to the proposal and ordered seventy *farmans* to be issued to individual *sardars*; but when the Maratha *sardars* began to assemble in large numbers in the vicinity of his camp and their demands increased with their growing number, his usually suspicious nature smelled foul play on the part of the wily Marathas and he abruptly broke off the negotiations.<sup>1</sup> Poor Sultan Hussain, Kam Bakhsh's secretary, who acted as the intermediary had to fight his way back to the Mughal camp. "It appears evident that Dhanaji and Shahu had open conferences at this time, in the presence of Kam Bakhsh and Zulfiqar Khan, and possibly Balaji Vishwanath was then a confidential adviser of Dhanaji. This accounts for Dhanaji's respect for Shahu just before the battle of Khed in 1707 and his quick desertion of Tara Bai's cause."<sup>2</sup>

What Aurangzib suspected was that assembled in great force as the Marathas were they might carry away Shahu with them, despite the fact that the maintenance of Shahu and his large party was a heavy burden on his depleted finances. Aurangzib had some plan up his sleeves of making use of Shahu for the purpose of creating division among the Marathas and hence was unwilling to part with him. The negotiations broke off with no regrets to the Marathas who were conscious of their dominant position and were unwilling to accept Mughal sovereignty. Shahu was sent back to his camp within the *Gulal-bar*. Aurangzib was,

<sup>1</sup> Khafi Khan, p. 510.

<sup>2</sup> Sardesai; *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. I, p. 356.

however, not discouraged and continued the exhausting war of nerves and diplomacy with a vehemence well worthy of him.

Just a year before his death he made another attempt to make use of Shahu. He gave out that he had given the province of Bijapur and Karnatak to Kam Bakhsh and that he himself was going back to Delhi; and that he would set Shahu free, give him a *7-hazari mansab* and instal him as a vassal king under Kam Bakhsh. He actually granted him some lands and the right to levy *chauth* over others. On February 6, 1706, Shahu was transferred to the charge of Nusrat Jang<sup>1</sup> and Raibhanji was also deputed to serve under the Khan with the express purpose of bringing about a compromise with the Marathas. And the occasion appeared a most opportune one. The smouldering embers of rivalry between Tara Bai and Rajas Bai had burst into a flame and the already existing factions had come into greater relief. The Emperor thought of making some gain by making the contest a three-cornered one by sending Shahu back to his people. With this end in view he made Shahu write letters to some of the Maratha *sardars* inviting them to come and see him. These letters were not taken seriously by the addressees because they knew that Shahu was not a free agent, and they were too shrewd to walk into a trap laid for them by the unscrupulous enemy.<sup>2</sup> Shahu was made apparently free and was allotted an independent place near Zulfiqar Khan's camp where Maratha *sardars* could come and meet Shahu. But Zulfiqar had secret instructions to keep a close watch on Shahu. How wise was Shahu in not making an attempt at escape!

Thus, this attempt also failed and fate allowed no time to Aurangzib to make any further attempt. Who knows what would have happened if Aurangzib had released Shahu in his life-time? There is perhaps some justification in holding that the Maratha civil war between Tara Bai and Shahu which came about after his death might have begun then and had given him some relief in his closing years. The Maratha camp was hopelessly divided when in the interest of national survival they should have stood as one man

<sup>1</sup> *Shiv Charitra Pradip* (Gadadhar Prahlad Shakavall for the Saka year 1627, p. 64); also *Dilkasha*, 154b.

<sup>2</sup> *Dilkasha*, 155a.



against Aurangzib. It cannot be said that patriotism did not exist in the Maratha country, for Shivaji's life's labour was not yet completely lost, but it was patriotism tainted with a corresponding urge for personal gain. Extremely suspicious as Aurangzib was, he failed to take advantage of this opportunity; it seems he purposely refrained from adopting this course because perhaps at the back of his mind he had a vague misgiving that Tara Bai and Shahu might unite against him. This was a major misreading of Maratha character by the senile Emperor.

The Emperor was fast decaying in health at Ahmadnagar under pressure of adverse circumstances. With manly courage he tried to reconcile himself to his losses and to make the best of a bad situation, but the sense of utter disappointment completely overwhelmed him in the end. Outwardly, he continued the routine of his life with the precision of a clock,<sup>1</sup> but inward mutterings of a very mysterious nature haunted him perpetually and he turned moody and irritable. He felt a sense of utter loneliness and there was practically none to console him. All his comrades of youth with the sole exception of the Prime Minister Asad Khan were already in their graves. His domestic life was darkened as bereavements thickened round his closing eyes. The behaviour of his sons added to the sorrows of the dying monarch. All men now saw that the end was not long in coming. On the morning of February 20, 1707, died the mighty Alamgir while his fingers moved mechanically over his rosary and his lips gasped out the *Kalimah*.

Deccan was the El Dorado of Aurangzib's ambition but he had to keep in abeyance his arch ambition for some time. Ultimately, divine retribution drew him to his doom. The rebel son of Shah Jahan had come to the Deccan following hard on the heels of his own rebellious son, Akbar, and there he was destined to spend the last 25 years of his life in tents and wear out the Empire's revenue, army, and organised administration as well as his own health in an unending and fruitless struggle. He had said good-bye to the magnificent royal mansions of Delhi with all their gorgeous splendour and by his own choice had become a gipsy king living in a strange land among people speaking a strange language, and here he lived not

<sup>1</sup>*Maasir*, 508.

for a day but for the whole quarter of a century during which "a new generation was born (in the camp). They passed from infancy to youth, from youth to old age, and passing beyond old age girt up their loins for the journey to the world of the angels, and yet (all this time) they did not see the face of a house, but only knew that in this world there is no better (i.e. other) shelter than a tent."<sup>1</sup> The tragedy of his life worked itself out slowly but pitilessly with increasing clearness during the last eighteen years of his life, from 1689 to 1707, when this frail man buffeted bravely in the tumultuous sea of Maratha lawlessness. The best course for him was to patch up a compromise in the Deccan and to go back to Delhi. He was at last overwhelmed by the surging waves; a strenuous reign of fifty years ended in colossal failure. Whatever be the causes of his failure, the Deccan proved to be the grave of not only his body and his reputation but also of his empire and his progeny. The days of Mughal dominance were over and henceforth was to follow a period of grim struggle for existence by his weak successors.

#### 4. *Tara Bai Recovers the Lost Ground*

The battle of the Maratha forts was organised by Tara Bai and although Aurangzib had succeeded in taking a number of them each one of them with the exception of Torna was reduced not through any feat of arms but through bribing the *qiledars*.<sup>2</sup> In some cases the surrender of the forts by the *qiledars* was not an isolated act actuated by corrupt motives. It was in fact in pursuance of a well-concerted plan thought out by Tara Bai and her ministers. The resources and the might of the Mughals were beyond question and hence the fall of the forts which they besieged was a foregone conclusion. To drive away the besieging force through bombardment from the fort walls and through the exertions of the roving Maratha

<sup>1</sup> *Dilkasha*, 141a.

<sup>2</sup> Khafi Khan's defence of Aurangzib's policy of bribing the *qiledars* is interesting: "The clemency and long suffering and care of the Emperor were such that, when he ascertained that several fortresses had been long and vigorously besieged by the forces appointed to the duty, and that the garrisons were in difficulty, he paid sums of money to the commandants, and so got the forts into his possession."

soldiery in the field was a foolhardy effort. Therefore, the garrisons adopted the sound strategy of holding out as long as they could and then surrendering on payment of huge sums of money.

The Mughals got almost nothing in the forts, and situated as they were in rough hilly country of difficult access it was not possible to hold them for long in the face of the hostility of the people surrounding the neighbourhood. The Marathas easily re-took these hill forts and the time and energy spent over their capture was wasted. It was a sickening story of a fortress taken, then lost and then taken again. This is in fact what actually happened. As soon as Aurangzib turned his back on the *mavals* to take up the more important job against Pindia Nayak, his six years' incessant labour in that region was lost. The weak garrisons which he had left behind in the forts were easily driven out. Parashuram Trimbak took back Basantgarh,<sup>1</sup> Panhala, Pawangarh and Satara. The last was taken through the remorseless activities of one Annaji Pant, who first gained the confidence of the garrison and entered the fort. With the keen eye of a *maval* huntsman, he watched his prey and when opportunity offered itself to him he jumped upon his victim with the stealth and spring of a tiger and put to the sword the very men who had showed him kindness, a transaction which can escape condemnation only under a cynical maxim, "everything is fair in love and war." The indefatigable efforts of Shankraji Narayan, the *Sachiv*, gained to the Marathas the fort of Singharh, Rajgarh,<sup>2</sup> Rohida and some other places. "The loss of these forts, particularly Singharh and Panhala, gave Aurangzib great vexation, and augmented an illness under which he laboured, and from which he recovered very slowly."<sup>3</sup>

Zulfiqar Khan was sent to re-take Singharh and before he went there Shahu was entrusted to his care. Zulfiqar succeeded on account of the shortage of supplies in the fort<sup>4</sup> but as soon as he turned his back Shankraji Narayan drove away the weak garrison.

<sup>1</sup>*Dilkasha*, 156b.

<sup>2</sup>Santaji Salimkar was killed in this effort in 1704. (*Rajwade*, Vol. XVII, pp. 24, 29, 33).

<sup>3</sup>Khafi Khan, II, 527.

<sup>4</sup>Khafi Khan, II, 540; *Dilkasha*, 155b; Sardesai says that Zulfiqar took the fort through bribery (*Rajaram*, p. 147.)

The Marathas went on pressing their advantage home, and succeeded in snatching away from the unwilling hands of the enemy the forts of Lohgarh in January, Rajmachi in June and Kondana in July, 1705.<sup>1</sup> Tara Bai now shifted her headquarters to Panhala and administered the State and organised the defence with the help of Ramchandra Nilkanth who was again admitted to her confidence.

It has been noticed how quick was Aurangzib in changing the name of the Maratha forts which came into his hands. In taking these forts he had a dual purpose—to deprive the Marathas of their strongholds which provided shelter to their roving field armies, and to strike hard at the system of Shivaji. These hill forts were assigned an important place in the liberation movement launched by Shivaji and they had rightly become an object of pride to the people of Maharashtra. By taking them and re-naming them he wanted to impress upon the Maratha people the fact that he had undone the work of Shivaji. Thus, the onslaught against the Maratha forts was a direct blow aimed at the ideology and system of Shivaji. Rajaram and Tara Bai had simply hatched the Shivajian egg; in fact, it was the life-work and ideology of Shivaji which was on trial and the credit of saving it in its concluding phases must necessarily go to Tara Bai. It was through her energy and ability that the Marathas not only emerged successful from this life-and-death struggle but became so powerful that they overran Northern India during the regime of Aurangzib's weak successors. This seven-year duel between Tara Bai and Aurangzib shall ever remain the most glorious episode in the annals of the country.

<sup>1</sup>Dhavji Visar was rewarded for taking Lohgarh and Rajmachi (*Peshwa Daftar*, pp. 30, 88 and 90).

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE INITIAL STAGE OF RIVALRY BETWEEN TARA BAI AND SHAHU

#### 1. *Shahu's Life at the Mughal Camp*

SHAHU AND his mother, Yesu Bai, acted with wonderful tact in the Mughal camp. Helpless prisoners as they were in enemy hands, they knew it well that it was not only useless but positively dangerous to put on their faces feelings of resentment or hurl defiance at the enemy in the manner in which Shambhuji had done. Making the best of a bad situation they had thrown themselves at the mercy of their enemy and had carried themselves in a way that they might give the Emperor the impression that they were happy with their lot in the Mughal camp and that Rajaram was their enemy. They never expressed satisfaction at Maratha victories and suppressed their feelings to a surprising extent.<sup>1</sup> But there was an end to this superhuman suppression of feelings. When poor Shahu heard of his uncle's death, the blow was too much for him and he fell so seriously ill that both his mind and body became crippled for the rest of his life.<sup>2</sup> Shahu had a fairly large party with him and through them he could maintain his contact with his uncle and other Maratha leaders. Jyotyaji Kesarkar and Uddhav Yogdev were constantly exchanging messages with Rajaram and other leaders through the agency of Bhaktaji Huzra and Banki Gaikwad who were frequently running errands between the two camps under various disguises. Jyotyaji Kesarkar was also largely responsible for what-

<sup>1</sup>. Once when Rajaram sent a message to Aurangzib demanding the release of Shahu, the Emperor jokingly asked Shahu whether he would like to go back to his uncle. Shahu promptly replied that his uncle was his enemy as he was his father's and that he tried to secure the throne to himself. He left him and his party at Raigarh while he himself escaped to Jinji. He would like to go back to Maharashtra only when the Emperor secured the throne for him after defeating his uncle. The Emperor was duped and felt greatly satisfied. (Chitnis: *Thorley Shahu Maharaj Yanche Charitra*, p. 5.)

<sup>2</sup>. According to the *Akhbarat* of 4th June, Shahu took his bath of recovery on 4th June, 1700; *Maasir*, 433.

ever little education Shahu was able to get in the Mughal camp. The way he was brought up made Shahu a curious mixture of the Hindu and Muslim cultures.

The year 1703 was a year of both joys and sorrows for Shahu. When Aurangzib was spending the respite of the rainy season of 1703 at Poona, he gave orders that Shahu be converted to Islam during the month of Muharram. The news spread like wild fire throughout the whole of Maharashtra and a deep shadow of gloom pervaded the whole atmosphere. Shahu himself and his mother were prostrate with grief and in that helpless state they turned to their great benefactor, the Princess Zinat-un-nisa, who pleaded for him with her father. Aurangzib relented at last but at a price, and the price was that two prominent Marathas should offer themselves for conversion in place of Shahu. Even in those days when unselfish patriotism was a rare virtue there were people who could die without a groan for their king and for their country. Two sons of Pratap Rao Gujar, Khandé Rao and Jagjiwan, brother-in-law of Rajaram, who were captured at Raigarh along with Shahu and lived with him in the Imperial camp, offered themselves for conversion to save Shahu. They were accordingly converted on May 16, 1703, and were re-named Abdur Rahim and Abdur Rahman.<sup>1</sup> The moral courage to offer oneself as a scapegoat for loyalty and risk one's soul by sacrificing the faith of one's ancestors is a nobler virtue than courting death on the battle-field. Shahu never forgot the obligation of these two brothers.

Through the good offices of Princess Zinat-un-nisa, Shahu was married to two girls late in the year 1703 when he was about 20 years of age. Jyotyaji Kesarkar and Moropant Sabnis selected two girls from the families of those Maratha *Sardars*, who served under Aurangzib. One of them belonged to the Jadhav and the other to the Sindhia family. The Emperor gave the *Parganas* of Akalkot, Indapur, Supa, Baramati and Nevasa in *Jagir* to Shahu on the occasion of his marriage.

Outwardly Shahu and Yesu Bai pretended to be happy, but in their hearts of hearts they were looking forward to the day of their

<sup>1</sup>According to the *Akhbarat*, Aurangzib had first sent Hamid-ud-din Khan to Shahu on May 9, 1703, to induce him to become a Musalman; also see *Aitihāsik Sankirna Sahitya*, No. 4, p. 41.

release and return home. So long as the Royal camp was at Galgala and at Brahmपुरi, Shahu was well provided but from the day of Rajaram's unsuccessful bid to capture him Aurangzib had become alert and kept Shahu as closely guarded as possible. With the increasing difficulties of Aurangzib while out to capture the Maratha hill forts Shahu's difficulties also increased. Sometimes the mother and the son were separated and like the pay of the soldiers, the allowances of Shahu and his party also fell into arrears. The miserable position to which all the inmates of the Mughal camp, including Shahu's party, were reduced is to be read from the pathetic letter dated Ahmadnagar, the 19th April, 1705, which Yesu Bai wrote to the head of the temple of Moraya Dev of Chinchwad begging immediate financial help. "Our assigned allowances," says Yesu Bai, "have not long been paid to us, all cash was either plundered by the Marathas or appropriated by the Muslim officials. For a long time past we have had to live on loans, but now no banker hazards a loan to us.... It is indeed providential unkindness that such extreme misery should befall the great Shivaji's daughter-in-law..."<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *Aftermath of Aurangzib's Death: Prince Azam releases Shahu*

When Aurangzib died at Ahmadnagar, Azam, his second son, was not very far from that place. That prince had been forced to proceed to his post in Malwa by his dying father; but knowing that the end was not long in coming the cunning prince had purposely marched very slowly and had made two halts after every march. On receiving the news of his father's death, he proceeded post-haste to Ahmadnagar with a select following. There he performed the last rites of his father and then ascended the throne on March 5, 1707. He won over to his side most of the generals including the *Wazir* Asad Khan and his son Zulfiqar Khan. At the time of the Emperor's death, Zulfiqar was not in the camp. He came back to Ahmadnagar on March 23, 1707, along with Shahu, who had been under his charge for some time, and joined the cause of Muhammad Azam.

Kam Bakhsh had been sent to Bijapur to take charge of the government of that Province. He also heard the news of his father's death while on his way but did not come back to Ahmadnagar for

<sup>1</sup> Varshik of the Saka year 1837, p. 298.

fear of Azam. Having antagonised Asad Khan and Zulfiqar Khan, he could expect little support in the Mughal camp. So he proceeded and reached Bijapur where he found the gates of the fort shut in his face. After overcoming much opposition he was at last able to enter the fort and assume the government. From the very beginning he behaved in the manner of an independent prince.

Azam did not give much thought to the activities of Kam Bakhsh and made preparations to proceed to the North to contest the throne against his elder brother, Prince Muazzam. He left Ahmadnagar with a large following but since he had neither money nor even pleasant manners his ranks were thinning day by day. Chin Qalich Khan and Amin Khan deserted him and came back to the Deccan.<sup>1</sup> Firuz Jang also evaded joining him. He, however, proceeded further and crossed the Narmada at Handia.

Here news arrived that the officers of Tara Bai had become active again and had absolutely thrown the imperialists on the defensive. They had taken back most of the forts and Lodi Khan, the Mughal *Faujdar* of Poona and Chakan, had been driven out by Dhanaji.

Azam was in a fix. Zulfiqar Khan<sup>2</sup> and Padishah Begum came to the rescue of the distracted Prince. They advised him to release Shahu from imprisonment and send him to his homeland as a vassal prince to make good his claim against his aunt. Several Rajput princes of the camp, who were friendly to Shahu, urged the same course upon the prince's attention. At first Azam was hesitant because he had the same suspicions which his father had.<sup>3</sup> This belief is confirmed because although Azam honoured Shahu with gifts and dresses, he put off the actual release for one reason or another. Zulfiqar Khan and Padishah Begum both gave him hint to quit the Mughal camp at the earliest, lest Azam change his mind.<sup>4</sup> The other thing which confirms this belief is that Azam detained as hostages his mother, his wife, his half-brother Madan Singh<sup>5</sup> and many others of his party. "The terms of his release as they had come under discussion from time to time were (1) that he was to rule the

<sup>1</sup> Khafi Khan, II, 571 and 581.

<sup>2</sup> He introduced Shahu to Muhammad Azam on March 13, 1707.

<sup>3</sup> *Bharatvarsha*, No. 10, p. 55.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> The other half-brother, Madho Singh, had died on September 10, 1698.



small *swarajya* of his grand-father as a vassal of the Mughal Empire; (2) that he was to serve his liege lord whenever called upon to do so with his contingent of troops; and (3) that he was also permitted to collect *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* from the six Mughal provinces of the South."<sup>1</sup> As advised by Zulfiqar Khan and other well-wishers, Shahu did not stay for taking the *sanads*. He left the Mughal camp on May 8, 1707, while it was at Doraha<sup>2</sup> near Nemewar and started on his homeward journey with mixed hopes and fears, after having been a close prisoner for 18 years.<sup>3</sup> He left behind Jyotyaji Kesarkar to receive the *sanads* when they were drawn up.

Shahu's noble character and charming manners had endeared him to all in the Mughal camp, and hence his departure was felt by everybody. In token of personal regard and affection he was entertained day after day for thirty-four days by both his Hindu and Muslim friends in the Mughal camp. It was here that he made friends with some of the leading Rajput princes including Sawai Jai Singh of Amber.<sup>4</sup> This friendship stood him in good stead when the Marathas advanced to the north during the weak rule of Aurangzib's successors. The perverted policy of Aurangzib had as much alienated the Rajputs of the north as the Marathas of the South, and hence when time came the Rajputs willingly lent their helping hand to the Marathas.

### 3. *Shahu's Homeward Journey: People flock to his Banner*

When Shahu left the Mughal camp he had a very small following and of them Mahadaji Krishna Joshi, a banker, and Gadadhar Prahlad, a Priest, were the only persons of note.<sup>5</sup> Avoiding the more

<sup>1</sup> Sardesai: *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. II, p. 12; also *Jalpur Akhbarat* and *Chitnis*.

<sup>2</sup> 20 miles north-west of Bhopal.

<sup>3</sup> Some Muslim historians say that Shahu escaped from the Mughal camp. This does not seem correct. Either Shahu left with express permission or Azamshah connived at his escape; otherwise he would have been pursued.

<sup>4</sup> Shahuchi Rojnishi, p. 198. Shahu was entertained by some of the Rajput Princes in the camp of Muhammad Azam. Chitnis is mistaken when he says that Shahu was entertained while passing through their respective dominions (Chitnis: *Thorley Shahu Maharaj Yanche Charitra*, p. 9).

<sup>5</sup> Uddhav Yogdev Rajajna and Jyotyaji Kesarkar were left behind to take the *sanads* from Prince Azam. Two other persons of note who accompanied Shahu were Moropant Sabnis and Shuklaji, a Kanujia Brahman from the North.

frequented eastern route which ran through the Mughal stronghold of Burhanpur, Shahu took the shorter route through Bijagarh and Sultanpur into Western Khandesh.

Bijagarh (Barwani) is even now a small principality about 30 miles south of the Narmada. At that time, one Mohan Singh was the siegholder of Bijagarh. He was friendly to the Marathas, and when Nimaji Sindhia had raided Malwa in 1704 he had helped him in all possible ways.<sup>1</sup> Shahu had known him before and on crossing the Narmada he came directly to Mohan Singh who received him with open arms and helped him with men and money.<sup>2</sup>

From Bijagarh Shahu proceeded to Sultanpur on the Tapti river. In the valley of this river was the fort of Kokarmunda then in the possession of one Ambu Pandé, who now joined Shahu.<sup>3</sup> On the advice of Mahadaji Krishna Joshi and Gadadhar Prahlad, Shahu had addressed letters to many Maratha *sardars* announcing his arrival and asking them to join his standard.<sup>4</sup> Of the many who came to join Shahu were Sujan Singh Rawal of Lambkani, the Bokils and the Purandarés. The last probably also brought with them their friend, Balaji Vishwanath, an astute Brahman and a civilian servant of the Maratha state already well known round about Poona for integrity and business capacity. Some of these families which joined him were serving the Mughal Government with mental reservation for the national cause. Shahu's status as a vassal prince of the Mughals made it convenient for them to join him readily without incurring the danger of Mughal displeasure.

Shahu seems to have spent about a month at Lambkani<sup>5</sup> where he received whole-hearted support from the local *zamindar*, Sujan Singh Rawal. His stay at Lambkani during June proved very beneficial to him. There came to see him Bapuji Sonaji Dighé, the right-hand man of Parsoji Bhonslé, who then looked after the Maratha interests in Berar. Later, Parsoji and his brother Bapuji Bhonslé (ancestors of the Bhonsles of Nagpur) came to join Shahu

<sup>1</sup> Raghbir Singh: *Malwa in Transition*, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Shahuchi Rojnishi*, pp. 202 and 203; also Khafi Khan, II, 582.

<sup>3</sup> Khafi Khan, II, 582.

<sup>4</sup> One such letter was written to Rustamrao Jadhav, Shahu's father-in-law (Rajwade, Vol. XX, Document No. 60).

<sup>5</sup> About 15 miles north-west of Dhulia.

with their forces. Parsoji Bhonslé's support greatly strengthened the position of Shahu. On hearing of his arrival, Tara Bai had declared him an impostor but when Parsoji ate with him out of the same plate everybody in Maharashtra was satisfied about the legitimacy of Shahu. Shahu acknowledged Parsoji's and Dighé's obligation in a letter dated June 27, 1708, addressed to Bapuji Sonaji Dighé.<sup>1</sup> Parsoji's example was quickly followed by Nimaji Sindhia, Haibatrao Nimbalkar, Rustamrao Jadhav (Shahu's father-in-law), Chimanaji Damodar and others who were then campaigning in Khandesh and Baglan.

In July 1707, Shahu moved to Chorvad and thence to Kusumbi. Here he was joined by Dadaji Nilkanth Nayak of Purandhar. Shahu left Kusumbi in August for Ahmadnagar and stayed there for nearly three months. During this time he greatly improved his position by his tact and judicious policy.<sup>2</sup>

While at Ahmadnagar Shahu paid a visit to the place where Aurangzib had died and then he went on foot to his tomb at Khuldabad and rendered pious obeisance to his memory.<sup>3</sup> Shahu was a God-fearing person and did not want to be ungrateful to the Emperor who had treated him so kindly when he could well have put his life to an end and inflicted untold miseries upon his mother and other relations. The political significance of his act was that he wanted to earn the good-will of all the Mughal officers in the Deccan by deferring to the claim of Mughal overlordship and there is no denying the fact that he was in sore need of this good-will on account of the hostile activities of his aunt.

#### 4. *Tara Bai declares Shahu an Impostor and denies his Claim*

Having stabilised his position, Shahu sent a message to Tara Bai announcing his arrival in the home country and begging to be allowed to rule. He also added that his claim had the approval of the Mughal Emperor. He, however, assured Tara Bai that her

<sup>1</sup> Sardesai: *Balaji Vishwanath Peshwa*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> The description of Shahu's supporters is to be found in the large number of *sanads* issued by him. Many of them are to be found in Vad's *Shahuchi Rojnishi*, in the *Itihas Sangraha Peshwa Daftaratil Mahiti* in Mawji and Parasnis's *Sanda va Patren va Kaifiyati* and some of them in the *Peshwa Daftar* volumes.

<sup>3</sup> Khafi Khan, II, 582; Rajwade, Vol. II, p. 8.

position as the venerable guardian of the royal house will be respected and that he sought her blessings and would benefit by making use of her wide experience.<sup>1</sup>

To Shahu's above request Tara Bai's answer was that she considered him nothing but an impostor, and that he was to meet the same fate which a former impostor, who had impersonated him, had met. But this stand of hers did not appeal much to the people at large. Shahu had roamed about with the imperial camp in Maharashtra for 18 years and had maintained personal contacts with most of the prominent Maratha leaders and hence there could be no possible doubt about his identity. If there was any doubt at all then it was set at naught by Parsoji Bhonslé's action in eating with him out of the same plate.

As soon as doubts about his identity were dispelled, a reaction against Tara Bai and a tide of loyalty in favour of Shahu set in. The long-drawn battle, with all the sacrifices involved in it, was after all fought for the release of Shahu—the legitimate successor to the Maratha throne. When Tara Bai saw that this contrivance did not work she did not press it too far<sup>2</sup>; she herself had not much doubt about the genuineness of Shahu's person.<sup>3</sup> But desirous of clinging to power at all costs she found out other arguments to refute the claims of Shahu who was plainly told that he had no right of succession to the Maratha throne—a political blunder that did deceive neither her own partisans, nor the Maratha nation as a whole.

5. *Tara Bai convenes a Meeting of her Officers and administers to them an Oath of Fidelity and Allegiance to her Son.*

Tara Bai wrote out letters to all the Maratha officers and landholders refuting Shahu's claim to the throne on the ground that Shambhuji (whose son Shahu was) had lost the kingdom which Shivaji had carved out through his enterprise; and that Rajaram through his exertions had regained the kingdom lost by Shambhuji

<sup>1</sup> Sardesai: *Balaji Vishwanath Peshwa*, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> This is evident from her letter dated September 17, 1707, to Somnalk Desai and Kulkarni. In this letter she does not insist upon Shahu being an impostor.

<sup>3</sup> Yesu Bai and Sakwar Bai, Shivaji's widow, had exchanged secret messages with Tara Bai for years from the Mughal camp. (Sardesai: *Balaji Vishwanath Peshwa*, p. 37.)

and hence it was not the same old kingdom of Shivaji which had descended to Shambhuji in the natural course but a new one created by Rajaram through his own enterprise. As such, his son, Shivaji III, so did Tara Bai argue in vain though, had a better title to succession than Shambhuji's son, Shahu. Moreover, during his life time Shivaji had felt annoyed and disappointed with the wayward conduct of his first born, Shambhuji, and had favoured the succession of Rajaram. Thus she tried to maintain that from the very beginning her husband was the real *Chhatrapati*; Shambhuji by force of arms having had simply usurped power from which his father had excluded him. When Shambhuji himself was not the rightful heir how could his son Shahu be? These letters further instigated the Maratha *sardars* to imprison the messengers of Shahu who would come to them and then to despatch them to the court. One such letter dated September 17, 1707, addressed to Somnaik Desai shows her attitude towards Shahu.<sup>1</sup>

In order to enlist support for her son Tara Bai summoned an assemblage of all her principal officers and exp'ained to them how Shahu had undone Shivaji's work by accepting the vassalage of the Mughals, and had thereby bartered national independence for personal gain. All the sacrifice which the Maratha people had made during the last twenty-five years was thus wasted. Highly intelligent as Tara Bai was, she had become a past-master in intrigue and diplomacy through personal contacts with such distinguished statesmen as Santaji, Dhanaji, Ramchandra Nilkanth, Shankarji Narayan, Parashuram Trimbak and others. She p'ayed her trump-card by placing before them a point of honour by pointing to Shahu's dependence on the Mughals. By doing this she had, indeed, touched a tender spot in the Maratha character. Some of them thought that Tara Bai was after all right. After the wastage of so much blood, sweat and tears, they felt, the net result must not be to have only a vassal of the Mughals as the Maratha *Chhatrapati*; that position could have been obtained years

<sup>1</sup> This letter is given in *Vividh jryan Vistar* of February, 1924, and bears the seal of Nilkanth Moreshwar *Pradhan* and Parashuram Trimbak *Pratinidhi* which means that they looked eye to eye with Tara Bai. Chitnis says, that she ordered her officers and landholders to capture or kill Shahu, if possible.

ago, for during the last years of his life the Emperor had ardently desired a compromise with the Marathas on much the self-same terms as were accepted by Shahu at the hands of his son, Muhammad Azam.

When most of the Maratha nobles were in this predicament Tara Bai made them take the most solemn oaths to support the cause of her son who now symbolised the complete independence of the Maratha State as compared with Shahu's vassalage of the Mughals. In Maharashtra some oaths are considered very sacred and a person who dares to break them does not only come down in social estimation but according to the general belief is also punished by invisible divine forces. The most sacred oaths even to this day are those of *Doolh Bhath* (milk and boiled rice) and *Bel Bhandar* (leaves of Bel tree and turmeric). Tara Bai placed before her assembled officers boiled rice and milk and commanded them to take the oath of fidelity to her son by touching them. According to the custom of the country it was an irrevocable step. Many of them took the oath; some with sincerity while others half-heartedly or with mental reservation. The two persons to bind themselves unequivocally to Tara Bai's cause were Parashuram Trimbak, *Pratinidhi* and Shankarji Narayan, *Sachiv*. Ramchandra Nikanth had taken the oath with a divided mind. He was convinced of the justice of Shahu's cause but he at the same time did not want to be ungrateful to the family of his patron, Rajaram. The most clear-headed person, however, was Khando Ballal, the hereditary loyal *Chitnis* of the house of Shivaji. Tara Bai's cunning arguments could not dim the clarity of his vision and he took only a qualified oath pledging himself to fight Shahu only if he was an impostor. Dhanaji fell in line with Khando Ballal. The Maratha notables stood divided between Shahu and Tara Bai in their loyalty and thus Aurangzib's policy began bearing the poison fruit for Maharashtra.

#### 6. Tara Bai's Arguments Examined

Tara Bai's contention of Shahu being an impostor needs no examination as she herself did not perhaps mean it seriously. Tara Bai first sent Khando Ballal and then for further confirmation

Bapuji Bhonsle of Hingni (real brother of Parsoji Bhonsle) to ascertain the identity of Shahu. Both reported that Shahu was not an impostor.<sup>1</sup>

Tara Bai next advanced the plea that her son had a better title to the throne because Shivaji had desired the succession of Rajaram and not of Shambhuji. This point is a controversial one because although Shivaji was disgusted with the shameful behaviour of his first-born, he did not actually disinherit him in unequivocal terms. The question greatly vexed his mind and he looked himself up with Ramdas Swami at Sajjangarh for about a month but the sanctity attached to the rule of primogeniture was so great that they could not come to a definite decision. Hence, even on his death-bed Shivaji did not make an unequivocal statement about the succession issue, but only an attempt at partition if feasible. This uncertainty led to that palace intrigue in which much valuable and innocent blood was shed and in which Shambhuji ultimately came out triumphant.<sup>2</sup>

The third argument of Tara Bai was that Shahu had no claim to the throne because his father, Shambhuji, had lost Shivaji's kingdom and that Rajaram created an altogether new kingdom by his own exertions. In this connection it is necessary to ascertain the sentiments of Rajaram himself and his conduct towards Shahu and his mother. All documentary evidence so far available goes to show that Rajaram was a man who was honest to the core. During the critical period following Shambhuji's death, he displayed patriotism of a high order. He might have had some grievances against Shambhuji but towards Yesu Bai and Shahu he had no feelings of enmity. In fact, according to Grant Duff, the rigours of Rajaram's imprisonment were softened to a certain extent by the kindness of Yesu Bai who lived at Raigarh along with Shahu. Rajaram had very cordial relations with Yesu Bai.

On the death of Shambhuji, brave Rajaram readily drew the curtain

<sup>1</sup> Tara Bai had chosen Khando Ballal purposely for this commission. She thought that Khando Ballal must have feelings of enmity towards Shahu, whose father had cruelly killed Khando Ballal's father. This narrow-minded lady failed to notice the consummate statesmanship and unflinching loyalty of Khando Ballal. (*Nagpurkar Bhonsle Yanchi Bakhar*, pp. 19 and 20).

<sup>2</sup> Sardesai: *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. I, p. 266.

of oblivion over the bitter memories of the past—the torture of his mother and his own imprisonment at the hands of Shambhuji—and his only thought was to save the nation from a greater calamity than what had hitherto befallen her. It was the patriotism of Rajaram and Yesu Bai which had saved the nation in its hour of crisis. What a great contrast was Yesu Bai's attitude to Tara Bai's? Realising the gravity of the hour and displaying no womanly obstinacy or selfishness in pressing the claims of her infant son, she gave a noble lead to others. At her instance, it was decided that though Shahu was the legitimate successor to his father all power for the time being be left in the hands of Rajaram who should act as regent and assume even the ensigns of royalty.

Rajaram made a stirring appeal for unity and co-operation and proclaimed Shahu to be the real king with himself as his regent. "I am," said Rajaram, "but the Prince's servant; you must, it is true, give me your obedience, but your loyalty and devotion you must keep for my master. Do but this and I am confident that we shall not only save the kingdom, but bring to pause the prophecy of the Goddess."<sup>1</sup> He assumed the ensigns of royalty in the interest of the State only when pressed to do so by Yesu Bai; but so scrupulous was he about the rights of Shahu that he never allowed himself to be crowned<sup>2</sup> and never even sat on the throne but used only a village cot.<sup>3</sup>

Rajaram's love for Shahu was great. How pathetically has Chitnis described the farewell meeting between Rajaram and Shahu and Yesu Bai. According to the same source Rajaram was at first reluctant to leave Yesu Bai and Shahu behind at Raigarh, but finding no alternative plan he had to do so with a heavy heart. So long as he lived he made ceaseless efforts to get back Shahu and while on his death-bed his last wish and command to Ramchandra Nilkanth was to continue the struggle for the release of Shahu and for the liberation of the country. The honest motives of Rajaram were never in question and Yesu Bai and Shahu had the fullest

<sup>1</sup> Chitnis: *Rajaram Yanche Charitra*, p. 27; Kincaid and Parasnis: *History of the Maratha People*, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Sardesai: *Rajaram*, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Kincaid and Parasnis : *History of the Maratha people*, p. 159.



confidence in him. If Shahu made some adverse remarks about Rajaram while in the Imperial camp it was the piteous bleat of a helpless lamb before a wolf.<sup>1</sup> Shahu and Yesu Bai deserve all the credit for the wonderful tact with which they maintained their position in the Mughal camp.

It is true that Shambhuji's irresponsible conduct gave a rude shock to the nascent Maratha State and it is also true that Rajaram had a great hand in regaining the lost kingdom; but he did so as the regent of Shahu who had fallen into enemy hands. It is doubtful if Rajaram could have received the wide support that he did if he had acted for his own benefit. He did not create a new kingdom but recovered the lost one. In a letter to Shankraji Narayan dated August 25, 1697, Rajaram himself wrote that the real claimant to the throne was Shahu; whatever he did was as his representative.<sup>2</sup> There can be no better and more unequivocal statement of his intentions than this and in the face of it all the arguments later advanced by Tara Bai seem unjust and absolutely untenable.

Having disposed of the question of succession, it is time to examine Tara Bai's charge that Shahu brought down the prestige of the Maratha monarchy by his acceptance of Mughal suzerainty. So long as the Mughal camp was in the Deccan, Shahu's anxiety was not great. He was after all in his own country and could hope that he would regain his liberty some day. But his anxiety increased when the Mughal camp moved northwards after the death of Aurangzib. His future was in the dark. A life-long imprisonment at Delhi or in any other fort of the Empire, blinding or death was the only thing he could normally hope for at the hands of his new master. However ardent their desire, it was apparently not possible for his countrymen to go to the North in force and free him from there when they could not free him while he was in his own country and in their midst.

<sup>1</sup> Shahu acknowledges his uncle's obligation in his letter to Shambhuji in 1727. The relevant portion deserves to be quoted. "Your revered father the late Rajaram Maharaj went as far as Jinji and eventually obtained a kingdom through great personal effort. He then returned to his home in Maharashtra, plundered rich and renowned cities and made a name for himself. You must be well aware what a keen interest he took in our welfare, and efforts he made to get us released from the imperial confinement. (Chitnis: *Thorley Shahu Maharaj Yanche Charitra*, pp. 57 and 58.)

<sup>2</sup> Rajwade: Vol. XV, Document No. 286.

On the death of Rajaram, Shahu had written a letter to Ramchandra Nilkanth saying that he (Ramchandra) now stood in the place of his uncle and that he hoped he would continue his efforts for his release. In the same letter he had begged Ramchandra Nilkanth to convey his respects to his aunts and his blessings to his cousins.<sup>1</sup> Ramchandra Nilkanth was greatly moved by this letter and would have continued the old policy of Rajaram, but he had to bow before the wishes of the ambitious Tara Bai who had no qualms of conscience about the justice or injustice of her cause. During the time Tara Bai held the reins of government, no serious effort was made for the release of Shahu. The activities of Tara Bai were known in the Mughal camp and it was on the strength of them that Aurangzib had tried to create division among the Marathas by releasing Shahu. It is significant that Aurangzib had made the proposal of Shahu's release to Dhanaji and not to Tara Bai who was for the time being the head of the State for all practical purposes.

When Shahu saw that the feelings of his aunt were lukewarm towards him and that she wanted to supersede him in favour of her own son whom she had already formally crowned, he must have felt sorely disappointed and in that hour of melancholy he might have been forced to take some decisions not very much in accord with his actual intentions and feelings. Shahu had no distinguished Maratha leader with him in the camp to guide him. The only persons to whom he could turn for advice were Raibhanji Bhonslé, Jyotyaji Kesarkar and Uddhav Yogdev Rajajna—all extremely loyal but of mediocre abilities. Zulfiqar Khan and Padishah Begum were thus the only persons to whom he could look for guidance. They might have suggested to him that the wisest course for him was to go back to his homeland as a protected vassal of the Mughal Emperor to claim his legitimate rights against his aunt.

A change had come in the attitude of Zulfiqar Khan. One of the important factors in the failure of Aurangzib was the apathy and indifference of his generals, particularly of Zulfiqar Khan. Now Zulfiqar Khan looked upon the Deccan as his future charge, and

<sup>1</sup> Chitnis : *Rajaram Yanche Charitra*, p. 68.

although he was anxious to have a Maratha king favourably disposed towards him, he could no longer support the Maratha pretensions as he had lately been doing in his own interest. With his vast experience of the Deccan he could prove more dangerous than Aurangzib himself. He was a very hard nut to crack, and if the Marathas stood in awe of any Mughal general it was Zulfiqar. Zulfiqar Khan being no longer a half-hearted fighter, a working compromise with the Mughals was the only wise course.

All these considerations weighed heavily on the minds of Shahu and his mother. Having no other alternative and making the best of a bad situation, Shahu agreed to return to Maharashtra as a feudatory of the Mughals. Briefly stated the terms of the agreement were: (1) that he was to rule the small *swarajya* of his grandfather as a vassal of the Mughal Empire; (2) that he was to serve his liege lord whenever called upon to do so with his contingent of troops; and (3) that he was also permitted to collect *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* from the six Mughal provinces of the South.

In order to understand properly the correctness or otherwise of Shahu's decision, it is desirable to look back at the aims and objects of Shivaji himself. As a shrewd statesman Shivaji had known his own limitations and also the great resources of his adversaries and hence his steps towards the attainment of his ideals were measured and gradual and seemingly so innocent that his opponents could not properly gauge the significance of them at the time. He had not gone to Agra to get his independence recognised, for that was a thing he could not hope for. He had gone there to put his viewpoint before Aurangzib, and to convince him that a more rational and generous policy towards his Hindu subjects was needed. He also had gone there to obtain the grant of *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* which he had intended to use as an all-India instrument for expansion. He ultimately succeeded in obtaining in 1667 Aurangzib's recognition for the first two terms obtained by Shahu in 1707, but Aurangzib never recognised his independent status.

Closely examining the terms of the agreement which Shahu had made it seems that it was not a downright surrender of national interests, but an honourable compromise, the best that could be had under the circumstances. If Shivaji had been granted these terms

(*chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* of the Deccan) by Aurangzib at Agra, even the Father of the Maratha nation would have perhaps accepted them too gratefully. No doubt, the Marathas had offered a very stout opposition but the Mughal was yet too powerful for them and could not let them live in peace. In the absence of a compromise there was neither peace for the Mughals nor for the Marathas; and the Maharashtra country devastated by 25 years of incessant warfare needed the restoration of peaceful conditions badly. It seems Shahu never intended to barter the freedom of his nation for his selfish gains. As a shrewd man he bided his time and looked forward to the chance of recovering the lost ground as soon as opportunity offered itself. When he had disposed of rivals at home and had set his house in order, he readily approved the ambitious projects of his *Peshwas* not only to shake off the Mughal yoke but to strike at the trunk. Shahu was an apostle of peace and moderation and caution was his watchword.

Thus Tara Bai's charge that Shahu bartered away national independence for his own selfish gains does not seem to be proved. Her own conduct was inconsistent with her professions. She said she stood for complete independence but immediately after the death of Rajaram was she not prepared to accept much lower terms than accepted by Shahu?<sup>1</sup> Again, when Bahadur Shah came to the Deccan to measure his sword with Kam Bakhsh did not Tara Bai herself send *vakils* to supplicate in the same humble way in which Shahu had done for the grant of formal *sanads* for the collection of *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi*?<sup>2</sup> What need had an independent *Chhatrapati* to do all this? This shows that her claims and professions were not based on any sound logic or moral principle; she was an adventurer and an opportunist and wanted to cling to power irrespective of the fact whether her cause was just or unjust and whether the means employed to gain her ends were fair or unfair.

<sup>1</sup> For these terms see Chapter VI.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, she wanted only *sardeshmukhi*. (Khafi Khan: Vol. II, p. 625.)

## CHAPTER IX

### CIVIL WAR BETWEEN TARA BAI AND SHAHU

#### 1. *The Battle of Khed*

SHAHU HAVING been a man of peace, tried to avoid conflict with Tara Bai as far as possible. He would have been content to make Ahmadnagar his capital and to rule from there the small principality of his grandfather. But there were practical difficulties in adopting this course. First, the Mughals could not agree to it because Ahmadnagar was the principal seat of that *Subah*. Secondly, Shahu, the lack-land king, could not convince the common people of Maharashtra of his assumption of the Maratha sovereignty unless he took possession of Satara, the official capital of the Maratha State.

From Ahmadnagar, Shahu had been closely watching the activities of Tara Bai and was at the same time making active preparations for the coming conflict which now seemed inevitable.<sup>1</sup> Shahu's popularity had increased a hundred fold.<sup>2</sup> Jyotyaji Kesarkar, whom Shahu had left behind to obtain the formal *sanads* for the grants of *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi*, re-joined his master at Ahmadnagar.

Shahu waited patiently but Tara Bai precipitated matters and in October, 1707, Shahu learnt that Tara Bai's forces were already on

<sup>1</sup> During his brief absence from Ahmadnagar, Shahu had an accidental skirmish with the villagers of Parad (about 25 miles north of Daulatabad). The *patil* of the village was killed and his widow brought her little son to Shahu and sought his protection. Shahu, looking upon the encounter as his first victory, gave the boy the name Fateh Singh and brought him up as his own son. This boy of the Lokhande family came to play an important part at Shahu's court and was brought up as an heir-apparent and would possibly have inherited Shahu's throne, if he had not declined the position himself. His family still rules at Akalkot. This little incident, which took place in August, 1707, illustrates the soft and kindly disposition of Shahu's nature. His forgiveness and solicitude for peace and compromise influenced not only his personal actions throughout his long reign, but the fortune of the whole Maratha nation. (Sardesai: *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. II, p. 14.)

<sup>2</sup> *Itihas Sangraha Peshwa Daftaratil Mahiti*, pp. 12, 176 and 180; also *Aitihashik Juni Goshti*, Part II, Document No. 4. Grant Duff, however, says that "the people of the country seemed inclined to the cause of Tara Bai." (Vol. I, p. 344.)

the march against him. This forced his hands and he marched towards Poona and halted at the village of Khed.<sup>1</sup> On the other bank of the Bhima, at the village of Kadus,<sup>2</sup> he found stationed the forces of his aunt. The grand spectacle on the other side of the river sent a shiver through Shahu's frail body, for his own force was after all a heterogeneous mass with no capable leaders to lead it. On the other hand, Tara Bai's forces, inspired by her own energy, were led by Dhanaji Jadhav, the *Senapati*, and Parashuram Trimbak, the *Pratinidhi*—the two foremost and seasoned generals of the Marathas who had not only defied Aurangzib for the quarter of a century but had ultimately made him die a broken-hearted man.

Apparently, Shahu's position seemed hopeless and complete annihilation stared him in the face. Finding himself weak in arms he tried diplomacy. By the sterling merits of his character and gentle disposition of temperament he had already won over to his side some of the key men of the Maratha State. The hereditary *Chitnis*, Khando Ballal, Balaji Vishwanath (*Sar-Subahdar*) and Naro Ram, all close helpmates of Dhanaji, had already joined Shahu's cause secretly, and they were trying to induce other Maratha leaders to come over to Shahu by convincing them of the justice of his cause.<sup>3</sup> It was common knowledge that the result of the battle hinged on Dhanaji's attitude. Through these agents a meeting was arranged between Dhanaji and Shahu; Shahu's genial manners completely won over Dhanaji to his side. He promised Shahu that he would fight a sham battle and would join him with his partisans at a convenient moment.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the key-stone was taken out of Tara Bai's arch and as a natural consequence her whole edifice crumbled down. Parashuram Trimbak, *Pratinidhi*, who owed his position to Tara Bai, remained loyal to her. Next day, probably October 12, 1707, the forces came to grips with each other on the plains of Khed on the north bank of the Bhima. Shahu led his army in person and showed bravery and

<sup>1</sup> Khed is a village on the north bank of the Bhima, about 22 miles north of Poona.

<sup>2</sup> Kadus is opposite to Khed across the river. In common parlance the people of the locality join the two villages and call it "Khed-Kadus."

<sup>3</sup> *Kavya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi*, Document No. 495.

<sup>4</sup> Dalvi: *Maratha Kulancha Itihas*, p. 66.

determination. On Tara Bai's side the *Pratinidhi* fought valiantly but what could he alone do when the *Senapati*, Dhanaji Jadhav, stood neutral. A very large number of his men were killed and then he fled with his life across the river.<sup>1</sup> Shahu's waiting game thus proved more effective against the whirlwind tactics of Tara Bai.

After Shahu had won the day, Dhanaji presented himself to Shahu along with his partisans and swore allegiance to him. On an auspicious occasion a camp *Darbar* was held in which Dhanaji was invested with the robes of the *Senapati*, Khando Ballal with the office of the *Chitnis* and many others were rewarded according to their respective merits. The victory of Khed gave Shahu confidence and he assumed the royal title of *Khsatriya Kulavatamsa Sri Rajah Shahu Chhatrapati*.<sup>2</sup>

It is instructive, interesting and of the highest importance to analyse the causes of the defeat of Tara Bai at Khed. Apparently, she was the more powerful and Shahu seemed no match for her. But the difference between the character of the two decided the issue. Shahu was a generous-hearted, genial sort of man who could readily forgive and forget. He was an excellent judge of men and at this particular time displayed statesmanship of a high order. On the other hand, Tara Bai, though very able and highly intelligent, was after all no Elizabeth, but only a vindictive, suspicious and highly imperious partisan woman, a whole-hogger in politics that went against the grain of her semi-feudal supporters.

By her unwise conduct she annoyed the veteran Ramchandra Nilkanth whom she suspected of favouring the cause of Shahu as against her son.<sup>3</sup> She bestowed all her favours on Parashuram Trimbak who began to thwart the wise arrangements of Ramchandra Nilkanth. Hounded by the very man who owed his rise to

<sup>1</sup> On Shahu's side, Chimnaji Damodar and Parsoji Bhonsle showed great bravery. According to Chitnis's *Life of Shahu*, p. 13, and *Peshwa Daftar*, 12, 1, it seems that Khande Rao Dabhade fought in this battle on the side of Tara Bai. He was captured but Dhanaji later stood surety for him and took him under his protection.

<sup>2</sup> This is how he is described in the State papers after the battle of Khed.

<sup>3</sup> As has already been pointed out, Ramchandra Nilkanth was always anxious for the release of Shahu and made unceasing efforts for it. He had opposed the coronation of Tara Bai's son. In fact, he had never seen eye to eye with the policies of Tara Bai.

his patronage, Ramchandra Nilkanth began to intrigue against Tara Bai. Tactless and ungrateful, Tara Bai again took a hasty step. She put the *Hakumat-panah* in fetters of silver and threw him in prison at Basantgarh. This inflamed the feelings of Ramchandra Nilkanth all the more and in a spirit of vindictiveness he encouraged Dhanaji and others to join the cause of Shahu for whom Ramchandra always had had a soft corner in his heart and the legitimacy of whose claim he had never for a moment doubted.<sup>1</sup> Thus, deprived of the counsels of a man of approved ability, she became a pawn in the hands of ambitious Maratha nobles who had no scruples in increasing their *Jagirs* and *Vatan* lands at the cost of both parties. Shahu's conciliatory policy was another factor in thinning the ranks of Tara Bai. This is the background against which is to be studied the defeat of Tara Bai at Khed.

After his escape from Khed, the *Pratinidhi* tried to rally his forces at Chakan for a second trial of strength but people now displayed little enthusiasm for Tara Bai's cause and hence the attempt fizzled out. He then proceeded to Satara, the metropolis of the Maratha State, in order to save it from falling into Shahu's hands.

## 2. *The Sachiv Commits Suicide: The Fall of Satara and the Capture of the Pratinidhi*

Shahu lost no time in marching upon Satara. He crossed the Bhima and reached Shirwal travelling through Chakan,<sup>2</sup> Poona, Supa and Jaejuri. Near Shirwal, in the fort of Rohida,<sup>3</sup> lived another staunch adherent of Tara Bai, the seasoned war veteran and statesman, Shankraji Narayan, *Sachiv*. Shahu sent him summons to come and meet him or to face the consequences of refusal. The *Sachiv* found himself between the devil and the deep sea. On the one hand, he had taken the oath of fidelity to Tara Bai's son; on the other hand, he probably no longer had any doubt about the identity of Shahu and also the justness of his cause. Torn between these two opposing sentiments, he ended his life on October 27, 1707, by taking poison.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Khare : *Inchalkaranji Sanshodhan Itihas*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> At Chakan he visited the *ashram* of Kacheshwar Baba and his wife and obtained their blessings.

<sup>3</sup> It is near Bhor.

<sup>4</sup> *Kavya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi*, No. 495.



When Shahu heard the news he felt very sorry. He went up the fort and there met the late *Sachiv's* shrewd wife, Yesu Bai, and appointed her one-year-old son, Naro Shanker, to his father's office.<sup>1</sup> This kindly treatment of the family of a fallen opponent greatly added to the rising popularity of Shahu. The forts of Rajgarh, Prachandgarh (Torna), Vichitrargarh (Rohida) and others came into Shahu's possession.<sup>2</sup> Shahu then proceeded to the forts of Chandan-Wandan and took possession of them. He then sent a letter to the *Pratinidhi* asking him to surrender to him the fort of Satara where Tara Bai had stationed herself. In view of the rapid successes of Shahu and his growing popularity, Tara Bai lost heart and leaving the defence of the capital to her trusted lieutenant, the *Pratinidhi*, she left for Panhala.<sup>3</sup>

Shahu reached the environs of Satara some time in November, 1707. The *Pratinidhi* was obdurate and refused to surrender. Shahu, however, had made up his mind to take the fort of Satara within eight days at any cost. Dhanaji laughed at Shahu's childish adventure because he thought that it was almost impossible to reduce Satara within the short space of eight days when it was defended by no less a person than the veteran soldier, Parashuram Trimbak. Though young and inexperienced, Shahu had made up his plans. The *Havildar* of Satara was one Shaikh Mira of Wai. Shahu caught hold of his family living at Wai and brought them to Satara. He then sent a message to Shaikh Mira saying that if the fort was not surrendered within 8 days he would destroy his family by tying them to the mouth of guns. The threat was too severe for Shaikh Mira. When the Shaikh met the *Pratinidhi* and apprised him with the situation he found him obdurate.<sup>4</sup>

In desperation Shaikh Mira put the *Pratinidhi* under confinement and opened the gates of Satara to Shahu. It was on a Saturday in December, within 7 months of his leaving the Mughal camp, and since then has begun the custom of *Naubat* being played on

<sup>1</sup> Naro Shanker was born in August, 1706.

<sup>2</sup> Soon after that Shahu got possession of Purandar and Singhgarh.

<sup>3</sup> About sixty miles south of Satara.

<sup>4</sup> When Shaikh Mira told him of the threatened danger to his family, Parashuram replied that he would give him money with which he could get married again. (*Nagpurkar Bhonslyanchi Bakhar*, p. 21.)

each Saturday.<sup>1</sup> Shahu had surprised Dhanaji and others by his resourcefulness in taking the fort within the appointed time and gained immensely in prestige. Shaikh Mira was rewarded and confirmed in his office. Shahu did not get only the official capital of Maharashtra but also captured along with it one of the staunchest adherents of Tara Bai. Her cause was more than half doomed by the capture of Parashuram Trimbak whom Shahu put in confinement.

On the auspicious day of January 12, 1708, Shahu performed his coronation at Satara with great pomp and made fresh ministerial appointments.<sup>2</sup> In making the appointments he made another departure from the wise rule of Shivaji. Shivaji was greatly averse to the creation of hereditary offices and with him merit was the only criterion for appointment. Shahu made the offices hereditary. The other departure, which has already been noticed, was the creation of hereditary *Jagirs*. Readers of Maratha history are well aware of the mischief done by these two departures from Shivaji's wise rule. But at that time this was the only policy to rivet the shaky loyalty of the greedy Maratha *sardars*.

Though Shahu had secured the Maratha throne, his difficulties had not yet come to an end. Tara Bai was defeated but not totally crushed. A past-master in the art of intrigue, she could not let Shahu live in peace. She moved heaven and earth and created a host of difficulties for Shahu.

### 3. *Tara Bai Rejects the Offer of Peace: Ramchandra Nilkanth Comes Back to Power*

Though beaten at Khed and at Satara, Tara Bai was not yet completely crushed. Anxious to end the domestic strife Shahu offered Tara Bai liberal terms consistent with his own position as the Maratha *Chhatrapati*. The terms, in short, stipulated that the territory and the forts south of the Warna river might remain

<sup>1</sup> Rajwade : Vol. XV, Document Nos. 288, 289, 360; also *Karya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi Lekh*, 495; also *Sanda Va Patren*, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the appointments went to the families already holding these offices. Some of the old incumbents had, of course, gone to Tara Bai. Their places were given to their near relations. For the first 3 or 4 years some changes were made but after that the offices became hereditary.

under the possession of his cousin, Shivaji III, who should be a subordinate prince to the Maratha *Chhatrapati* paying at least nominal obedience.<sup>1</sup> Shahu's anxiety to come to a compromise with Tara Bai had a dual purpose: well aware of the resolute character and resourcefulness of his aunt, he knew it well that unless pacified she would raise a whirlwind of troubles for him; besides, he wanted to have his hands free so that he could bring under his control the territory over which he was to rule. The Mughal Emperor had, no doubt, agreed that Shahu should rule over the *Swarajya* of his grandfather, but nothing was in writing. Above all, the Mughal officers in the Deccan were reluctant to carry out the imperial orders. Shahu's authority did not extend to more than 20 to 25 miles round about Satara. He had thus before him the twin task of disarming the opposition of the local Mughal officers and of the partisans of Tara Bai who sometimes made common cause with them against Shahu.

Tara Bai rejected Shahu's generous offer and continued her war-like activities. It has already been related that two of her staunch adherents, Parashuram Trimbak and Shankraji Narayan, had been put out of action—the one committed suicide and the other was a helpless prisoner in Shahu's hands. In her hour of need she again turned to the loyal Ramchandra Nilkanth who, though disgusted with the ingratitude of Tara Bai, did not want to desert the family of his patron, Rajaram, in its hour of need. Tara Bai brought him to Rangna from his prison-cell at Basantgarh and seating young Shivaji and Shambhuji in his lap she begged him to defend their claims against Shahu who, she alleged, had betrayed the national cause by accepting the overlordship of the Mughals.

Ramchandra was long associated with Tara Bai in politics and in administration and knew full well her capricious nature. But at that moment he seems to have been in a strange frame of mind. He knew he could not get on for long with the domineering Tara Bai. Being for long at the helm of Maratha affairs he had developed a taste for virtual dictatorship and wanted only a titular *Chhatrapati*-like Rajaram. He was also convinced of the justice of Shahu's

<sup>1</sup>Rajwade: Vol. XX, No. 282, which is dated January 16, 1708. See also *Itihas Sangrahatil Prachin Maratha Sardars*, pp. 10-12.

# CIVIL WAR BETWEEN SHAHU & TARA BAI

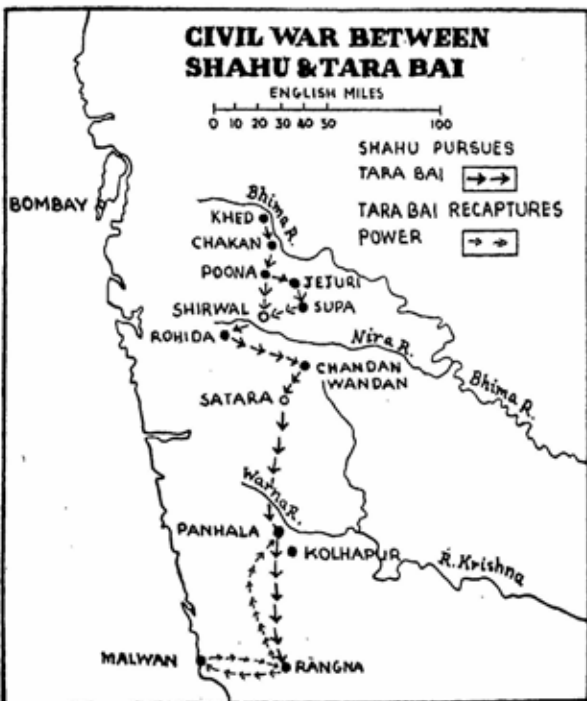
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SHAHU PURSUES

TARA BAI →→

TARA BAI RECAPTURES  
POWER →→





cause. But perhaps Tara Bai was able to convince him that Shahu had compromised the position of the Maratha *Chhatrapati* by his acceptance of the Mughal overlordship. Ramchandra Nilkanth was also a disappointed man. Either at the time of Shahu's coronation or shortly after it, Ramchandra had carried on negotiations for joining Shahu's newly formed ministry but ultimately these negotiations came to naught. Shahu had no need of a man with divided loyalties.

Ramchandra Nilkanth being restored to his old position of authority, began to look after the affairs of Tara Bai's son once again. He tried his utmost to strengthen the cause of Tara Bai by undoing all that he had done in his hour of anger. Through the agency of Naro Mahadev, the founder of the *Jagir* of Inchalkaranji, they tried to win back Dhanaji, Khando Ballal Chitnis and Parashuram Trimbak to Tara Bai's side but the attempt failed.<sup>1</sup> Tara Bai herself wrote three letters with the same purpose but with no better results.<sup>2</sup> Of the three persons to whom the letters were addressed, Parashuram Trimbak was the only person who in his heart of hearts still cherished the cause of Tara Bai. The two powerful chiefs on whose support she now mainly banked were the Sawant of Wadi and Kanhoji Angre, the Warden of the West Coast and the Admiral of the Maratha fleet.<sup>3</sup> Angre was just then the most powerful Maratha chief.

#### 4. *Shahu Besieges Panhala and Rangna*

On leaving Satara, Tara Bai had fled to Panhala and it was there that Shahu directed his forces at the end of February 1708. "The Maratha nation was solidly rallying behind Shahu and acclaimed him with full heart as against a lady who, however competent, could not occupy the throne and whose son the young Shivaji was known to be altogether incompetent and incapable of conducting the affairs of the State."<sup>4</sup> In order to stem the tide of desertions in favour of Shahu, Tara Bai wrote letters to Maratha *Vatandars*, threatening

<sup>1</sup> Khare: *Inchalkaranji Sansthacha Itihas*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Rajwade: Vol. VIII, Document Nos. 64-66.

<sup>3</sup> Kanhoji Angre was appointed *Sarkhel* or Admiral by Rajaram in 1698 on the death of Sidoji Gujar. (*Itihas Sangraha Peshwanchi Bakhar*, Vol. IV; also *Vividh Jnyan Vistar*, 1924, p. 492.)

<sup>4</sup> Sardesai: *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. I, pp. 15 and 16.

and cajoling them in the same breath to remain loyal to her cause. Her letters of February 2 and 3, 1708, to Khem Savant II (1675-1709)<sup>1</sup> of Wadi show the state of her mind.<sup>2</sup>

Despite her best efforts, Shahu's following was increasing day by day. The Maratha *Vatandars* had no scruple in crossing from this camp to that because in either camp they thought they were serving their master, but they preferred to serve in the camp where they had better prospects irrespective of the consideration whether it was in the general interest of the country or not. Bahirji Ghorpadé, Khem Savant and a few others who had their vested interests in the vicinity of Panhala were the only persons of note who remained loyal to Tara Bai. These reverses, however, could not discourage a lady who had hurled defiance at Aurangzib for full seven years. She rose equal to the occasion and made preparations to offer a stiff opposition.

During his triumphant march from Satara to Panhala in February-March, 1708, Shahu took the fort of Basantgarh, and Pavangarh without much opposition and established a *thanah* at Kolhapur.<sup>3</sup> The lieutenant of Parashuram Trimbak surrendered to Shahu the fort of Vishalgarh as well. This unbroken chain of successes and the wave of loyalty displayed for Shahu unnerved Tara Bai and she did not consider Panhala safe for her stay. Unable to stem the tide of Shahu's armed invasion, she decided to withdraw to the more inaccessible fort of Rangna, 60 miles further south and there to entrench herself for a trial of strength both in arms and in diplomacy. After her departure Panhala easily fell to Shahu.

On reaching Rangna Tara Bai organised the defence of that fort, for she knew for certain that after the fall of Panhala, Shahu would surely direct his forces towards Rangna. And Shahu actually did so. He directly marched upon Rangna and was there from the third week of March to the end of June, 1708. A letter shows that he was at Patgaon in the neighbourhood of Rangna on March 18, 1708.<sup>4</sup> Another letter shows that he came back to Panhala

<sup>1</sup> The founder of the family was also one Khem Sawant (1627-1640). They were Bhonsles.

<sup>2</sup> *Bavda Daftar*, Vol. I, pp. 70 and 71.

<sup>3</sup> From Panhala Shahu went to Panchganga (Rajwade: Vol. III, No. 64).

<sup>4</sup> Rajwade: Vol. XV, Document No. 59.

on June 27, 1708.<sup>1</sup> Ramchandra Nilkanth did not consider the further stay of Tara Bai and the young Shivaji and Shambhuji safe at Rangna and sent them away to Malvan on the west coast. Relieved of immediate danger, Tara Bai resorted to her favourite game of intrigue and moved heaven and earth to subvert Shahu's position. She had her agents in Shahu's camp who were busy inducing people to join Tara Bai's cause. She obtained some success in this direction when Naro Pant, Ramchandra Nilkanth's brother, and Rayaji Malhar deserted Shahu and walked over to her side. Khandé Rao Dabhadé also seems to have joined Tara Bai's side because on July 7, 1708, his *vatan* lands from Junnar to Saswad consisting of 720 villages, granted to him by Rajaram on October 19, 1698, were confiscated by Shahu and given to Fateh Singh Bhonslé.<sup>2</sup>

More dangerous for Shahu was the intrigue which she carried on for the capture of Satara and the neighbouring forts for she rightly thought that the best way to stab Shahu in the back was to capture his capital and the neighbouring forts. For this purpose she carried on negotiations with Kesho Trimal Pinglé,<sup>3</sup> a relation of Ramchandra Nilkanth, by dangling before him the prospect of being appointed the *Peshwa* in case he succeeded in throwing Shahu out of Satara. For the surrender and capture of other forts in the vicinity of Satara she offered terms to Trimbak Shivdev, the *Mutalik* of the *Sachiv*. If Tara Bai had succeeded in her plans, Shahu would have been prostrate altogether. But Shahu's star being in the ascendant, few could dare oppose him openly at Satara and in its neighbourhood where he had a host of loyal adherents. The plan did not succeed because the task was beyond the capacity of the persons chosen for its accomplishment. How difficult had become Tara Bai's position is clear from her letter to Ramchandra Nilkanth dated March 31, 1708.

Shahu spent a little more than three months before Rangna, but it was so bravely defended by the veteran Ramchandra Nilkanth, ably assisted by Tara Bai's *Senapati*, Piraji Ghorpadé, and Naro Pant that despite his best efforts Shahu could not reduce it. One day

<sup>1</sup> *Junia Atihasik Goshti*, Vol. II, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Trimasik* of B.I.S. Mandal, Poona, 8, 124.

<sup>3</sup> He was Ramchandra Nilkanth's wife's uncle.



while himself ascending the rock on which is built the fort of Rangna, Shahu had a hair-breadth escape. The approaching monsoon and the apathy of his generals compelled Shahu to give up the pursuit and retrace his steps to Panhala where he spent the rainy season. Rangna was the first failure of Shahu in his warfare against Tara Bai and the reasons for it are not far to seek. First, Rangna was stoutly defended and Shahu knew it well that his aunt was no mean opponent and not without a following. For her help Tara Bai had called in Kanhoji Angré and the Sawant of Wadi. Angré probably had not yet made up his mind to oppose Shahu openly in spite of his loyalty for his benefactor Rajaram and his family. Secondly, in Shahu's camp there was not much enthusiasm for pressing matters to extremity with Tara Bai. In order to serve their own interests better, the Maratha *sardars*, like the English barons in the civil war between Matilda and King Stephen, did not want either party to grow too strong for the other. In continued strife between the two lay scope for their feudal turbulence and aggression against their neighbour and hence their exertions in the siege were only halfhearted.<sup>1</sup> Above all, all eyes suddenly turned towards the contest between Bahadur Shah and Kam Bakhsh for mastery over the Deccan. For Shahu the more important business lay with the Mughals and he would have willingly agreed to a compromise, but Tara Bai lost this opportunity for a favourable bargain through her own obstinacy to have the whole and not a part of Shivaji's legacy.

Shahu retraced his steps to Panhala where he came on June 27, 1708, and cantoned there for the rains.<sup>2</sup> While at Panhala he sustained a great loss by the death of his *Senapati*, Dhanaji Jadhav, who had gone out on a campaign for the recovery of the northern portion of Shahu's patrimony in Khandesh and in Baglan. Recalled for the monsoon while he was on his way back Dhanaji died at Wadgaon on the Warna on June 27, 1708.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rajwade: Vol. III, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> Rajwade: Vol. XV, Document No. 59 and Vol. III, Document No. 182.

<sup>3</sup> According to Dhanaji's letter to Gadadhar *Pratinidhi*, published in the *Trimasik* of the year 7, page 84 onwards, it is certain that Dhanaji was not with Shahu in the Rangna campaign.

A grant of land dated July 9, 1708, on the occasion of the 13th day ceremony of Dhanaji is mentioned in *Jadhvanchi Kaiifiyat*, p. 71. This means that Dhanaji died on June 27, 1708.

Leaving the affairs of the territory between the Krishna and the Warna in the hands of Parsoji Bhonslé, the main organiser of the Rangna campaign, Shahu returned to Satara at the end of 1708 in order that he could closely watch the movements of Bahadur Shah.<sup>1</sup> This was Tara Bai's opportunity. Meanwhile, she reorganised her forces and called in for help the Sawant of Wadi and returned to Rangna. She then pushed on to Panhala which her former *Qiledar*, whom Shahu had retained in his post, surrendered to her without the least resistance. She conquered back most of the territory and forts from Parsoji Bhonslé whom Shahu had left behind to look after the Kolhapur region. Thus, Shahu's campaign in the Panhala-Rangna region was not as successful as it was in the North, and as soon as he had turned his back it was totally undone. The Kolhapur region became a stronghold of Tara Bai and busy as Shahu was in affairs more important than this domestic feud, he quietly connived at Tara Bai's usurpations beyond the Warna river. But the pretensions of the ambitious Tara Bai were not only confined to the territory which lay to the south of the river Warna; she could be content with nothing less than the sovereignty of the whole of Maharashtra. In her scheme of things Shahu had no place.

### 5. *The Battle of Jajau: Bahadur Shah in the Deccan*

A war of succession among the sons of Aurangzib was long foreseen. Prince Muazzam defeated and killed Prince Azam on the battle-field of Jajau near Agra on June 8, 1707, and ascended the throne as Shah Alam Bahadur Shah.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, he set about consolidating his position. The Rajput opposition was gathering momentum and it was to their land that he directed his forces in November, 1707, and after establishing peace in that quarter he came back to Ajmer in March, 1708, where he received the alarming news of Kam Bakhsh's proclamation of his independence. This

<sup>1</sup> Parsoji Bhonsle died in 1710 and his son, Kanhoji, was appointed in his place (*Aitihāsik Patren*, No. 4).

<sup>2</sup> Irvine: *Later Mughal*, pp. 22-25; Shah Alam wrote 4 letters to Shahu announcing his victory and commanding him to rule as his vassal prince. They are given in Rajwade : Vol. VIII, Document Nos. 54, 55, 56 and 57. They show that Shahu had the moral support of the Mughal Emperor in his contest against Tara Bai.

precipitated matters. He proceeded with all speed to the Deccan and crossed the Narmada in May, the Godavari in June and stood in full force before Bidar in October, 1708.

Bahadur Shah had apprehended trouble from the side of his half-brother, Kam Bakhsh, in the Deccan. He had, in fact, foreseen the Deccan campaign, and before leaving Delhi at the end of 1707 had sent Madan Singh, Shahu's half-brother, to the Deccan to enlist Maratha support in his favour.<sup>1</sup> He had also written to the Mughal *mansabdar*, Raibhanji, to exert his influence with Shahu and to induce him to join his side against his rebellious brother.

Both Kam Bakhsh and Bahadur Shah being anxious to enlist Maratha support, had written letters to important Maratha leaders like Kanhoji Bhonslé, Rambhaji Nimbalkar, Nimaji Sindhia and others. On his arrival in the Deccan, Bahadur Shah called upon Shahu and other Maratha leaders to join him. It has already been seen that Shahu was just then engaged in operations against his aunt. He wound up his affairs as best as he could and hastened to Satara where he arrived at the end of 1708. Two of his partisans, Madan Singh and Raibhanji, were already in the Mughal camp. In response to royal summons Shahu made excuses for personal attendance and sent Nimaji Sindhia with a Maratha contingent. He sent two more envoys, Krishnaji Dadaji Prabhu while Bahadur Shah was at Burhanpur,<sup>2</sup> and then his *Pratinidhi*, Gadadhar Prahlad.<sup>3</sup> Other Maratha leaders either kept aloof or stood divided between the camps of Bahadur Shah and Kam Bakhsh. In a sanguinary fight Kam Bakhsh met both defeat and death near Haidarabad on January 3, 1709.

Having overcome his rival, Bahadur Shah stayed at Haidarabad for three months to make administrative arrangements for the future governance of the Deccan, and then started back for the North and reached Ahmadnagar in May, 1709. It was here that Shahu's *Pratinidhi*, Gadadhar Prahlad, and Raibhanji offered him obeisance on behalf of Shahu and assuring him of his loyalty, so amply displayed in the late campaign, begged him for *sanads* confirming the

<sup>1</sup> *Jaipur Akhbarat* of 13th December, 1707.

<sup>2</sup> *Rajwade*: Vol. XV, Document No. 289.

<sup>3</sup> *Trimasik* of B.I.S. Mandal, Poona, year 7.

grant of *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in order to legalise Shahu's position. Bahadur Shah seemed favourable to Shahu. The *sanads* were drawn up and only the names had to be filled up when the inopportune arrival of Tara Bai's *vakils* marred the prospects of Shahu.

Tara Bai, who professed to have stood for complete independence, contested the claim of Shahu as the legitimate Maratha *Chhatrapati* and her *vakils* begged the *sanads* in the name of Shivaji III. This complicated affairs at the eleventh hour. Zulfiqar Khan had been exerting his influence in Shahu's favour. His political rival, Munim Khan, the newly appointed *Wazir*, took up the cause of Tara Bai's son. The rivalry of these two Mughal dignitaries further complicated the affair and proved fatal to the cause of Shahu. Munim Khan went into the details of the two representations and advised Bahadur Shah to issue the *sanads* in the name of the winner when the parties had settled their dispute by fighting it out.<sup>1</sup> Bahadur Shah eagerly accepted this advice, for nothing was so near the heart of Aurangzib and his descendants as the weakening of the Maratha power by creating divisions among them.

During these years Raibhanji and Madan Singh were the main advisers of Shahu and it was mainly on their advice that he had accepted the overlordship of the Mughals. During the last years of Aurangzib and also Bahadur Shah's campaign in the Deccan Raibhanji was the main support of Shahu and had vehemently pleaded his cause at the Mughal court. He had obtained a rare insight into the various political currents of the Mughal-Maratha relations and by his death on August 23, 1709, Shahu suffered a great loss. Now only his half-brother, Madan Singh, remained to look after his interests at the Mughal court at this critical stage in his career brought about by the machinations of Tara Bai. Bahadur Shah took away Madan Singh with him to Delhi.

<sup>1</sup> Khafi Khan: Vol. II, p. 625. Khafi Khan says that Tara Bai was satisfied if only the *sardeshmukhi* was granted to her son. She did not make any reference to the right of collecting the *chauth*.

## CHAPTER X

### TARA BAI RAISES A STORM FOR SHAHU

#### 1. *Shahu consolidates his Position*

ON COMING back from the Panhala-Rangna campaign, Shahu fixed his camp in the fort of Wandan and cantoned his army in the nearby plains. His main concern at this hour was to watch the movements of Emperor Bahadur Shah and to bring under his control the territory which comprised the *swarajya* of his grandfather. The territory in the actual possession of Shahu did not extend to more than 20 to 25 miles round about Satara. The rest was either in the hands of hostile Mughal officers or rebellious Maratha chiefs who had carved out *vatan*s in virtual independence during the period when Maharashtra was in the vortex of confusion, and now had become so powerful that they laid claim to full independence.

Despite great handicaps caused by the death of his *Senapati*, Dhanaji Jadhav, and his political adviser, Raibhanji Bhonslé, Shahu was determined to pursue with vigour his policy of recovering his territory and suppressing the rebellious elements.<sup>1</sup> He made great exertions to expand his resources and sought help from all directions. By pursuing a clever policy of nominal vassalage he had already won the moral support of the Mughal Emperor; he now turned for help in respect of men, ammunitions and guns to Sir Nicolas Waite, the English Governor of the Bombay settlement, but the help was refused.<sup>2</sup>

Not losing heart and depending upon his own resources, he undertook the task of bringing under control the territory round about Poona. He overcame the opposition of Lodi Khan, the Mughal *Thanahdar* of Chakan, who was defeated and killed on May 16, 1709, at the pass of Purandar. Another Mughal officer, Karim Beg of Junnar, had also been defeated and taken prisoner but was

<sup>1</sup> *Akhbarat* of 20 *Rajab*, i.e. 24 September 1709.

<sup>2</sup> Grant Duff on the authority of *Bruce's Annals*, p. 348.

later released. Shahu's letter<sup>1</sup> to his *Pratinidhi* Gadadhar Prahlad, whom he had sent to Bahadur Shah, contains full details of his doings and the details of it are corroborated by the *Akhbarats*.<sup>2</sup> Another letter written by Shahu to Gadadhar Prahlad in July, 1709, tells us how zealously and how cleverly Shahu was pursuing his plans.<sup>3</sup> When Chandrasen Jadhav was surrounded by the forces of Hamid Khan at Shahgarh in the Godavary valley, Shahu sent him timely succour with the help of which he not only extricated himself from a difficult situation but brought Hamid Khan to his knees on March 12, 1710.<sup>4</sup> On August 15, 1710, Chandrasen, looted Dharur *alias* Fatehabad and besieged the fort of that place which was relieved by a force sent by Daud Khan Pani from Aurangabad.<sup>5</sup> Another force sent by Shahu brought under its possession the *Thanah* of Wai in March 1711.<sup>6</sup>

The desire of Shahu to free the territory comprising the *swarajya* of his grandfather and to enforce his claims for the *chauth* and the *sardeshmukhi* hit hard the Mughal officers and some of the refractory Maratha nobles, and raised a storm against him. These Mughal officers and Maratha nobles made common cause and they were encouraged in their designs by Tara Bai who did not leave any stone unturned for bringing about the fall of Shahu.

## 2. Tara Bai Proclaims a Rival House of Chhatrapati

It has been noticed how Tara Bai had undone all Shahu's work in the Kolhapur region. Shahu would have connived at her usurpation beyond the Warna but Bahadur Shah's decision coupled with the unceasing intrigues of Tara Bai made war inevitable. Shahu had left behind Parsoji Bhonslé in the Kolhapur region while coming back from there; but he could offer only a weak opposition to Tara Bai and after his death in 1710 his son, Kanhoji, on whom Shahu conferred his father's office, could scarcely hold his own against Tara Bai. Tara Bai firmly established her power in that

<sup>1</sup> Dated May 26, 1709.

<sup>2</sup> *Akhbarat* of May 16, 1709.

<sup>3</sup> *Trimastik* of B.I.S. Mandal, Poona, year 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Akhbarat* of April 3, 1710.

<sup>5</sup> *Akhbarat* of August 15, 1710.

<sup>6</sup> *Rajwade*, Vol. III, No. 47.

region and made Panhala her seat.<sup>1</sup> The *Chhatrapati's* house was now definitely split into two branches. It would have been better if things had stopped there, but the restless character of Tara Bai made affairs more complicated and it was only in 1731 that the internecine strife raging in Maharashtra came to an end. The intervening years were full of difficulties for Shahu.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. *Tara Bai sows the Seeds of Sedition*

Having cleared the Kolhapur region of Shahu's adherents, Tara Bai sowed the seeds of sedition among the powerful Maratha *sardars* who were feeling uneasy on account of Shahu's anti-feudal policy with regard to his home territory. Shahu was interested in restoring law and order in the Maratha country while the *sardars* wanted the old state of confusion and weakness to continue. How the powerful *sardars* wanted to dictate their terms to Shahu and what difficulties were thickening round him are to be seen in the *Akhbarat* of July 17, 1709. Sullen resentment developed into gradual desertions and ended in their armed opposition with Tara Bai pulling the wires from behind.

The principal Maratha *sardars* whom Tara Bai was successfully able to seduce were Rambhaji Nimbalkar, Santaji, Pandhré, the Thorat brothers, Udaji Chavan and Chandrasen Jadhav, the *Senapati*. A number of other *sardars* were in a hesitant mood; yet undecided whether to join this side or that. The third class consisted of turncoats of whom Khande Rao Dabhadé was the principal one. He was very fickle in his loyalty and had no scruples in crossing to and fro from one camp to the other. He had been a partisan of Tara Bai and was captured at the battle of Khed but Dhanaji took him under his protection. He again seems to have deserted to Tara Bai's side because while at Panhala Shahu deprived him of his large *Jagir* granted to him by Rajaram in 1698 and the same were bestowed upon Fateh Singh Bhonslé.<sup>3</sup> But Dabhadé never opposed Shahu openly; he was a typical time-server.

<sup>1</sup> Rajwade, Vol. II, p. 9, says that she established herself at Kolhapur.

<sup>2</sup> A close study of Document Nos. 4 and 5 of the *Peshwa Daftar*, Vol. 45, gives an indication of the difficulties of Shahu.

<sup>3</sup> *Trimasik* of the year 8, p. 124.

The most dangerous conspirator was, of course, Dhanaji's son, Chandrasen Jadhav. The death of Dhanaji at a time when Shahu's affairs were still in jeopardy was a great loss to him. Dhanaji had defended the honour of Maharashtra with a single-minded devotion and after the death of his rival, Santaji, it was he who had borne the brunt of the Mughal onslaught. But his conduct was not wholly irreproachable. Like other Maratha *sardars*, he was always eager to seek profit from the troubles of his king and of his country. He was as avaricious of *Jagirs* and *Saranjams* as any other Maratha *sardar*, but he was not much of a turncoat. Once he had chosen to join Shahu, he adhered to his cause till his death. Shahu also could not afford to disoblige Dhanaji though at times he resented his activities at heart; Shahu disliked the malicious pleasure which Dhanaji had been taking in fomenting the family quarrel between the Pisals and the Jagdales.<sup>1</sup>

Dhanaji had left behind three sons—Santaji, Chandrasen and Shahmbhu Singh. Following the policy of hereditary appointments, Shahu decided to give the office of the *Senapati* to one of the sons of Dhanaji. He superseded the eldest, Santaji, because he had lost his father's confidence. The office was, therefore, conferred upon the second son, Chandrasen. This proved to be a blunder because Chandrasen was at heart never loyal to Shahu. He regretted his father's decision in choosing to espouse the cause of Shahu, and in his heart of hearts always favoured the cause of Tara Bai. His elevation to the high office of the *Senapati* gave him greater chance of making mischief. Shahu had virtually admitted a fifth columnist in his inner counsel and had to reap a harvest of difficulties for this error of judgment. Chandrasen was Tara Bai's man, but he at first did not openly oppose Shahu. Deluding Shahu by an outward show of loyalty he sowed, broadcast the seeds of sedition among his followers. The Maratha *sardars*, afraid of being deprived of their feudal privileges, if not possessions, readily listened to Chandrasen and Tara Bai and waited for an opportunity to rise against Shahu.

The partisans of Tara Bai had even less scruple in joining hands with the Mughal officers. Daud Khan Pani was then the viceroy

<sup>1</sup> Rajwade: Vol. III, Document No. 64; and Vol. XV, Document No. 59.



of the Deccan ruling as a deputy of Zulfiqar Khan. He saw with dismay that although Shahu had outwardly accepted Mughal suzerainty he was taking vigorous steps to bring as much territory under his direct rule as possible and was steadily widening the thin end of the wedge of the *chauth* and the *sardeshmukhi* at Mughal cost. In fact, he was trying to push down the Mughal throat the same bitter Shivajian pill now very cleverly sugar-coated. With his wide experience of the Deccan he could not let go unchallenged this camouflaged subversive movement against the Muslim authority. Following the traditional Mughal policy he always wanted to keep the Marathas divided and took advantage of the internecine strife between the two branches of the house of Shivaji. He induced Krishna Rao Khatavkar, the Thorat brothers, Udaji Chavan, Rambhaji Nimbalkar, Karim Beg of Junnar, Truktaj Khan and many other Maratha leaders to rise against Shahu and subvert his authority.<sup>1</sup> Other Mughal officers also joined hands with the followers of Tara Bai in opposing Shahu. According to the *Akhbarat*<sup>2</sup>, Hamid Khan eterned Bijapur in force and was joined by Hindu Rao Ghorpadé (a partisan of Tara Bai) with a following of six thousand. Ghorpadé later left Hamid Khan and went away towards Sholapur. The above account of the *Akhbarat* corroborates an undated letter of Shahu himself written to Shankraji Mahadik informing him of the movements of Hindu Rao Ghorpadé and Hamid Khan and warning him to be alert.<sup>3</sup> Chandrasen himself made friends and exchanged dresses with Hamid Khan at Shahgarh in the Godavary valley when the latter paid him a visit on March 12, 1710.<sup>4</sup> Another partisan of Tara Bai, Rambha Nimbalkar, met Daud Khan Pani at Aurangabad with 8,000 followers and was well received by the latter. He was later appointed *Faujdar* of Ahmadnagar by the Mughal Emperor. Thus, the selfish Maratha *sardars* had no scruples in joining the Mughals who, with Daud Khan at their head, were only too glad to receive them. But despite the activities of

<sup>1</sup> Sardesai; *Punyashlok Shahu*—Balaji Vishwanath, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Akhbarat* of the 14th November, 1709.

<sup>3</sup> *Itihas Sangrahatil Prachin Maratha Sardar*, p. 14. This letter does not bear the date which is fixed by the *Akhbarat* of November 14, 1709.

<sup>4</sup> *Akhbarat* of April 3, 1710. After the visit, Hamid Khan went away to Burhanpur.

these mischievous Maratha *sardars*, Daud Khan could not resist for long the legitimate claims of Shahu. He arrived at a compromise with him for the payment of the *sardeshmukhi* and the *chauth* but the actual collection of it was to be made by Daud Khan's own men and not by those of Shahu.<sup>1</sup> If this had not taken place a fight to the finish would have become inevitable between Tara Bai and Shahu in view of Bahadur Shah's decision to grant the *sanads* to the winner.

#### 4. *Balaji Vishwanath comes into the Limelight*

Shahu was, at this initial stage of his rule, surrounded on all sides by enemies, both Maratha and Mughal. He found himself ill-equipped to face this opposition. Some of his prominent supporters—Raibhanji, Parsoji and Dhanaji—were already dead, and the loyalty of many of his officers was questionable. In this hour of need there appeared a first-rate administrator and diplomat in the person of Balaji Vishwanath. The antecedents and the previous career of Balaji Vishwanath are still shrouded in mystery, but so much detail is now available that a fairly accurate account of his gradual rise in the Maratha service can be reconstructed. By sheer dint of ability and character, he rose gradually from a humble start as a revenue underling to posts of honour and confidence.<sup>2</sup> He kept contact with Shahu while he was in captivity with the Mughals and had rendered him service when he most needed them.<sup>3</sup> He was the right-hand man of Dhanaji Jadhav, and when Shahu came back to Maharashtra he at once began to espouse his cause and it was largely on account of the persuasive tactics of Balaji and and Khando Ballal Chitnis that Dhanaji joined the cause of Shahu.

The devotion and loyalty of Balaji could not escape the keen eye of Shahu and in one of his letters he has addressed him

<sup>1</sup> Hiranman was the principal Mughal officer for the collection of these dues.

<sup>2</sup> Balaji Vishwanath was an officer of the district of Poona very likely before 1700 (*Peshwa Daftar*, 30. 1). In many other letters from 1695-1707, Balaji has been addressed by Ramchandra Nilkanth and other ministers of Rajaram as the *Sar-Subah* of the districts of Poona and Daultabad. In *Peswa Daftar*, 7.1, he is referred to as *Sar-Subah*.

<sup>3</sup> Sardesai, on the authority of an unpublished *Bakhar* at the Osmania University, thinks that Balaji was possibly introduced even to Zinat-un-nisa's notice and was privy to the affair of Shahu's proposed conversion and marriage. (*New History of the Marathas*, Vol. II, p. 19.)

as "a servant of incomparable ability."<sup>1</sup> Shahu was suspicious of Chandrasen Jadhav and was getting gradually convinced that it was Balaji alone who could bring his affairs to a successful issue. So, while Shahu was at Panhala after his return from the Rangna campaign he conferred the title of *Senakarte* or the organiser of armies on Balaji on November 20, 1708. This was considered an encroachment upon his jurisdiction by the newly appointed *Senapati*, Chandrasen, who was already jealous of Balaji's influence with his father. Soon things came to a head in the summer of 1711 over the notorious affair of a game, a chased deer.<sup>2</sup> Insulted and hounded by Chandrasen, Balaji sought Shahu's protection. Chandrasen sent a challenge to his master to surrender Balaji to him. Shahu refused this insolent demand with the contempt it deserved, but anxious to square up matters with his powerful *Senapati* he, on the suggestion of mischief-mongering Chandrasen himself, sent Khande Rao Dabhadé and Parashuram Trimbak<sup>3</sup> to settle the matter amicably. But these two former adherents of Tara Bai, who had gone with the ostensible purpose of pacifying the dissatisfied *Senapati*, were soon won over by Chandrasen who now threw off the mask. Shahu promptly called to his help his *Sarlashkar*, Haibat Rao Nimbalkar, and ordered him to bring to book the disloyal *Senapati*. Haibat Rao defeated Chandrasen in an action at Jeur near the pass of Adarki in the spring of 1711. Thereupon, he went to Panhala and openly joined Tara Bai.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shahu so addressed Balaji in one of his letters written to him in 1714.

<sup>2</sup> The deer incident is clearly indicated in *Peshwa Daftar*, 7.13, dated October 11, 1711. The open rebellion of Chandrasen took place in the summer of 1711 but his desertion was long foreseen. The *Akhbarat* of the 17th October, 1710, gives a clear indication of it.

<sup>3</sup> Parashuram Trimbak's confinement had never been severe. He had all along corresponded with Tara Bai. (Sardesai: *Punyashlok Shahu—Balaji Vishwanath*, p. 96.)

<sup>4</sup> Dalvi in his *Maratha Kulancha Itihas*, p. 78, says that Chandrasen went to Panhala and openly joined Tara Bai. He fought with the forces of Shahu and conquered for Tara Bai the *Thanahs* of Bargaon, Kumthe *alias* Gumthe, Shirol and Kolhapur. He then collected his forces and taking with him his favourite *sardars* like the Ghatgey of Kagal went to Balaghat and there took a vow not to change his dress unless he had defeated and deposed Shahu, and made Tara Bai's son, Shivaji, the sole *Chhatrapati* of Maharashtra.

Chitnis has also a somewhat similar story to tell but it differs considerably from Dalvi's (Chitnis: *Thorley Shahu Maharaj Yanche Charitra*, p. 24).

That this rising was not sudden but a planned and deliberate one is clear from Chandrasen's letter to Shivaji III dated August 13, 1711: "My devotion is for the feet of the master (i.e. yours), my desire is for the service of the master and for reputation in his service. Rajashri Jadhav Rao (Dhanaji) knew of no other deity than the feet of the master. When there arose internal factions in the kingdom he led an army with a promise to serve the master. But there was a turn of fortune which turned the heads of all. Hence to fulfil his purpose (Dhanaji's original purpose of helping Shivaji's cause) has been the sole desire of my heart, and with this idea in view, I have drawn together Rajashri Appaji Thorat, Damaji Thorat, Shahaji Nimbalkar, Santaji Pandhré and others, and without paying any heed to the temptations of Shahu, I have sowed disaffection against him. With a view to induce into this affair Khande Rao Dabhadé and the *Pratinidhi*, who are inclined towards you, I specially sent for them and had an interview with them. I also met Haibat Rao Nimbalkar. Whatever I had planned with Rajashri Thorat,<sup>1</sup> Khande Rao Dabhadé and Santaji Pandhré, I disclosed to Nimbalkar, who also had the same idea in his mind. Then, we included all the *sardars* present in our conspiracy, and held consultations with the *Pratinidhi*. We proclaimed you and made rejoicings. I have sent my letters and those of the above-mentioned Pandit into the fort. Now you should march upon Satara, destroy the factions and order rejoicings."<sup>2</sup>

This letter shows quite clearly the motives and activities of Chandrasen while he was still a servant of Shahu. Judged by the rank and resources of those who were in it, the conspiracy was indeed a formidable one. Their underhand dealings came to light only when Chandrasen rebelled and openly joined Tara Bai.<sup>3</sup> Till the end of 1710 the conspirators were doing their work secretly but in 1711 the smouldering embers burst into a flame. Tara Bai received the news with the greatest joy and praised Chandrasen and other conspirators in very flattering terms.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 7.14, dated October 24, 1711, refers to the rebellion of Damaji Thorat and Chandrasen Jadhav.

<sup>2</sup> Sardesai: *Punyashlok Shahu—Balaji Vishwanath*, pp. 67 and 68.

<sup>3</sup> Sinha: *Rise of the Peshwas*, p. 9. Also Rajwade, Vol. II, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Alitkhasik Patravayavhar*, No. 5, p. 5, dated August 24, 1711.

Now to a contest between Shahu and Tara Bai was added the sting of personal enmity between Chandrasen and Balaji. It has already been noticed that Chandrasen and Tara Bai had no scruples to call in the Mughals against Shahu and their country's liberty. The *Akhbarat* of August 17, 1711, announced that "Dhanaji's son Chandrasen left Shahu and joined Daud Khan at Bahadurgarh." Chandrasen's desertion gave the signal for the desertion of many other Maratha leaders such as Damaji Thorat, Krishna Rao Khatavkar, Udaji Chavan—all who were looking around for an opportunity to oppose Shahu in order to gain their own selfish ends. They all rose in favour of Tara Bai and "thus the later half of 1711 filled the cup of Shahu's misery to the brim."

Tara Bai had no doubt put a team in the field to oppose Shahu, but her main weakness lay in the want of solidarity or cohesion among the various elements that formed her following. Moreover, she had absolutely no funds to keep an army in the field, and an army cannot march on empty stomachs. She once again withdrew her confidence from Ramchandra Nilkanth and relied more and more on Chandrasen who was a brave soldier but a mere political braggart without any capacity for organisation and leadership.

Shahu had shown some strength of character and had taken stern measures against his disloyal servants. He was so much infuriated by the ungrateful conduct of Parashuram Trimbak<sup>1</sup> that he not only deprived him of his office and confiscated his property but ordered him to be blinded on November 20, 1711. The prompt intervention of Khando Ballal Chitnis saved him from this calamity and through his prayers the sentence of blinding was converted into that of mere confinement. He then appointed Chandrasen's elder brother, Santaji, whose claims he had earlier ignored, as the *Senapati* on October 1, 1711.<sup>2</sup> But desertions continued. Haibat Rao Nimbalkar, the *Sarlashkar*, who had defeated Chandrasen, also joined the conspiracy. Khande Rao Dabhadé was already in it. The most dangerous of them, however, was Kanhoji Angre, the

<sup>1</sup> It seems that Parashuram Trimbak held the office of the *Peshwa* for some time in 1710 and on December 16, 1710 was appointed *Pratinidhi* (*Shahuchi Rajnishi*, pp. 119 and 151; also Rajwade, Vol. XXI, Document No. 328).

<sup>2</sup> Santaji Jadhavrao *Senapati* acknowledges receipt of 30 *mohurs* (*Peshwa Daftar*, 7.12).

Admiral of the Maratha fleet and the Warden of the West Coast. Another prominent Maratha Sardar who had leanings towards Tara Bai, Khem Sawant of Wadi, was fortunately dead.<sup>1</sup>

### 5. *The Nizam Comes to the Deccan as the Mughal Viceroy*

To add to the difficulties of Shahu, Chin Qilich Khan Ghazi-ud-din Firuz Jang was appointed the viceroy of the six *subhas* of the Deccan with the title of Nizam-ul-Mulk Khan-i-Khanan in February, 1713.

Emperor Bahadur Shah's untimely death on February 17, 1712, had once again led to a war of succession in the Temurid family. Zulfiqar Khan raised to the throne Jahandar Shah with himself as the power behind the throne. But ultimately Farrukh-Siyar, a grandson of Bahadur Shah, defeated and killed his rival and ascended the throne on January 17, 1713, mainly with the help of the Sayyid brothers, Abdullah Khan and Husain Ali Khan. Zulfiqar Khan was brought to the block, and Daud Khan Pani who had ruled the Deccan as his lieutenant, was transferred to Gujrat. The Nizam was no partisan of the Sayyids, but they thought it politic to befriend a chief of his status and experience by appointing him to an important vicereignty. Daud Khan Pani left Aurangabad in July, 1713, and the Nizam arrived there in October the same year.

With the arrival of the Nizam-ul-Mulk as the Mughal *subahdar* of the Deccan the scope for intrigue, which was at its highest, much widened. The Nizam with his eyes fixed on virtual independence in the Deccan, was wholly averse to the revival of the Maratha power. Having lived and worked in that region for long he had acquired a thorough grasp of the affairs of the Deccan and like Zulfiqar Khan had the ambition to found an independent principality there. But while Zulfiqar Khan had adopted the policy of conciliating the Marathas, the Nizam was determined to curb, if not crush, their power. Thus, he wholly disapproved the policy and practice of Daud Khan Pani of paying the *chauth* and the *sardeshmukhi* to the Marathas even though it was collected by Mughal officers. Payment of these dues to the Marathas meant a humiliating admission of their claim to these levies. From the very hour of his arrival he plunged headlong in the politics of the Deccan and

<sup>1</sup>*Trīmasik* of the year 7, p. 86, B.I.S. Mandal, Poona. He died in 1709,

adopted the traditional policy of weakening the Marathas by creating divisions among them and winning as many of them as could be brought over to the Muslim camp. On his arrival, he found the field already prepared for him by the rival camps of Shahu and Tara Bai. He opened negotiations with some of the important Maratha chiefs, most of whom were already known and dangled before them the prospect of rich *Jagirs* and high *mansabs* in the Mughal service. From the very beginning he began to patronise the weaker party of Tara Bai. Thus, the combined activities of Tara Bai and her partisans and of the Mughal dignitaries threw Maharashtra once again into the vortex of confusion, and Shahu's position became extremely critical for a time. It was Balaji Vishwanath Bhat who ultimately proved a match for the Nizam-ul-Mulk and his protégé, Tara Bai. Like Bismarck, Balaji Vishwanath found his sovereign tottering on his throne and left him well on the way to become the most powerful potentate in India though more like the British king than a Prussian autocrat.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE STORM SUBSIDES

#### 1. *Krishnarao Khatavkar Killed*

BALAJI VISHWANATH assiduously set about the task of winning over the opponents of Shahu. Though by no means a soldier, Balaji possessed unrivalled tact and persuasive address, fortitude, power of planning and resourcefulness. He was anything but rash, and would exhaust the arts of diplomacy before appealing to the sword. It was partly due to his intrigue that Tara Bai's partisans could not combine, and then he beat them or won them over individually. Through friends and bankers, he borrowed large sums of money in personal security and raised an army to clench his diplomacy. This army later on came to be styled the *Huzrat* or the King's own troops. He then proceeded cautiously against the conspirators.

The first to be put down was Krishnarao Khatavkar, a Mughal *Mansabdar* who had enjoyed the title of *Maharajah*<sup>1</sup> and had his stronghold at Khatav.<sup>2</sup> As a partisan of Daud Khan Pani and Tara Bai he had given much trouble to Shahu. Balaji marched in force upon Khatav and by a sudden attack defeated and killed Krishnarao and his eldest son on December 2, 1711.<sup>3</sup> The *Jagir* of Khatav was restored to the two surviving sons of Krishnarao who sought Shahu's protection. Sripatrao showed great bravery in the action and as a reward for his services his father, Parashuram Trimbak, was released and appointed *Peshwa*. After sometime he became the *Pratinidhi*.<sup>4</sup> The hostile activities of the Thorats and of Udaji Chavan were also at this stage sufficiently checked.

#### 2. *Balaji wins over Kanhoji Angre*

These maiden victories made Shahu think that the storm had subsided but this was not so. A very formidable Maratha *sardar*

<sup>1</sup> Chitnis : *Thorley Shahu Maharaj Yanche Charitra*, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Khatav is 15 miles to the east of the Koregaon railway station.

<sup>3</sup> *Itihas Sangrahatil Peshwa Daftar*, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Chitnis, however, says that he directly became the *Pratinidhi* (*Thorley Shahu Maharaj Yanche Charitra*, p. 29).



had chosen to espouse the cause of Tara Bai. This was Kanhoji Angre, nominally the Admiral of the Maratha fleet and Warden of the West Coast, but actually a person who little cared for the authority of the *Chhatrapati* and considered himself as an independent prince. Kanhoji had been appointed Admiral of the Maratha fleet by Rajaram in 1698 on the death of Sidhoji Gujar. He rose in power during the regime of Rajaram and Tara Bai and defended his charge ably against the Mughals during the concluding phase of the War of Maratha Independence.

Although Tara Bai had administered the most solemn oath of fidelity to Kanhoji, he did not oppose Shahu on his entry into Maharashtra. On the other hand, he is known to have rendered service to Shahu as a loyal servant. An unpublished paper of the *Peshwa Daftar*<sup>1</sup> shows that Shahu was constantly sending his agent, Baswant Khoja, to Kanhoji for getting foreign articles of luxury and also materials of war through him.<sup>2</sup> But, after the rebellion of Chandrasen, Kanhoji also joined Tara Bai's side and marched upon the territories of Shahu.

Shahu's position during 1713 was most critical as the whole weight of Nizam-ul-Mulk was thrown on the side of Tara Bai and her partisans. Shahu had deputed different officers to meet different conspirators. To meet the threat of Kanhoji Angre he sent his *Peshwa*, Bahiropanth Pinglé, and Nilo Ballal, the Chitnis's brother, but they were no match for Angre, who defeated them badly and confined both of them at Kolaba. Thereafter, he raided the territories of Shahu, captured the district of Kalyan along with several forts<sup>3</sup> above the *ghats*, and threatened Shahu's very capital, Satara.

<sup>1</sup> This letter is published in Sardesai's *Punyashlok Shahu—Balaji Vishwanath*, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Shahu continued this practice in later years. *Peshwa Daftar*, 8.51, 52 and 55.

<sup>3</sup> According to the *Akhbarat*, Angre along with Tara Bai also subdued several forts belonging to the Mughals near about Panwel.

<sup>4</sup> The exact date of this invasion is not available. But a useful hint for its determination is given by *Peshwa Daftar*, 30, p. 231, dated August 25, 1713, where Shahu is said to have honoured Tukoji Gujar on his arrival. Tukoji's ancestors had held the admiralty of the Maratha fleet before the appointment of Kanhoji. When Kanhoji took up arms against Shahu the latter thought of removing Kanhoji and giving his post to Tukoji. He probably also charged him to subdue Angre. No account is yet available of the measures taken by Tukoji for subduing Kanhoji Angre.

Shahu in consternation looked round for a man who could curb the aggression of Angré. At first, Shahu thought of deputing Parashuram Trimbak for the job but he found him unwilling. Parashuram Trimbak declined, first, because he did not want to fight a former partisan of his under Tara Bai; and secondly, because he thought the task was beyond his power. Disappointed with Parashuram Trimbak, Shahu turned to Balaji who had just returned in triumph from the Khatav campaign. Balaji accepted the offer on the condition of his being appointed the *Peshwa* before he would start on this expedition so that he could meet Angré as the accredited Prime Minister of the *Chhatrapati* fully empowered to decide the delicate issues of war and peace. Shahu consequently invested Balaji with the office of the *Peshwa* on November 17, 1713, at his camp at Manjri, eight miles south of Poona, on the recommendation of Parashuram Trimbak and Khando Ballal Chitnis. Parashuram Trimbak had already been restored to his office of *Pratinidhi* on June 19, 1713, on the recommendation of Balaji and the Chitnis in recognition of the bravery of his son, Sripatrao, in the campaign against Krishnarao Khatavkar.<sup>1</sup>

Balaji knew full well the power of Kanhoji Angre, and hence decided to try conciliation before armed hostilities. He and Kanhoji were the inhabitants of the same coastal region overlooking the Arabian Sea and had known each other through correspondence. Balaji flattered the neighbourly sentiment of Kanhoji by saying that the office of the *Peshwa* might be regarded as virtually in Kanhoji's family. He further made an appeal to the higher interests of Kanhoji and also placed before him a practical proposition beneficial both to him and to Shahu. He was ultimately able to convince Kanhoji that Tara Bai's cause was after all a broken reed and that he stood to gain if he submitted to the authority of Shahu. Single-handed, argued the *Peshwa*, it could not be possible for Kanhoji to hold his own against the unceasing aggressions of the *Siddi* of Janjira, the English and the Portuguese; whereas with the material and moral support of the legitimate Maratha *Chhatrapati*, he would be able to face his enemies in a much better way; and above all the Maratha

<sup>1</sup> Parashuram Trimbak probably worked as *Peshwa* from 16th March to 19th June, 1713, when he was appointed *Pratinidhi* on the death of Naro Prahlad.

*raj* was a legacy of the great Shivaji and it was the duty of every Maratha, high or low, to preserve that legacy. Balaji also guaranteed that he would get Kanhoji confirmed by Shahu in his office of *Sarkhel*.

These irrefutable and persuasive arguments of Balaji served their purpose, and Kanhoji became agreeable to Balaji's proposal. Balaji and Angré met at Valvan, a suburb of Lonavala, early in January, and a treaty was drawn up on February 28, 1714, defining the limits of the territories of the *Chhatrapati* and the possessions of Kanhoji.<sup>1</sup> Kanhoji was confirmed in his office by Shahu.<sup>2</sup> Although Kanhoji nominally submitted to the authority of the *Chhatrapati*, this treaty is the first recognition of the inconvenient fact that the Maratha *sardars* were not the servants of Shahu who held their offices and the emoluments attached to them in the shape of assigned territories and forts during the pleasure of the *Chhatrapati*, but had independent rights of their own of which the *Chhatrapati* could not deprive them even if he wanted to do so. It was from this day that the constitution of the Maratha polity took the shape of a confederation. Shahu and Balaji were not unaware of the mischief that had been done, but they had no other course open to them under the circumstances. With Kanhoji's walking over to Shahu's side the cause of Tara Bai was doomed, for among her supporters Kanhoji was the most formidable. Kanhoji thereafter visited Shahu, frequently at Satara.

### 3. *The Bloodless Coup at Panhala: Tara Bai forced out of Active Politics*

Having won over Kanhoji to Shahu's side, Balaji proceeded to deal with Tara Bai, the arch-conspirator. Her capacity for intrigue having been known all over the land, Balaji proceeded very cautiously against her. In the absence of contemporary records having any direct bearing on this interesting episode,

<sup>1</sup> Mawji and Parasnis: *Treaties and Sanads*, p. 197. Roughly, all the forts above the *ghats* were to remain in the hands of Shahu and those below the *ghats* in the hands of Kanhoji. Kanhoji also made it a condition that Damaji Thorat would not be interfered with and that the *Peshwa* would help Kanhoji every year during the campaigning season against his enemies.

<sup>2</sup> Rajwade, Vol. IV, p. 35.

nothing can be said with certainty on this affair, but almost all writers on Maratha history, including Rao Bahadur G. S. Sardesai,<sup>1</sup> suspect that Balaji and Shahu had some hand in it. All circumstances taken together, the probable story seems to be something like this: Balaji was aware of the rivalry which Tara Bai had been facing from her co-wife, Rajas Bai, and her supporters. He wanted to take advantage of this rivalry and was on the lookout for an opportune moment to gain his end.

Ramchandra Nilkanth was now the only man of importance on Tara Bai's side, but he always felt disgusted with an imperious and termagant lady of moods like Tara Bai, who used her faithful followers like broken reeds and ran always after new favourites. He had become used to serving only such docile masters as Rajaram and was, therefore, not likely to get on well for long with the domineering Tara Bai. With boundless ambition and restless brain fertile of petty intrigues, she could not be content with playing only a secondary role; she did not want a minister to frame her policies and plan her campaigns, but to carry out her behests like an obedient servant. Thus, temperamentally Tara Bai and Ramchandra were not destined to work in unison. Acute differences always existed between the two and very often their relations were strained. Tara Bai, in one of her letters, reprimands Ramchandra Nilkanth for his suspicions and consequent indifference to the affairs of State.<sup>2</sup>

It has already been noticed that Tara Bai had put Ramchandra Nilkanth in prison at Basantgarh on the suspicion that he favoured the cause of Shahu and was in collusion with the Mughals; but having been unable to carry on the administration single-handed after the capture of Parashuram Trimbak at Satara, she had again to restore Ramchandra Nilkanth to his old post of authority. Though Ramchandra came back to his office, he continued to be in a sullen and suspicious mood. Tara Bai, too, had no sincere feelings towards him. She had recalled him because there was nobody else who could command so much respect from the people of Maharashtra as Ramchandra Nilkanth, or, perhaps, organise

<sup>1</sup> Sardesai: *Punyashlok Shahu—Balaji Vishwanath*, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

a party to oppose Shahu. Her feelings for Ramchandra chilled again when Chandrasen joined her party openly. At his instigation, she began to thwart the wise measures of the *Pant* who, naturally, felt slighted.

Tara Bai had great expectations from Chandrasen, but he proved to be a mere political braggart with no capacity for managing the affairs of State or for leading to success the armies of Tara Bai. Moreover, he had plans of his own and cared as little for the fate of Tara Bai as for the fate of Shahu. He was interested in creating a semi-independent status for himself and had no scruples in joining the Mughals to gain his end. He had joined the cause of Tara Bai only because it would have shocked the feelings of Maharashtra if the son of Dhanaji, one of the deadliest enemies of the Mughals, would have, at this stage, walked straight into the camp of the enemy of the nation. Thus, by joining Tara Bai he was simply biding his time and ultimately joined Nizam-ul-Mulk at a convenient hour.

Ramchandra Nilkanth was made of an entirely different stuff. Though as avaricious of *jagirs* and *saranjams* as any other Maratha *sardar*,<sup>1</sup> he could never be a traitor to his country. First of all he tried conciliation between the two branches of the *Chhatrapati's* house; but having failed in that attempt, he joined the party of Tara Bai—driven to take that decision under the pressure of circumstances then prevailing. He remained with Tara Bai partly because she was perhaps successful in convincing the *Pant*, rightly or wrongly, that Shahu had undone the work of his forefathers by his acceptance of Mughal sovereignty. Thus, no doubt, he came to oppose Shahu as a partisan of Tara Bai, but he could never for a moment brook the idea that the partisans of Tara Bai should take the help of the Mughals in crushing the grandson and lawful successor of Shivaji.

Ramchandra Nilkanth, therefore, looked askance at the policy which Tara Bai had been following on the advice of her new ally, Chandrasen Jadhav—the dangerous policy of joining hands with the Nizam in her war against Shahu. Ramchandra Nilkanth was too

<sup>1</sup> He applied for making his office and the emoluments attached to it hereditary (Mawji and Parasnis: *Sanda va Patren*, p. 187).

patriotic to approve of this policy which was definitely anti-national. He could never allow the Mughals to act the monkey in the quarrel of the Maratha cats. Though appointed in February, 1713, the Nizam actually took up his job as the Viceroy of the Deccan at Aurangabad some time in October of the same year. The palace revolution which resulted in the overthrow of Tara Bai came about between July 11, 1714 and October 14, 1714.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the Nizam was at the helm of affairs in the Deccan for about a year before Tara Bai went out of power. As he had come determined to curb the Maratha power, he must not have lost a day in pursuing his fond plans and it was his good luck that he came at a time when the opponents of Shahu had attained their highest water-mark. Chandrasen at that time guided the counsels of Tara Bai and he was well willing to listen to the overtures of the Nizam. Tara Bai too had developed a cynical unscrupulousness about the means she employed to gain her ends and tried to cover her mean actions by a veneer of super-saintly solicitude for the Maratha nation. Ramchandra Nilkanth saw through the designs of Chandrasen and Tara Bai and became alert and alarmed. He knew well the character of Tara Bai and thought that it was useless to persuade her to give up these nefarious activities and hence the only alternative left was to take power out of her hands.

Balaji Vishwanath's keen eye was observing everything carefully. While Ramchandra Nilkanth was in this mood he probably wrought upon his wounded feelings through the agency of his relation, Naro Mahadev,<sup>2</sup> and tried his utmost to widen the chasm, and also probably pledged his armed support if it was needed. How the whole thing came about is still a mystery but what seems probable is that the people who were close to the person of Tara Bai and her son and were holding the charge of Panhala fort were positively corrupted. With their help, the opposite party captured the person of Tara Bai and her son and made them prisoners

<sup>1</sup> In *Bayda Daftar*, Vol. I, the last document which bears the seal of Shivaji III is Document No. 91 dated July 11, 1714. The next document, i.e. 92 is dated October 14, 1714, and is in the name of Shambhuji II. This fixes the date of the coup between these two dates.

<sup>2</sup> Naro Mahadev, the founder of the *Jagir* of Inchalkaranji, was a loyal adherent of Ramchandra Nilkanth. Balaji Vishwanath's daughter, Anu Bai, had been married to his son, Vyankat Rao Ghorpade, at Satara in 1713 (Khare: *Inchalkaranji Samsthacha Itihas*, p. 26).

before they had time to call in their powerful allies. Tara Bai herself later on made a hint about it. "In the course of time," says Tara Bai, "we were compelled to undergo a sad experience. Rajas Bai and her son, Shambhuji, managed through some of their agents to put us in confinement and inflict hardship upon us. Shambhuji was seated upon the throne."<sup>1</sup> Principal among those who betrayed Tara Bai were Girjoji Yadav, Antaji Trimal, Tulaji Sitole and the commandant of the fort of Panhala. It was a bloodless revolution and was brought about with the utmost secrecy. On the fall of Tara Bai her partisans, who were not very steadfast in their loyalty, were completely demoralised and ran helter-skelter to save their own skin. Of her supporters the Sawant of Wadi had already died, Krishnarao Khatavkar was reduced and the most formidable of them all, Kanhoji Angré, had been reconciled.

Tara Bai's rule had never been popular. She was an ungrateful, vindictive, and hard-hearted lady who was not steadfast in her support to her lieutenants. Her son, for whose sake she had moved heaven and earth, proved to be nothing but an idiot with absolutely no capacity to rule. He was made a prisoner along with his mother and two wives, Bhavanibai and Parvatibai. He lived a prisoner at Panhala till his death in 1727. At the time of his death his wife, Bhavanibai, had gone six months with a child.<sup>2</sup> Shambhuji II was seated on the throne at Panhala. He shifted his capital to Kolhapur, finding Panhala safe for the confinement of Tara Bai and her son.

#### 4. *The Rest of the Conspirators Checked or Subdued*

With the capture of Tara Bai her party broke up. Chandrasen Jadhav, afraid of being captured and surrendered to Shahu, sent his lieutenant, Appa Rao, to the Nizam and sought his protection. He was well received and was granted a considerable *Jagir*, worth about rupees twenty-five lakhs, near Bhalki for the maintenance of his troops.<sup>3</sup> He carried along with him Rambhaji

<sup>1</sup> Rajwade: Vol. VIII, Document No. 169.

<sup>2</sup> Shivaji III had three daughters—Daryabai, Krishnabai and Ahalyabai. The first was married in the Nimbalkar family, the second in the Jadav and the third in the Sindhia family. (Chitnis: *Rajaram's Life*, p. 72.)

<sup>3</sup> *Maathir-ul-umara*, Vol. II, p. 337.

Nimbalkar and Sarjerao Ghatgey. Henceforth, he became the Nizam's tool in his intrigues against the Marathas.

Balaji next moved against the Thorats, but here he was successfully duped by the fox-like Damaji Thorat. The Thorats had risen to power under Ramchandra Nilkanth who had granted to Damaji Thorat the *Parganas* of Supa and Patus, to the east of Poona. Damaji enjoyed the title of Rustamrao and had built for himself the fortress of Hingangaon.<sup>1</sup> He was a chief with no steadfast loyalty and lived on organised plunder. Instigated by Chandrasen Jadhav and the Mughal functionaries, he created considerable trouble for Shahu, specially after the Peshwa, Bahiropanth Pinglé, was captured by Angré. Thorat was a partisan of Tara Bai in 1712. During 1713 and 1714 he seems to have been less inimical to Shahu.<sup>2</sup> After the deposition of Tara Bai and her son, Damaji, like Chandrasen, sought protection of the Mughals.

Balaji made an attempt to win over Damaji Thorat through peaceful means. On Damaji taking the oath of *Bel Bhandar*, Balaji went to Hingangaon with his family. The unscrupulous Damaji broke his faith and made Balaji and his family prisoners. He threatened them with the worst tortures unless a huge ransom was paid. Shahu paid the ransom and obtained the release of Balaji.<sup>3</sup> Shortly after, the task of subduing Damaji was entrusted to the *Sachiv*. The *Sachiv* being a minor, his shrewd mother, Yesu Bai, sent her agent Ranjhekar against Damaji with a large force.

While the force of the *Sachiv* marched against Hingangaon, Naro Shanker was living at the foot of fort Rohida. By a clever move Damaji captured Naro Shanker, the minor *Sachiv*, and carried him to Hingangaon. He threatened to kill Naro Shanker if hostilities were continued against him and if he were not paid a specified huge ransom. Shahu found himself in a fix and ultimately paid the ransom. Damaji could be brought to book only in 1718 when his stronghold of Hingangaon was completely destroyed with the help of the artillery borrowed from Sayyid Husain Ali Khan and he

<sup>1</sup> The Thorats were a very large family and the names of many of them are found frequently mentioned in the *Akhbarat*. Hingangaon is 25 miles to the east of Poona.

<sup>2</sup> *Farandare Daftar*, Vol. I, Document Nos. 44, 46, and 49.

<sup>3</sup> Rajwade: Vol. II, pp. 12 and 13.



himself was imprisoned at Purandar fort. He was released in 1728 on the intercession of Shahu's wife, but the incorrigible chief shortly thereafter joined Shambhuji of Kolhapur and the Nizam. He was again captured and imprisoned at Purandar where he died shortly afterwards.

Rambhaji Nimbalkar, as has already been said, went over to the Nizam long with Chandrasen Jadhav. Poona and its neighbourhood was the bone of contention between Rambhaji and Shahu. Poona having been so closely associated with the early career of the great Shivaji, Shahu was naturally very anxious to bring it and the territory round about it under his direct rule. But it had been given to Rambhaji Nimbalkar in *jagir* by the Mughal Emperor after the death of Lodi Khan on the recommendation of Daud Khan Pani. Rambhaji was not prepared to give up his claim and did not allow the officers of Shahu to collect even the *chauth*. Through unity of interest he had joined Tara Bai and her partisans. After her fall, he could not hold his own for long and openly deserted to the Nizam.

Another partisan of Tara Bai was Udaji Chavan. His ancestors had fought shoulder to shoulder with Santaji Ghorpadé and had earned the title of *Himmat Bahadur*. When Shahu came back to Maharashtra, Udaji chose to join the side of Tara Bai. Instigated by Chandrasen Jadhav, he, along with Damaji Thorat, had created plenty of trouble for Shahu. He had his stronghold at Battisshirole and from there raided the territory round about Shirole, Raibagh and Bijapur. Shahu had to send several expeditions against him. On the fall of Tara Bai he transferred his allegiance to Shambhuji II.

### 5. *Exit of Ramchandra Nilkanth*

Ramchandra Nilkanth was a thoroughly disappointed man. With the death of Rajaram the days of his dominance came to an end. During Rajaram's absence from Maharashtra he had ruled this virtually kingless State as an autocrat. He, no doubt, saved the nation from utter destruction; but in doing so he had concentrated so much power in his own hands and had developed so much intoxicating taste for it that when time came to part with it he felt like parting with his soul.

The domineering Tara Bai could not be a nonentity like Rajaram, and Ramchandra Nilkanth found it not very agreeable to work

with her. During the time Tara Bai was at the helm of affairs Ramchandra Nilkanth was gradually relegated to the background. When Shahu came back to claim his heritage Tara Bai opposed him tooth and nail and so cleverly managed affairs that Ramchandra had no option but to throw his weight on Tara Bai's side. He was, however, in a divided state of mind. He believed in the justice of Shahu's cause and at the same time did not want to be ungrateful to his patron Rajaram's family.

Shahu had no personal knowledge of Ramchandra Nilkanth but he was anxious to win the *Pant* over to his side because of his past services to the country and the immense influence he commanded. At the time of his coronation in January, 1708, or a little after it, he made an offer to Ramchandra Nilkanth to accept the office of the *Amatya* in his ministry. Rao Bahadur G.S. Sardesai has quoted an extant letter found in the papers of Ramchandra's family.<sup>1</sup> It clearly shows that negotiations did take place between Ramchandra Nilkanth and Shahu. The terms having been not acceptable to the parties, the negotiations failed. Ramchandra Nilkanth was not satisfied with the office of the *Amatya* and wanted to be *Hukumat-Panah* or the sole dictator as he was in the time of Rajaram. The *Amatya's* office he wanted for his son, Bhagwant Rao. Ramchandra was not wholly trusted either by Tara Bai or Shahu. Shahu's position at that hour was very delicate. He virtually found himself in the same position in which his father had found himself after the death of Shivaji. He could not trust anybody implicitly as the whole atmosphere was surcharged with treason and looked round for a man of whose loyalty he could be cent per cent sure. Ramchandra Nilkanth's hesitant conduct made Shahu to turn his face from him. On the failure of the negotiations the office of the *Amatya* was purposely given to Parashuram Trimbak, Ramchandra's political rival. After a short time Balkrishna Vasudeo *alias* Amburao Hanumanté was appointed to the office.<sup>2</sup>

Disappointed from Shahu's side Ramchandra Nilkanth continued to serve Tara Bai, but when Tara Bai and Chandrasen thought of

<sup>1</sup> Sardesai: *Rajaram*, pp. 155, 156.

<sup>2</sup> *Shahuchi Rofnishi*, p. 151.

joining hands with the Nizam he became alarmed and took the desperate decision of taking the power out of Tara Bai's unworthy hands. The change, no doubt, enhanced for the moment the power and prestige of Ramchandra Nilkanth, but he could not maintain his grip for long and soon found that so far as the framing of policy was concerned his new master was in no way better than his predecessor. He had put aside Tara Bai and her son because he had thought that Tara Bai's policy was not in the best interest of the country. But Shambhuji II was no better. Despite the best efforts of Ramchandra to imbue the mind of young Shambhuji with the high traditions of Shivaji, the response was not very encouraging. To his utter disappointment he found that his beloved pupil, Shambhuji, to whom he had addressed his famous *Ajñapatra*, expounding Shivaji's policy, was prepared to lend his ears to the enemies of the nation as readily or even more readily than Tara Bai had done.

This *Ajñapatra*, completed on November 19, 1715, is the last political document of Ramchandra Nilkanth. After that he either retired or died. Unfortunately, the exact date of neither his birth nor that of his death is yet available, but it is known that he succeeded his father, Nilo Sondev, as Shivaji's *Amatya* in 1672. Putting his age at 20 or 25 at that time he seems to have been born near about 1650. In a letter dated March 9, 1716, Ramchandra Nilkanth's eldest son, Bhagwantrao Ramchandra, has been described as *Amatya Hukumat-Panah*. This means that he retired or died before March 9, 1716, and thus enjoyed a ripe old age. It is believed that he led a quiet retired life and died about 1720 at Panhala where an inscription has recently been discovered with the words "Sri Ramchandra Nilkanth" inscribed on it. His policy of divided loyalties not only marred his own career but also that of his descendants and permanently crippled the Maratha State; but for Ramchandra there would have been perhaps no Kolhapur to keep the Marathas divided. Distrusted by both the Satara and the Kolhapur branches his descendants dwindled into insignificance and fell into poverty. To what pitiable state they were reduced is to be seen in the numerous letters of Bhagwantrao Ramchandra.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>These are to be found in *Bavda Daftar*, Vol. II; *Peshwa Daftar*, Vol. XXIV; and *Rajwade*, Vol. VIII.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SHADOW OF TARA BAI DOMINATES KOLHAPUR POLITICS

#### 1. *The Viceroyalty of Sayyid Husain Ali Khan in the Deccan*

THE DIFFICULTIES of Shahu continued even after the fall of Tara Bai owing to the incessant intrigues of the Nizam. Shambhuji II continued the policy of Tara Bai in opposing Shahu and had no scruples in joining hands with the Nizam. "As regards our situation here," writes Shahu in one of his letters to his *Peshwa* in 1715, "we have already communicated to you in detail the rebellious activities of our cousin of Kolhapur incited thereto by the Nizam-ul-Mulk. Thus, the short-sightedness of the one and the treachery of the other, have now combined to our detriment: but we are by no means daunted by this development." It was Shahu's good fortune that the Nizam was removed from the viceroyalty of the Deccan which was bestowed upon Sayyid Husain Ali Khan. The change came about as the result of intrigues at the Mughal court and proved greatly beneficial to the cause of Shahu.

Farrukh-Siyar ever since his accession had looked upon with alarm at the growing power of Sayyid Abdullah Khan and Husain Ali Khan. Having failed to kill or capture them, he had ultimately decided to bring about their ruin by separating the two brothers. The elder, Sayyid Abdullah Khan, was to remain at his post at Delhi while the younger, Husain Ali Khan, was to go to the Deccan as its Viceroy.

The Nizam, who was recalled to the court, naturally felt greatly disappointed, first, because he was living a life of almost regal splendour at Aurangabad; and secondly, because his two years work for the consolidation of his rule in the Deccan by successful intrigues against the Maratha power was suddenly interrupted. During his brief stay he had tried to strengthen his hold on Poona and its neighbourhood and had drawn to his side some of the refractory Maratha chiefs like Chandrasen Jadhav, Rambhaji Nimbalkar

and others. He, however, left Aurangabad for the North in sullen resentment in April, 1715, and was later appointed to the comparatively less important post of *Faujdar* of Moradabad.

Sayyid Husain Ali Khan's path was beset with difficulties from the very beginning. Before he could reach Aurangabad he found his way barred at Burhanpur by Daud Khan Pani, whom the scheming Farrukh-Siyar had secretly instigated to do away with the Sayyid on promise of being appointed to the vacant post if he succeeded in his mission. He had also sent a message to Shahu to bring about the ruin of the Sayyid. Husain Ali, however, first defeated and killed Daud Khan Pani at the battle-field of Lalbagh at Burhanpur on August 26, 1715,<sup>1</sup> and then took stern measures to put down the Marathas as soon as he reached Aurangabad.

For two years he struggled hard to check Maratha encroachments. Khanderao Dabhadé and his associates had become a terror along the route from Burhanpur to Surat. They had set up a systematic machinery for collecting the *chauth* by force of arms and no caravan could pass without paying one-fourth of the value of their goods to the Maratha *rahdars*. The intrigues of the Emperor against Husain Ali Khan emboldened the Marathas and they became bolder than before and roved about the country in open defiance of the local authority. Sayyid Husain Ali Khan sent Zulfiqar Beg against Khanderao Dabhadé but he was defeated and killed by the wily Maratha. Mohkam Singh, assisted by Chandrasen Jadhav, was then sent to avenge the defeat and death of Zulfiqar Beg. They fought an indecisive action against the Marathas near Ahmadnagar, but later the Mughal force was defeated in another action by the Marathas led by Dabhadé and Sultanji Nimbalkar (April 24, 1717).

These reverses had in no way discouraged Sayyid Husain Ali who had formed plans to raise a big army to curb the Maratha aggressions, but the timely counsel of one of his trusted lieutenants, Muhammad Anwar Khan, Governor of Burhanpur, made him change

<sup>1</sup> Nima Sindhia was present at the battle but he stood at a distance and did not take part on either side. When the battle was decided in favour of the Sayyid he presented himself before him. Both Khafi Khan and the author of the *Siyar-ul-mutakhhharin* ascribe Daud Khan's defeat to the double-dealing of Nima in whom Daud Khan had placed much confidence. (*Khafi Khan*, p. 750; *Siyar*, p. 96.)

his policy. It was not possible for him to curb the power of the Marathas when the Emperor himself was encouraging their lawless activities out of his spite for him. He had received messages of late that the position of his elder brother, Qutb-ul-Mulk Abdullah Khan, was fast deteriorating at court owing to the intrigues of their political opponents to whom the Emperor readily lent his ear. Placed in this situation, Husain Ali thought of befriending the Marathas in order to strengthen his hands for the impending trial of strength with his powerful *Turani* adversaries.

## 2. *Shankraji mediates an Agreement between the Sayyid and Shahu*

The Sayyid, while coming to the Deccan, had brought in his train one Shankraji Malhar surnamed Nargundkar, a shrewd Maratha diplomat, who had resigned his post as *Sachiv* under Rajaram at Jinji and had retired to Banaras at a very early stage in the war of Maratha independence. He had a rare genius for political affairs and probably soon got tired with a routine life of religious idleness. He, therefore, when introduced to the attention of Emperor Farrukh-Siyar, readily accepted his offer to accompany Sayyid Husain Ali to the Deccan in the capacity of his adviser on Maratha affairs.<sup>1</sup>

Sayyid Husain Ali sent Shankraji to Shahu's court to settle the terms of a treaty of friendship. Balaji Vishwanath and Chimnaji Damodar were already aware of the presence of Shankraji in the Mughal camp; and eager to seize this opportunity they accorded Shankraji a right royal reception on his arrival at the Maratha metropolis. Whatever might have been the feelings of Shankraji at the time of his departure from Jinji, he was after all no enemy of his country. All his old colleagues had either died or retired from politics with the sole exception of the *Chitnis*, the wise and loyal Khando Ballal. Shankraji convinced Shahu and his advisers that this opportunity was God-sent and that he stood much to gain by accepting the proffered hand of friendship extended by the Sayyid.

An agreement was soon drawn up<sup>2</sup> granting to Shahu the *Swarajya*

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 30.23 shows the importance of Shankraji Malhar.

<sup>2</sup> The details about the Treaty are given in Rajwade, Vol. VIII, Document No. 78 and Vol. II, p. 31; *Aitihāsik Patra Vyavahara*, Document No. 6; Chitnis, p. 38. The draft of terms suggested by Shahu is given in *Peshwa Daftar*, 7.28.

along with all the forts and the right to levy the *chauth* and the *sardeshmukhi* from the six *Subhas* of the Deccan. The territories conquered in recent years by the officers of Shahu in Khandesh, Gondwana, Berar and Haidarabad were also to form part of the extended *Swarajya*. Shahu was to get back his mother, his wife, his natural brother and their followers. In return for these concessions, Shahu's obligation was to pay a *peshkash* of ten lakhs of rupees per year for the *Swarajya*; to be responsible for maintaining law and order in return for the *sardeshmukhi*; to keep a contingent of fifteen thousand troops for the support of the Mughal authority in lieu of the *chauth*. Though Husain Ali did not have relations as cordial with Shambhuji of Kolhapur as the Nizam had, he, following the traditional Mughal policy of keeping the Marathas divided, purposely got a clause inserted in the treaty that Shahu would not interfere with the affairs of Shambhuji. Thus, while the Sayyid recognised Shahu as the legitimate head of the Marathas, he, at the same time, guaranteed the independent existence of Shambhuji who could be used as a tool of Mughal policy whenever opportunity offered itself.

Soon after the agreement had received the approval of both the parties, Shahu put it in execution. He made arrangements for the proper governance of the territory of his *Swarajya* and for the collection of the *chauth* and the *sardeshmukhi*. He also sent a contingent of fifteen thousand strong to Aurangabad under the command of his *Senapati*, Khande Rao Dabhadé. The Sayyid had promised to get this arrangement ratified by the Emperor, but when the matter was referred to him he, on the suggestion of his imprudent advisers, indignantly rejected the whole thing and made some appointments in the administration of the Deccan which were not acceptable to the Sayyid.

This precipitated matters. Moreover, Sayyid Abdullah had sent word to his brother apprising him of the storm which the Emperor and his favourites had raised to undermine his influence, and asked him to march forthwith for Delhi with an imposing force sufficient to terrorise their political opponents. Sayyid Husain Ali, therefore, applied to his Maratha allies for help, and made preparations to march to the North. As their own vital interests were at stake, the

Marathas eagerly accepted the proposal. A large Maratha force headed by a galaxy of commanders and statesmen, such as Khande Rao Dabhadé, Balaji Vishwanath and his young son, Baji Rao, Santaji and Rupaji Bhonslé, Khando Ballal Chitnis and some others accompanied the Sayyid on his northward march.

The news of this march struck terror in the heart of Farrukh-Siyar. This unfortunate monarch had at his disposal the services of some of the ablest commanders, administrators and statesmen of his times. Sawai Jai Singh, Ajit Singh, Nizam-ul-Mulk, and the Sayyid brothers, were all men of valour and capacity and given proper opportunity would certainly have set Farrukh-Siyar's house in order. But this irresolute and suspicious monarch failed to pool their talents and efforts for toning up his administration and curbing the Maratha power, and under the influence of some of his upstart and incompetent nobles, indulged in schemes for the destruction of the overbearing Sayyids.

Delhi was reached in the middle of February 1719, and there, amid horrid scenes of intrigues and armed demonstration and some bloodshed lasting for about a fortnight, Farrukh-Siyar was dethroned and murdered. The king-makers then raised to the throne in quick succession two sickly princes, who died, one after the other, in less than a year, leaving the field open for the accession of Muhammad Shah who continued to rule till his death on April 25, 1748. The Sayyids conceded all the demands of their Maratha allies. Three separate grants for the *swarajya*, the *chauth* and the *sardeshmukhi* for the six *subhas* of the Deccan were executed in the name of Shahu in March 1719, and the captive relations of Shahu were set free.

With this "Magna-Carta" of their political rights, Balaji marched back to the Deccan in triumph and reached Satara early in July 1719, where he was accorded a warm reception by his grateful master. Balaji had not only successfully averted the storm raised for Shahu by Tara Bai, but had placed his affairs on a firm footing by securing for him a recognised legal status from the Mughal Emperor for which Shahu had struggled so long in vain.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shahu had sent his *Parasnir*, Yadavrao Prabhu, to Delhi to plead his cause at the Mughal court and secure these concessions.



and enriched Shahu's coffers by thirty lakhs of rupees saved out of the expenses paid by Sayyid Husain Ali Khan for the maintenance of the Maratha force. Though the bare continuance of the other branch of the *Chhatrapati's* house, founded by Tara Bai, was guaranteed even by the Sayyids, Shambhuji was now definitely relegated to the background.

This first successful visit of the Marathas in force to Delhi was fraught with important consequences for the future. The brief sojourn of Balaji and his party at Delhi disillusioned them as to the real condition of the "Prop of the Universe" and their keen eye could see through the fair fallacy of court splendour the ghastly rottenness to which the once all-powerful Mughal Empire was in fact reduced. The Mughal Emperor was actually tottering on his last feet and with a little courage who knows the Maratha might step into his shoes.<sup>1</sup> With some such thoughts behind the back of his mind Balaji Vishwanath purposely travelled back to the Deccan through Rajputana establishing thereby relations of amity with the Hindu princes of that region so that when time would appear opportune the combined might of the Rajput blades and Maratha lances might give the last blow to Muhamadan sovereignty. Although legally Shahu was only a Mughal vassal, yet by granting the right of collecting the *chauth* and seeking thereby the appeasement of an over-powerful subject the sovereign had already accepted the fact that the respective positions of the contracting parties were reversed.

Soon after Balaji had left the Deccan for the North, Shambhuji had disturbed Shahu's peace by creating disturbances in his dominions, but Shahu had taken prompt measures and nipped his mischief in the bud in the early months of 1719. Balaji's resounding success at Delhi added fuel to the fire of jealousy at the Kolhapur court and immediately after his arrival he and Shahu had again to lead their forces against Shambhuji in the later part of the same year. They besieged Kolhapur in force and although Shahu had the means to put an end once for all to the mischievous activities of his cousin he held his hand partly because of his own kindly vein and partly because it would have meant the breach of one of the

<sup>1</sup> This is what Malhar Barve suggested to Baji Rao Peshwa after the death of Sayyid Husain Ali (*Peshwa Daftar*, 30.24).

conditions of the agreement with the Sayyids which had guaranteed Shambhuji's continued existence.

### 3. *The Second Viceroyalty of the Nizam in the Deccan.*

Shortly after his return from the Kolhapur campaign, Balaji Vishwanath died, worn out probably by continued and ceaseless exertions extending over years.<sup>1</sup> The affairs at Delhi also took a rather serious and unexpected turn. The Sayyid brothers having played the part of king-makers had attained the zenith of power and had excited the jealousy of some of their powerful colleagues who were weaving dark cobwebs of intrigue to catch them. For some time they struggled successfully but ultimately their power came to an abrupt end through the intrigues of two cousins Nizam-ul-Mulk and Muhammad Amin Khan—backed by the Emperor Muhammad Shah and his shrewd mother. Muhammad Amin Khan was appointed *Wazir* and the Nizam was confirmed in his viceroyalty of the Deccan which he had obtained in defiance of the central authority in the heyday of the Sayyids' power by defeating and killing their partisans and protégés—Dilwar Ali Khan at Khandwa, and Alam Ali Khan at Balapur.<sup>2</sup>

The beginning of the second viceroyalty of the Nizam synchronised with the appointment of Baji Rao to his deceased father's vacant office. The Nizam from the very day of his coming to the Deccan had put into execution his old policy of suppressing the Maratha power and was actively helped in his plans by Mubariz Khan, the Governor of Haidarabad, and one of the deadliest of enemies of the Maratha power. Together they sat down in grim determination to work out the ruin of the Marathas by fomenting dissensions among them.<sup>3</sup> Through their ally, Chandrasen Jadhav, the Nizam instigated Shambhuji of Kolhapur and setting him up as a rival to Shahu informed Baji Rao that the dues payable under the agreement made with the Sayyids would be withheld pending

<sup>1</sup> He is seen collecting Maratha dues in the South only two weeks before his death (*Peshwa Daftar*, 7.37, dated March 16, 1720). He died on April 2, 1720.

<sup>2</sup> Irvine: *Later Mughals*, Vol. II, pp. 28-49; Khafi Khan, pp. 875 and 885; *Peshwa Daftar*, 10.4 also makes a reference about the Nizam's coming to the Deccan.

<sup>3</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 10.15 makes a reference to the Nizam's movements against Poona.

the decision as to who the real *Chhatrapati* was. He also offered to arbitrate in their rival claims. Shahu found himself in much the same position in which he had found himself when the Emperor Bahadur Shah had deferred the issue of *sanads* for the *Swarajya*, the *sardeshmukhi* and the *chauth* on rival claims having been proffered by Tara Bai on behalf of her son.

While affairs stood in this stalemate condition, the death of the *Wazir*, Muhammad Amin Khan, in February 1721, made the Emperor to choose the Nizam to fill the vacant office.<sup>1</sup> The Nizam, with his grandiose plan of creating an independent principality for himself in the Deccan, was at first unwilling but when the Emperor appealed to his conscience and hailed him as the protector of "the honour of Chaghtais" he could not refuse and departed for Delhi on October 21, 1721, leaving Mubariz Khan as his deputy in the Deccan. The Nizam, however, soon found, only after a brief stay of about ten months, that the office of the *Wazir* was by no means a bed of roses.<sup>2</sup>

During this brief spell of supreme authority the Nizam had, of course, desired to strengthen his hands further for the prosecution of his designs in the Deccan, and with this end in view had appropriated to himself the governments of Malwa and Gujrat in addition to the viceroyalty of the Deccan. But this move had widened the gulf between the Nizam and the Emperor still further; and alarmed at the growing power of the Nizam, the Emperor, not yet out of the nightmare of the days of the Sayyid brothers, had taken prompt steps to curb the ambition of the Nizam in time by transferring him to the insignificant *Faujdar* of Oudh.

Confident of his power the Nizam defied the imperial order and after resigning his *Wazirate*, marched straight for the Deccan. The Emperor unable to do anything himself declared his erstwhile *Wazir* a rebel and instigated his deputy, Mubariz Khan, whom he promoted to the viceroyalty, and Rajah Shahu to resist him. Mubariz Khan, at first hesitant, decided to oppose the Nizam. Both the Nizam and Mubariz Khan applied for Maratha help in the impending contest. Shahu at first thought of opposing the Nizam

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 30.29; Khafi Khan, p. 939; Irvine: *Later Mughals*, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> Khafi Khan, p. 947.

and offered terms to Mubariz Khan, fully detailed in one of the papers of the *Peshwa Daftar*.<sup>1</sup> The terms being not acceptable to Mubariz Khan, Shahu decided to remain neutral.<sup>2</sup> Through superior generalship the Nizam defeated and killed Mubariz Khan at Sakharkhedla on September 30, 1724, and thenceforth began his virtually independent career in the Deccan.

After his decisive victory at Sakharkhedla, the astute Nizam watched the proceedings of the Maratha government with an outward show of friendliness, gaining thereby the much-needed time required to consolidate his position and to formulate plans for the future. He also utilised this period of lull in creating a party favourable to him at the court of Shahu. The time was very opportune for this kind of thing. Shahu's court had become a hot-bed of intrigue ever since the appointment of young Baji Rao to the *Peshwaship*. There was a feeling of frustration among some of his senior nobles like Sripatrao *Pratinidhi*, *Senapati* Khande Rao Dabhadé, Kanhoji Bhonslé, *Sena Sahib Subah*, Sultanji Nimbalkar *Sarlashkar*, Anandrao *Sumant* and Chimnaji Damodar, the *Rajajna*. The Nizam fanned their simmering jealousies and there sprang up a powerful party at the court of Shahu, which, led by Sripatrao *Pratinidhi* (whom the Nizam had won over by bestowing on him a sumptuous *Jagir* in Berar) openly opposed the bold policies of the youthful Baji Rao.<sup>3</sup> They advocated with one voice a policy of pacification towards the Nizam. Shahu, essentially a man of peace, hesitated for some time in accepting the policy of aggression as suggested by Baji Rao and lent his ear to the party opposing the *Peshwa* and it was under their influence that he accepted from the Nizam a *Jagir* in Balaghat in lieu of his claim for *chauth* in the Haidarabad territory to which place the Nizam had shifted his capital from Aurangabad.<sup>4</sup>

The expedition which Shahu sent to the Karnatak precipitated matters. The Nizam looked upon it as an encroachment upon his

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, Vol. X, No. 1. This paper is very important as it indicates the increasing nature of the Maratha demands; also *Shahuchi Rojnishi*, pp.4-10.

<sup>2</sup> *Shahuchi Rojnishi*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 10.39, makes a mention about the treacherous intrigues carried on by Sripatrao *Pratinidhi* and Kanhoji Bhonsle with the Nizam.

<sup>4</sup> Khafi Khan, p. 972.

jurisdiction, for according to him all territory beyond the Krishna that once belonged to the defunct States of Golconda and Bijapur had now passed on to the Mughals by virtue of conquest. No less offensive was this expedition to Shambhuji of Kolhapur who considered all territory south of the river Tungbhadra as his exclusive sphere of influence by virtue of an informal agreement made with him by Shahu on December 30, 1725, on the eve of the *Peshwa's* departure for the Karnatak: "Let us both exert ourselves in co-operation to recapture Mughal territories and add them to our *Swarajya* in the way our ancestors did. You may work in the South, we will work in the North. We shall give you a fair share of what we acquire in the North and you shall also similarly give us a share of what you would acquire in the South."<sup>1</sup> This agreement clearly embodies in itself three things: joint exertion, earmarked spheres for work, and division of spoils. Shambhuji had neither the means nor even the desire and capacity to uphold the Maratha interests in the South which were obtained and defended at the cost of much blood since the time of Aurangzib. When Shahu saw that the Maratha influence in the Karnatak was on the wane, and Shambhuji was doing nothing to check it he sent his own army to keep the Maratha banner flying there. How could Shambhuji expect to share the spoils of an expedition in which he did not take part at all?

#### 4. *The Unholy Alliance of Shambhuji II with the Nizam : Events leading to Palkhed*

Envious of the rising prospects of his cousin, Shambhuji had never ceased intriguing against him. A letter written by him on July 23, 1721 to Rayaji Malhar, agent of Chandrasen Jadhav, clearly testifies to this fact.<sup>2</sup> Greatly dissatisfied with the Karnatak expedition and actively instigated by two of his ministers—Nilkanth Trimbak Prabhu Mahadkar<sup>3</sup> and Bhagwantrao Ramchandra—he

<sup>1</sup> *Kavya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi*, No. 14, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Rajwade, Vol. III, p. 559.

"Chandrasen Jadhav must have already communicated to you the deep interest he takes in our affairs and the efforts he is making to promote our cause. We have no doubt that you too with your great attachment for us would do your utmost towards the same end."

<sup>3</sup> *Kavya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi*, No. 18, p. 42.

resumed his intrigues with the Nizam through the usual channel of their common ally, Chandrasen Jadhav. Nothing could be more pleasing to the Nizam than this and he picked up the threads of his old policy exactly where he had left them at the time of his departure for Delhi to take up the *Wazirate*. He dangled before Shambhuji the prospect of making him the supreme head of the Marathas and promised to get him recognised as such by the Mughal Emperor. Shambhuji's letter leaves not a shadow of doubt about his unholy alliance with the Nizam: "We are exceedingly happy," writes Shambhuji to Chandrasen in February 1726, "to receive your letters and to learn that you have succeeded in inducing Nizam-ul-Mulk to espouse our cause and to promote it in every possible way. Acting upon your valuable suggestion, we led an expedition towards the South right upto the river Tungbhadra, having been joined by the influential following of Hindurao and Sagunabai Ghorpadé and of Piraji and Ranoji also. As Sripatrao *Pratinidhi* has marched against us, please come quickly for our succour. Nizam-ul-Mulk has marched towards Adoni and asked us to send him our contingent. Accordingly, we have despatched our minister Nilkanth Trimbak with orders to join the Nizam quickly, and now we are waiting at Torgal to meet you. We cannot ourselves go and join the Nizam, as the *Peshwa* and the *Pratinidhi* are both coming to oppose us. You have, indeed, done us a great service by inducing Nizam-ul-Mulk to break off his relations with Shahu and take up our cause. We are confident that Murarrao Ghorpadé, Udaji Chavan, Appaji Suro and others would soon join us. Aiwaz Khan has also earnestly commenced operations in different directions. Thus the moment is now ripe for action, and we are only waiting for you to join in as quickly as possible."<sup>1</sup> Another published letter from the Nizam to Sawai Jai Singh clearly explains the former's evil designs against the Marathas. "It has been repeatedly reported to the Emperor," writest he Machiavelli of the Deccan, "that these Marathas raid Gujrat and Malwa at my suggestion and instigation. I have performed all the necessary exertion in this matter. I have again and again written to Shahu Rajah giving him the good counsel that the Marathas should not plunder Gujrat and Malwa.

<sup>1</sup>Dalvi: *History of Jadhav Family*, p. 81.

Although thus pressed and threatened, nothing has resulted from it and the Marathas have not given up their raids. Therefore with a view to carrying out the Emperor's order I have called to my side Rajah Shambhuji, who is Shahu's rival. I have conciliated him and engaged him in punishing and exterminating Shahu. Sultanji Nimbalkar the *Sarlashkar* of the enemy's army, came and saw me and has been appointed to command Shambhuji's army. By the grace of God I am hopeful that the other partisans of Shahu would also desert him. As at this time autograph letters from the Emperor have repeatedly reached me, asking me to chastise Shahu, I have taken on my shoulders this grand enterprise, in order to satisfy the Emperor and give him proof of my loyalty and devotion. Otherwise, it would be highly inexpedient for me to break my relations with the Marathas. And now that they have permanently planted their claws in all the imperial territory and their strength and power have increased beyond limit, I have challenged them to fight solely out of reliance upon the grace of God and the Emperor's favour."<sup>1</sup>

This conspiracy was complete by the rainy season of 1726 and the wily Nizam had drawn into it several persons of note at the court of Satara who had reasons of their own for severing their connections with their master after having served him loyally for decades. The Nizam successfully drew into his net Chimnaji Damodar and Sultanji Nimbalkar, the erstwhile *Rajajna* and *Sarlashkar* respectively of Shahu.<sup>2</sup> Other persons of note who had active leanings towards the Nizam and Shambhuji were Kanhoji Bhonslé, Anandrao *Sumant* and possibly also *Senapati* Khanderao Dabhadé.<sup>3</sup>

And all the while Shahu was in the dark about the formidable combination which had been formed against him; he was rudely shaken out of his dreams when Shambhuji openly joined the Nizam on September 24, 1726. Shambhuji was away from his capital for

<sup>1</sup> Translation and text published in the *Islamic Culture* by Sir Jadunath Sarkar.

<sup>2</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 30, 43.

<sup>3</sup> *Peshwa Daftar* 10.3 shows Kanhoji Bhonsle's collusion with the Nizam. If the date of this letter be correct it seems that Kanhoji had leanings towards the Nizam even in the time of Balaji Vishwanath.

about three years and during his absence his mother, Rajas Bai, looked after the affairs of State at Kolhapur.<sup>1</sup> The agents of the Nizam—Turk-Taj Khan, Chandrasen Jadhav, Rambhaji Nambalkar, Udaji Chavan and others—made raids in the territories of Shahu. Early in 1727 Shambhuji travelled through the district of Poona as the virtual *Chhatrapati*, receiving homage from and granting *sanads* to the local officials. The Nizam even now kept up a show of friendliness and sent message to Shahu through the *Pratinidhi* and the *Sumant* telling him that he had nothing to say personally against Shahu and as one of his well-wishers wanted to free him from the tutelage of the too powerful *Konkanastha Peshwa*.

All this happened while Baji Rao and the *Senapati* were in the Karnatak with the main army and other commanders were stationed in the North with their respective contingents. Shahu in alarm wrote to all of them to hasten post-haste to his help and in the meantime weakened the enemy ranks by winning over to his side Chandrasen's brother, Shambhu Singh,<sup>2</sup> and the Kolhapur *Senapati*, Piraji Ghorpadé. He also wrote a letter to Shambhuji with a view to stopping him from pursuing the evil course and weaning him away from his ally, the Nizam. But the wise counsel contained in this letter fell on deaf ears. In his hour of weakness Shahu was half prepared to accept the advice of his *Pratinidhi* and *Sumant* who advocated the acceptance of cash payment for the *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* and the withdrawal of his tax-collectors from all over the Mughal territory.

Baji Rao came back from the Karnatak just in time to stop Shahu from taking that step so deadly to the existence and future expansion of the Maratha State. He had all along suggested a policy of aggression towards the Nizam, whose aims were diametrically opposed to those of the Marathas. It was Shahu's pacific policy and the clamour of some of his counsellors which had withheld Baji Rao's hand so far. The communication from the Nizam that even cash payment of the dues could not be made as Shambhuji had made a claim for them as the lawful head of the

<sup>1</sup> Rajwade: Vol. VIII, No. 94 and 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 10.29. The date of the letter seems to be wrong.



Maratha State awakened Shahu to the gravity of the situation and in great indignation he gave permission to Baji Rao to open hostilities against the Nizam and his satellites.

Baji Rao left Satara on August 27, 1727, and on October 13 war was formally declared against the Nizam who readily took up the challenge.<sup>1</sup> A period of marching and counter-marching ensued.<sup>2</sup> The Nizam had pitched his faith on his fine artillery, but Baji Rao having none, studiously avoided pitched battles and harassed the enemy by swift marches and the devastation of his country on a large scale. He overran the whole of Khandesh and then penetrated into Gujrat where he was not much opposed by the Nizam's political rival, Sarbuland Khan, the Governor of the province. Making use of his artillery the Nizam made Poona and its neighbourhood his main target and created havoc in that region. He personally campaigned there in company with Shambhuji whom he first married to a Rajput princess of the Ramnagar chief and then openly declared him the *Chhatrapati* of the Marathas. Shahu watched with dismay and with a feeling of suspense these proceedings from the fort of Purandar to which he had shifted for reasons of safety.<sup>3</sup> Through superior dash and generalship, Baji Rao ultimately drew this hero of a hundred battles to his doom at Palkhed<sup>4</sup> on February 28, 1728. Badly cooped up in a place where not only food and fodder but even water was scarce and where his artillery could help him no more, the Nizam had to accept at Mungi-Sheogaon on March 6, 1728, terms dictated to him by a mere lad, thirty years his junior. The mailed fist of Baji Rao destroyed with one stroke the dark cobwebs of intrigue which the Nizam had woven round Shahu. Palkhed gave the Nizam a correct estimation of the Maratha power and resulted in the breaking up

<sup>1</sup> *Shahuchi Rajnishi*, 30; *Peshwa Daftar*, 10.50.

<sup>2</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 30.40, refers to the movements of the Nizam's force in Khandesh. No. 51 also speaks of marching and counter-marching; also *Peshwa Daftar*, 10.35 and 10.40.

<sup>3</sup> Chimnaji Appa was with Shahu at Purandar. His letter to Baji Rao gives an indication of the anxiety which haunted Shahu at this critical hour (*Peshwa Daftar*, 10.50).

<sup>4</sup> About 20 miles west of Aurangabad. *Peshwa Daftar*, 30.313, refers to the battle of Palkhed. In No. 53 of this volume Chandrasen Jadhav congratulates Chimnaji Appa on Baji Rao's brilliant victory over the Nizam.

of the unholy alliance which he had formed with Shambhuji. It placed Shahu's affairs once more on a secure footing and raised Baji Rao heads and shoulders above his colleagues in the counsels of Shahu.<sup>1</sup> Till Palkhed the contest between the Marathas and the Nizam was in respect of the limits of the *swarajya* and the collection of the *chauth* and the *sardeshmukhi* of the six *Subahs* of the Deccan. After Palkhed he gave up his resistance in respect of these claims, and in future when a clash occurred between the Nizam and the Marathas it was in respect of other territories and other interests.

### 5. *The Treaty of Warna : Tara Bai at Satara*

Although beaten, both Shambhuji and the Nizam were not crushed and the Palkhed discomfiture long rankled in their minds. Shambhuji retired quietly to Panhala and thought no more of openly befriending the Nizam,<sup>2</sup> but he had not accepted the Palkhed decision as final and was constantly on the lookout for allies who could help him in his designs against Shahu. His *Senapati*, Piraji Ghorpadé and *Amatya*, Bhagwantrao Ramchandra, felt disgusted and looked for service under Shahu.<sup>3</sup> Chandrasen left him for good and Udaji Chavan patched up his differences with Shahu in 1729.<sup>4</sup>

For a time all seemed to go well, but the departure of Baji Rao and Chimnaji Appa for Malwa in 1728-29 gave rise to some wild hopes in the dissatisfied bosom of Shambhuji and he thought of trying his luck once more in collusion with Udaji Chavan. Instigated by Shambhuji, the unscrupulous Udaji started making raids into the territories of Shahu with whom he had come to terms only a few months back. Shahu faced the situation manfully and personally undertook an expedition against him early in 1730.

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 10.54, expresses Shahu's supreme satisfaction at the victory of Palkhed.

<sup>2</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 30.77, refers to the secret intrigues of Shambhuji with the Nizam; and also *Peshwa Daftar*, 10.71, 72.

<sup>3</sup> On Tara Bai's recommendation Bhagwantrao was appointed *Amatya* at the court of Satara by Shahu in 1728. *Peshwa Daftar*, 30.40, shows the sympathetic attitude of Shahu towards Bhagwantrao.

<sup>4</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 11.1.

Shambhuji also advanced to the help of his ally. While Shahu was out hunting one day some agents of Udaji Chavan came upon him with the intention of murdering him, but the plot was discovered in time and the culprits were punished. This mean action, however, roused Shahu's anger to white heat and he ordered his *Senapati* Trimabkrao Dabhadé to march straight upon the territory of Shambhuji. While Shahu himself remained stationed on the bank of the Warna, his *Pratinidhi* crossed the river in March, 1730, and attacked the forces of Shambhuji and Udaji Chavan assembled on the other side of the river. Their forces were completely routed and they fled precipitately to Panhala. Shambhuji's camp was plundered and the royal ladies—Tara Bai, Rajas Bai, and Jija Bai—were brought before Shahu as prisoners of war. It was no pleasure to Shahu to meet these ladies in that helpless state and much less had he the desire to wreak vengeance on women who were after all his kith and kin. He treated them most civilly and sent Rajas Bai and Jija Bai, Shambhuji's mother and wife, back to Panhala.

This was Tara Bai's first meeting with Shahu as a grown-up man. The last that she saw of him was at Raigarh 42 years ago when Shahu was just a child of seven and she herself was in her teens. From teenagers, they had become middle-aged and during the intervening period had faced each other as rivals for the headship of the Maratha State. Though they acted as enemies so far as the capture of political power was concerned, in the domestic, social and ceremonial affairs of the House of the Bhonslés, Shahu had always looked upon Tara Bai as an elder and sought her advice. He carried on correspondence with her even while she was a prisoner at Panhala.<sup>1</sup>

With this background when Tara Bai came to the camp of Shahu he offered to send her back to Panhala, but the shrewd Tara Bai had already noticed the difference between the character of Shahu and Shambhuji and elected to remain with Shahu at Satara. Out of gratitude for his late uncle, Rajaram, Shahu treated his widowed

<sup>1</sup> It seems that she also exercised some influence even in political matters while she was a prisoner at Panhala and at Satara (*Peshwa Daftar*, 30.31).

Bhagwantrao Ramchandra's appointment at Satara is another instance of this kind of influence.

wife, Tara Bai, with all possible respect, lodged her in the repaired royal apartments of the fort of Satara and appointed Yado Gopal of Khatav to look after her comforts. She was, however, to have the same restraints upon her liberty which she had had at Panhala. Out of sheer habit she continued to take interest in public life within the limited sphere allowed to her. Her letter to Baji Rao dated April, 1739, is indicative of her interest in the affairs of State and also shows that a change had come in her feelings towards Shahu.<sup>1</sup>

The battle of the Warna had shattered the hopes of Shambhuji and he had now no stamina left to try conclusions with Shahu. His officers, including his life-long ally, Udaji Chavan, were deserting him one by one and the only course then left open to him was to throw himself at the mercy of his cousin, Shahu, and to accept from him whatever terms he could offer out of his generosity. There were people both at Satara and at Kolhapur who earnestly strove for a reconciliation between the two branches of the *Chhatrapati's* house. Jija Bai, the shrewd wife of Shambhuji, had impressed upon the mind of her weak husband the necessity of a compromise with Shahu. Tara Bai also felt the desirability of a compromise between the two branches and actively worked for it.

Although Shahu had ordered his officers to invade Vishalgarh and other territory of Shambhuji, he was not altogether wanting in feelings of magnanimity and was prepared to accommodate his cousin in order to put an end to the civil war which had disturbed his peace and drained his resources for nearly 23 years. Peace feelers were set on foot from both sides and a meeting between the two cousins was arranged. Amidst scenes of gay festivity and royal splendour the two cousins Shahu and Shambhuji met each other for the first time at the village of Jhakinwadi, not very far from Karhad.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, the Treaty of Warna was formally drawn up and ratified at Satara on April 13, 1731,<sup>3</sup> demarcating the respective territories of Shahu and Shambhuji, who thenceforth became a mere subordinate ally of the Maratha

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 30.227.

<sup>2</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 30.85, mentions the visit of Shambhuji and his stay with Shahu from February 27 to April 17, 1731.

<sup>3</sup> *Kaya Itihas Sangraha: Patren Yadi*, No. 20 and 21 dated April 16, 1731 also *Shahuchi Rojnishi*, 176.

*Chhatrapati*. Shambhuji thereafter repeated his visits to Satara on several occasions, but it is strange that Tara Bai and Shahu did not return the call of Shambhuji even once.

The Treaty of Warna was the culminating point of a long drawn out civil war which Tara Bai had started and Shambhuji had continued; which had disturbed the peace of the land and had drained the resources of the Marathas for 23 years; which had given the Mughals an opportunity to fish in the troubled waters of Maharashtra; and finally, which had made confusion worse confounded by enlarging the scope for bargaining by the greedy Maratha *sardars*. "And how strange does it sound when one discovers in the end that Tara Bai herself had a great hand in bringing about this settlement."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shambhuji wrote to Shahu in October, 1730: "Your very warm greetings and your sincere and hearty wishes for a cordial and lasting understanding between us, conveyed by the revered Matushri Saheb (Tara Bai) have reached me and gladdened my heart immensely...what can redound to our credit more than that our differences should be finally settled and that perfect amity should for ever exist between us?..." (*Aitihastik Patren*, No. 15, p. 14.)

## CHAPTER XIII

### TARA BAI MAKES ANOTHER BID TO CAPTURE POWER

#### 1. *The Unhappy Close of an otherwise Glorious Reign*

THE CUMULATIVE efforts of three successive *Peshwas* had not only placed Shahu's affairs on a secure footing in Maharashtra, first against the pretensions of his aunt, Tara Bai, and later of his cousin Shambhuji, but had made him the most powerful potentate in India. His armies had overrun the whole of India from Delhi in the north to Rameshwaram in the south and from Gujrat in the west to Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in the east. Seemingly Shahu appeared to be a mighty and prosperous potentate, but this was not the truth. The last days of this pious king were saddened through domestic worries, financial embarrassments,<sup>1</sup> the intrigues of Tara Bai, the unending quarrels of his wives and the selfish bickerings of his courtiers and he ultimately succumbed to them. His health was on the decline since 1743 when he fell seriously ill and his life was despaired of for some time.

The deaths of some near and dear ones had left him very desolate and he felt that his own end was not long in coming. The financial arrangements made by Shahu at the commencement of his reign had failed, and he was shoulders deep in debt to private bankers who were pressing for the repayment of their loans. He was hardly able to pay the expenses of his court and the enormous sums required by his wives.<sup>2</sup>

In this helpless state, Shahu relied more and more on *Peshwa* Balaji Bajirao and did not allow him to move away from him for fear of some danger overtaking him all of a sudden. This attitude of the king doubled the jealousy of the court circle and his opponents re-doubled their efforts to discredit him in the eyes of his master.

<sup>1</sup> The details of Shahu's debts are to be found in *Purandare Daftar*, Vol. I, Nos. 214 to 218.

<sup>2</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 18.85.

Tired of these intrigues, Shahu, much against his own will,<sup>1</sup> took the desperate step of dismissing the *Peshwa* from his office early in 1747 for a short time and called Raghuji Bhonslé from Nagpur to take charge of the affairs of the State. Raghuji wisely declined the offer and reached Satara with his son, Mudhoji, only in May, 1747, when the *Peshwa* had been restored to his office.<sup>2</sup> For a time the post went abegging at the court of Shahu.

Contrary to the expectations of his opponents, Nanasaheb *Peshwa* (Balaji Bajirao) tamely submitted to the commands of his master, but fully apprised him through Govindrao Chitnis of the critical situation created by his dismissal and its repercussions on the fortunes of the State. The news of the *Peshwa's* dismissal spread like wild fire throughout the length and breadth of the country<sup>3</sup> and caused an unprecedented confusion in the affairs of the State. The Angré brothers started fresh trouble in Konkan; Shambhuji and his shrewd wife, Jijabai, instigated Murarrao Ghorpade to invade Shahu's territory; and the Nizam-ul-Mulk and his sons also thought of making gains out of this crisis in the affairs of the Maratha State. Only a few months suspension from office of the *Peshwa* convinced even his incorrigible opponents that he alone possessed the resources to control the intricate affairs of the fast-expanding Maratha State. Shahu, consequently, restored him to his office in April, 1747, and gave him his full confidence.<sup>4</sup> What had alienated Shahu from the *Peshwa* for a short time was his failure to arrange lump sum payment of his debts, his failure to appease his queens and his activities against Babuji Naik in the Karnatak. Shahu made a trial whether anybody else could take the *Peshwa's* place, but finding none coming forward to shoulder the responsibility he conferred the office again on Balaji Bajirao. The two things which greatly preyed upon Shahu's mind at this time were the questions of finding a suitable successor and the payment of his

<sup>1</sup> Shahu had made secret enquiries even about the personal conduct of Balaji Bajirao *Peshwa* and had satisfied himself about his good conduct and loyalty. (*Altihasik Patravayavhar*, No. 61.)

<sup>2</sup> Raghuji was not much interested in the Satara affairs and had made a secret understanding with the *Peshwa*. (*Nagpurkar Bhonslyanchi Bakhar*, pp. 63 and 64.)

<sup>3</sup> *Altihasik Patravayavhar*, No. 65; also in *Bharatvarsh*, Year 1, No. 45. This is dated January, 1747.

<sup>4</sup> Chitnis: *Thorley Shahu Maharaj Yanche Charitra*; *Kavya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi*, No. 48; *Peshwa Daftar*, 31.137; *Altihasik Patren*, No. 75.

debts before his death. In utter disgust Shahu retired to a grass-hut built for him at a place between Satara and Mahuli and desired to spend his last days in *Vanprastha Ashram*. The death of his junior wife, Saguna Bai, on August 25, 1748, snapped the last ties of his earthly affections.<sup>1</sup>

The *Peshwa* had assured Shahu about the repayment of his debts and had made repeated requests for permission to go out on an expedition for that purpose.<sup>2</sup> But so far as the question of choosing a successor was concerned he had adopted an attitude of perfect neutrality and had decided to comply with whatever decision his master arrived at acting according to his own free will. Shambhuji of Kolhapur had paid a visit to Satara in 1740 and had stayed there for six months. The *Peshwa* had assured him then that he would support his succession after the death of Shahu.<sup>3</sup> Shahu's elder queen, Sakwarbai, had also approved this secret move. Politically the suggestion for the union of the two States was laudable as it would have put an end to the constant friction in Maratha politics which gave rise to situations of which the neighbouring powers and selfish Maratha chiefs took advantage to the great detriment of the State. But when the thing leaked out to Shahu he looked upon it with great displeasure. The *Peshwa*, thereupon, adopted an attitude of perfect neutrality in the matter. It was Shahu's business, thought the *Peshwa*, to choose a successor; it was a purely family affair of the Bhonsle's. He, as the Prime Minister, had to serve whatever master was seated on the throne.

Shahu's anxiety was great with respect to this question. He had no son to succeed him. The one born to him from his queen, Sagunabai, in 1727, died an infant of three.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, he had daughters but no son. Of course, he had two sons, Yesaji and

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 8.60, 63.

<sup>2</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 18.86, shows how the king relied on the *Peshwa* for the repayment of his debts.

In *Aitihāsik Patravyavhar*, No. 65, dated January 1747, the *Peshwa* assured Shahu that he would do his best to repay his debts.

<sup>3</sup> In *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.232, Shambhuji's wife Jija Bai, impatiently reminds both the *Peshwa* and Sadashiv Bhau about the fulfilment of this promise.

This is also vaguely hinted at in *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.1, 2 and 3.

<sup>4</sup> He was named Shambhuji (*Maratha Daftar Rumal*, I, p. 132).



Kusaji,<sup>1</sup> by a concubine named Lakshmibai. But in Maharashtra there was no tradition allowing succession either to daughters or to illegitimate sons. Karna, the illegitimate son of Rajaram, was the sole exception; but his rule was so short-lived that it could not be taken to have established a precedent. The only other direct descendant of Shivaji was Shahu's cousin, Shambhuji of Kolhapur. Shahu gave due weight to his claims but ultimately decided not to name him his successor on two grounds; first, because Shambhuji himself was a middle-aged person with no male issue; and secondly, because he had formed a very poor opinion of his abilities and considered him least fitted to direct the affairs of a growing empire with discernment. He had, therefore, decided to take in adoption a suitable boy either from a collateral branch of the Bhonslé family or to take a Rajput boy from the North. In fulfilment of this desire he got a search made for the descendants of Vithoji and Sharifji Bhonslé<sup>2</sup> and also got from the North one Nathaji, brother of Rana Jagat Singh of Udaipur.<sup>3</sup> Nathaji was, however, shortly after called upon to succeed to the *Jagir* of Bagor and consequently left Shahu's court. According to Jaipur papers Shahu then made another effort to adopt a Rajput boy, Kushal Singh, through the help of Sawai Jai Singh. Shahu also thought of adopting Raghuji Bhonslé's son, Mudhoji.

## 2. Tara Bai Reveals Ramraja's Identity

While affairs stood in this stalemate condition, Tara Bai, who all this while had quietly been maturing her plans for staging a come-back to active politics, sprang a surprise on Shahu by sending him a message that he need not seek a boy for adoption from a distant family when a boy of the direct line, her own grandson, was available.

The story that she gave out was that when her son, Shivaji III, died, one of his wives, Bhavani Bai, was *enceinte* and gave birth to a

<sup>1</sup> Chitnis: *Thorley Shahu Maharaj Yanche Charitra*, p. 84; also *Peshwa Daftar*, 8.47.

*Peshwa Daftar*, 30.72, mentions one Yashwantrao Bhonsle, who was also probably an illegitimate son of Shahu.

<sup>2</sup> Vithoji was a brother of Maloji and Sharifji was a brother of Shahji.

<sup>3</sup> *Vir Vinod*, Vol. II, pp. 1581-82.

son three months after the death of her husband at Panhala. The birth of this posthumous child naturally stirred feelings of jealousy in the hearts of Shambhuji, his mother and his wife as the child could prove a rival at any future time. They, therefore, entertained evil designs against him from the very beginning and wanted to remove him from their path. Tara Bai took, so she gave out, timely steps to counteract their evil designs and decided to send the child out of the reach of her rivals. She took into her confidence a Rajput named Ghasiram<sup>1</sup> and his wife whose child had died only a short time ago and whose breasts were still wet. This couple belonged to some place in northern India and was about to leave for home when Tara Bai induced them to stay on and charged them with the commission of bringing up the prince *incognito* at Bavda (Gagangarh) under the care of Bhagwantrao Ramchandra, a partisan of Tara Bai. Having settled the plan, she gave out that the child had died and in order to set at rest the suspicions of Shambhuji and others she made the child almost senseless by an over-dose of opium and in this state sent him down the fort in the custody of the Rajput couple. The child was later carried to Bavda and there brought up in secret under the care of Durga Bai,<sup>2</sup> the wife of Bhagwantrao's younger brother, Shivram. Ramraja's secret existence having leaked out, Rajas Bai went to Bavda herself to make enquiries about it. The prince was consequently removed to an unknown place below the *ghats* and was looked after by the same Rajput couple. Unfortunately the Rajput's wife died two years after this event and so for purposes of safety and better care the prince was finally removed to his sister, Darya Bai Nimbalkar, at Pangaon, six miles south of Barsi.<sup>3</sup>

The news staggered Shahu as it would have staggered anybody

<sup>1</sup> Rajwade, Vol. VIII, No. 184.

<sup>2</sup> Shahu later rewarded Durgabai for her services by giving her the *Sardesh-mukhi Vatan* of Karhad (Rajwade, Vol. VIII, No. 170 and 171; also *Peshwa Daftar*, No. 26 and 40.29).

<sup>3</sup> This was probably done at the instance of Shahu who by now had been informed about Ramraja's existence by Tara Bai (*Peshwa Daftar*, 40.29; *Bavda Daftar*, 186-187). There is a tradition that Ramraja lived for some time at Tuljapur under the care of a priest. It seems probable that Daryabai might have removed him to that place for some time for reasons of safety. Once Ramraja himself threatened to go back to Tuljapur (*Peshwa Daftar*, 6.73).

else in Maharashtra, for Tara Bai had the reputation of being an unscrupulous schemer. To make things doubly sure, Shahu sent his secretary, Govindrao, to Tara Bai for the confirmation of the story and also to get it in writing from her. On being further questioned, Tara Bai revealed that Bhagwantrao Ramchandra was one of the persons who was privy to the secret bringing up of Ramraja, the rest having died. Thereupon, Shahu called Bhagwantrao to Satara and asked him to vouchsafe for the truth of the story in the sacred waters of the Krishna at Mahuli. On Bhagwantrao's doing it, Shahu could say nothing further and had to believe Tara Bai and Bhagwantrao.<sup>1</sup> He, therefore, gave up the idea of adopting any other child because that would bring trouble to Maharashtra which Shahu was most anxious to avert. Ramraja being nearer to him in relationship would in the eyes of the general public of Maharashtra be a better claimant to the throne than any other boy and hence his setting aside in favour of a stranger from a distant family was both unjust and dangerous.

Sakvarbai, the elder queen of Shahu, however, failed to be convinced and continued vehemently to denounce the whole thing as a mere hoax and a cunning device of the wily old Tara Bai to re-capture power in the name of Ramraja who, she said, was nothing but an impostor. She plainly told her husband that she would adopt another child to frustrate the plan of Tara Bai. Shahu quietly reasoned with her that her plan would simply land her in trouble as there would, in all probability, be a war of succession between the boy adopted by her and Tara Bai's grandson, Ramraja, who being nearer to him in relationship, was the rightful claimant to the throne. Shahu actually sent Govindrao Chitnis to some of the prominent *sardars* such as Dadoba Pratindhi, Appaji Somvashi Sarlashar, Fatehsingh, Trimbakrao Dabhade Senapati, Bimbaji Bhonslé, Raghuji and Mudhoji Bhonslé to ascertain from them whether they had to offer any better plan for the future governance of the Maratha State and whether any

<sup>1</sup> The story of Ramraja's birth and secret bringing up is narrated in the *sanad* granted to Bhagwantrao Ramchandra at the time of Ramraja's accession (*Itihas Sangraha Peshwa Daftartil Mahiti*, No. 44) and in several other letters of Tara Bai herself. A sufficiently detailed version is given in the *Amatya's Bakhar* published in the *Bharatvarsha*.

of them was prepared to shoulder the responsibilities of the State in opposition to the *Peshwa*. The *Chitnis* faithfully reported that nobody had to offer a better plan and nobody was prepared to shoulder the responsibility. Shahu explained to the *Rani* the public opinion thus gathered, but all these sober arguments failed to convert the obstinate Sakvarbai who, thereafter, began taking active steps to recruit a following with the help of Jagjiwan Parashuram *alias* Dadoba *Pratinidhi* and his Mutalik, Yemaji Shivdev, in order to offer armed opposition if it became necessary, although she knew full well that her plans could not succeed against the *Peshwa* who would naturally carry out faithfully the wishes of Shahu.

Govindrao Chitnis, Devrav Meghshyam, Yashwantrao Potnis and the *Peshwa* were the principal councillors of Shahu. Sakvarbai first wanted to win them over but failing in that she even attempted the life of the *Peshwa* and the *Chitnis*. The *Chitnis* had a providential escape, and one Tulaji, a personal attendant of Shahu, was killed in his place. She also made an attempt to take into her hands the administration of the State and called in Shambhuji of Kolhapur for her help. When Shahu learnt of it he sent word to Shambhuji of Kolhapur through Bapuji Khanderao telling him not to meddle with Satara affairs. Shambhuji wisely turned back and thus civil war was averted.<sup>1</sup>

Shahu's last illness began in August, 1749, and his condition went on deteriorating day by day.<sup>2</sup> Domestic and outside worries accelerated the pace of death. His only surviving wife, Sakvarbai, removed him from his hut outside to the *Rangmahal* on the slopes of the Satara fort and completely stopped the *Peshwa*, the *Chitnis* and their partisans from having access to the king's apartments. Yemaji Shivdev's brother, Antaji Shivdev, was deputed to keep a close watch on the activities of Tara Bai up at the fort of Satara. The *Peshwa's* party had, however, won over to their side the persons in charge of the fort and hence no harm could be done to Tara Bai. Shahu fortunately retained to the last the full use of his mental

<sup>1</sup> *Purandare Daftar*, Vol. I, No. 369.

<sup>2</sup> An English physician seems to have been requisitioned at Satara (*Peshwa Daftar*, 45.19).

powers and having a foreboding of the coming storm as a result of the misguided policy of Sakvarbai, he called the *Peshwa* to Satara with sufficient force to stop any untoward event following his death. The *Peshwa*, at the head of a large force, arrived at Satara along with his brother, Janardan, and his two trusted lieutenants Sindhia and Holkar, and stayed there for nearly eight months from August, 1749 to April, 1750, and went back to Poona only when he had performed the last rites of the deceased king and had seated the new sovereign on the throne.<sup>1</sup> Shahu had also sent an urgent call to Raghuji Bhonslé but he did not come as he had a secret understanding with the *Peshwa*.<sup>2</sup>

Shahu had made up his mind to name Ramraja as his successor,<sup>3</sup> but afraid of the violent Sakvarbai who might create some trouble and might even make an attempt on his life, he did not call him to Satara for a formal adoption during his life-time but left two brief orders in his own hand for the *Peshwa* indicating his last will: *Rescript No. 1*. "Balaji Pradhan Pandit is hereby commanded. You should collect troops; several others were similarly asked but they do not accept (the responsibility). I could not write this before. Nor do I now hope to recover. The concerns of the State must be protected. Therefore you should take steps to continue the succession. Do not bring in Kolhapur. I have explained matters to the *Chitnis*. You should conduct the affairs of the State under the order of the one who would succeed to the throne. I have every confidence in the *Chitnis*. You should work in cooperation with him. Whoever becomes the *Chhatrapati*, he will not interfere with your management. May you act wisely." *Rescript No. 2*. "Balaji Pandit Pradhan is commanded. We feel confident you will carry out the responsibility of the *raj*. I was sure of this myself, and the *Chitnis* confirmed me in my view. You have my blessings, and my palm is laid on your head. Whoever comes as *Chhatrapati* will continue you in the office of minister. If he does not, my curse be on him. You should continue

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.38.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.72, shows the respect which Raghuji had near about this time for the *Peshwa*.

<sup>3</sup> It was the topic of common talk at Satara. (*Ibid.*, 6.5.)

your service in obedience to him. Do preserve the State. What more can I write? You are wise enough."<sup>1</sup>

These two small orders have since become the most memorable State documents which made the position of the *Peshwa* unassailable and transferred the substance of the power to his hands leaving the *Chhatrapati* only a constitutional head. The orders were conveyed to the *Peshwa* through the *Chitnis* early in October, 1749.<sup>2</sup> Having made the best possible arrangement for the future governance of the State which had been built up through the exertions of three successive brilliant *Peshwas* under his own wise direction, the pious king breathed his last on December 15, 1749, amidst the heart-rending wailings and cries of all his subjects to whom he was like a father.

In the interest of public security the *Peshwa* at once posted his pickets all over the city and arrested the *Pratinidhi* and his *Mutalik* Yamaji Shivdev and other partisans of Sakvarbai.<sup>3</sup> The *Pratinidhi* and his *Mutalik* were later put into fetters and were sent to the fort of Lohgarh and Kavnai (near Igatpuri)<sup>4</sup> respectively.

### 3. The Immolation of Sakvarbai

Even before the remains of the dead king could be disposed of, the most momentous question to be settled was whether his sole surviving queen, Sakvarbai, was to become *Sati* or not. Under normal circumstances it was left to a woman to decide it for herself. There was no compulsion. Tara Bai and Rajas Bai were not willing to burn themselves with their husband but another wife, Ambika Bai, did so out of her own free will. The case of Tara Bai and Rajas Bai was not much noticed because there was at least one

<sup>1</sup> *Altihask Sphutik Lekh*, 4.5.

<sup>2</sup> The orders were probably written on October 10, 1749, the Dasher day, by Shahu himself, a little over two months before his death. When the *Peshwa* and the *Chitnis* were not allowed by the *Rani* to meet the king, they found out a person to exchange messages with him. It was Shati Malik *alias* Shetyaba Daji Sankpal, a personal servant of Shahu, who used to be sent on secret missions by his master.

<sup>3</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.33, shows that Yamaji Shivdev made an attempt to win over Ramraja. The *Pratinidhi* also seems to have done it. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.36)

<sup>4</sup> They were shifted to various other forts. The *Pratinidhi* was at Purandar when he was called to Sangola (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.93 and 94).

wife to become *Sati*. This was not the case with Sakvarbai. She was the sole surviving wife of Shahu and if she held back, public opinion was sure to take notice of it as it went against the social custom prevalent among Maratha noble families of those days to claim one victim at least. Of course, there were people who wanted her to become *Sati* out of political motives and Tara Bai being the foremost of them, the suggestion of Sakvarbai's immolation came principally from her. When she came down from the fort to have a last look at Shahu, Govindrao Chitnis went and conversed with her. She advised Govindrao "to arrange that Sakvarbai should become *Sati*. If she lives she will create trouble for the *raj*. Nor should Shambhuji be asked to come from Kolhapur. I have a grandson brought up at Pangaon. He should be fetched and placed on the throne."

Tara Bai knew that it was the best way of removing her political rival for if she lived her plans would not have a smooth course. On the political plane the *Peshwa* was one with Tara Bai. But neither Tara Bai nor the *Peshwa* could throw Sakvarbai bodily into the fire. If she had preferred to live whether she would have lived with or without power nobody could say. As for public opinion, it is a street dog which barks at everything and then forgets the past. If pressure was put on Sakvarbai through her brother Kanhoji Shirké, on the basis of adverse public opinion, she could well have resisted it and would have lived in spite of it. A woman who could defy her husband could easily have defied public opinion as well. What really led Sakvarbai to become *Sati* was neither devotion to her husband nor fear of public opinion but the realisation of the fact that her political rival, Tara Bai, backed no doubt by the powerful *Peshwa* and the *Chitnis*, was too strong for her and so if she preferred to live, life would be worse than death. Her ambition was as great as Tara Bai's but in ability she was leagues behind her husband's aunt. "It will be intolerable for me," said the disappointed Sakvarbai, "to accept her (Tara Bai's) grandson, which would mean remaining under the orders of these (*Chitnis* and Balaji) and Tara Bai. It is no use living after that."<sup>1</sup> Making the best of a bad situation, which was

<sup>1</sup> Sinha: *Rise of the Peshwas*, p. 234.

largely of her own creation, she decided to die with her husband.

Her own partisan, the *Pratinidhi*, and so also Fateh Singh Bhonslé, Dabhadé, the *Rajajna* and others unanimously supported Tara Bai's suggestion when the *Peshwa* consulted them about it. The *Peshwa* himself had no need to force her to burn herself. He could easily have restrained her if she had lived to make mischief.<sup>1</sup> The last rites of Shahu were performed under the direction of Tara Bai.<sup>2</sup> Sakvarbai and two concubines of Shahu, Lakshmibai and Sakhu, burnt themselves with the corpse of their husband. Sakvarbai declared from her funeral pyre "that Ramraja was a pretender and that Shambhuji alone was the rightful claimant to the Satara throne."

As a matter of fact, mystery surrounds the birth and bringing up of Ramraja. Several versions with only minor differences here and there are available about it but on account of the contradictory statements of Tara Bai herself nothing can yet be said with certainty on this subject. In view of what happened afterwards, her first statement about Ramraja as her own grandson cannot be accepted as truth because it was made by a person bent on capturing power at any cost and through any means. Her later statement, which contradicted the earlier one completely by denouncing the same person as an impostor, cannot be accepted as the whole truth because it was the outburst of frustrated ambition. Thus, the fact of the genuineness of the descent of Ramraja lies buried somewhere between these two statements and awaits the coming to light of some contemporary document which may clear up this riddle of history beyond the shadow of a doubt. But till then Ramraja should be held as an impostor because Shahu's wife from her funeral pyre was not likely to tell a lie on such a sad and solemn occasion and thereby imperil her soul.

<sup>1</sup> From her funeral pyre she gave the ear-rings of the deceased king to the *Peshwa* as a token of her last blessing. How should she have done it if the *Peshwa* had forced her to burn herself against her own free will? (*Nanasahebchi Rajnishi*, Vol. I, p. 124; also *Shahu Maharajchi Bakhar* in *Bharatvarsha*; also Sardesai, *Peshwa Balajirao*, p. 178.)

<sup>2</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 18.184 to 199, refer to the obsequies of Shahu.



4. *Ramraja Installed*

Ramraja,<sup>1</sup> the new sovereign of the Marathas, had hitherto been an utter stranger to the nation. The story of his birth and bringing up has already been told. Even Tara Bai had not seen him because, for reasons already noted, he had to live away from her ever since he was two years old or thereabout. She had, of course, made arrangements for his bringing up through secret agents while she herself was a prisoner first at Panhala and then at Satara. The *Peshwa* also did not know him. When he came to Satara there was nobody to give and nobody to take him in adoption. The two small orders of Shahu, who himself had not seen Ramraja, were the charter of his rights. He came to the throne at the age of twenty-three and meanwhile had lived a life devoid of all education and other training so necessary for a prince. Thus by his birth and bringing up he was least fitted to wear the purple and wield the sceptre of the Maratha sovereignty.

On the very morrow of Shahu's death, a deputation consisting of some of the prominent nobles headed by Bapuji Khanderao Chitnis, left for Pangaon with a considerable force and regal paraphernalia to fetch Ramraja from there. On Tara Bai's ring being shown to the people who had the custody of Ramraja's person, the prince was delivered to the party which started back for Satara along with the prince and his sister, Daryabai Nimbalkar.<sup>2</sup> They arrived at Vaduth in the valley of the Krishna, not very far from Satara on the 26th December. The same afternoon Ramraja paid his respects for the first time to his grandmother, Tara Bai, at the temple of Shakunteshwar on the north bank of the Krishna.<sup>3</sup> The next day, on the 27th, the *Peshwa*, along with other dignitaries, made their obeisance to their new master. Public opinion still had suspicions

<sup>1</sup> His name was really Rajaram but since the custom among the Hindus is that a wife would not utter the name of her husband so Tara Bai transposed the letters and made it Ramraja.

<sup>2</sup> Daryabai seems to have acted very cautiously. She was unwilling to hand over Ramraja unless some one of the three—Tara Bai, the *Peshwa* or his brother—went there in person to take charge of the person of the prince. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.36; also see *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.6.)

<sup>3</sup> *Nanasahebchi Rojnishi*, 1.25.

about the genuineness of Ramraja, but they were set at rest when Tara Bai ate with him out of the same dish.

Preparations had already been made for the reception of Ramraja. All prominent Maratha leaders, with the sole exception of *Senapati* Yashwantro Dabhade and Raghuji Bhonsle, had already arrived at Satara. The *Peshwa* was there along with his family. His wife Gopikabai who had come to Satara along with her two sons, Vishvas Rao and Madhav Rao, attended by Mahadji Sindhia, was received by Tara Bai on January 2, 1750, and cloth worth rupees 425/- was given to her and her sons.<sup>1</sup> Sadashiv Bhau had also come to Satara on December 20 and met Ramraja as soon as he arrived at Vaduth.

Ramraja had to wait for his official entry into the metropolis and for his coronation till the thirteenth day ceremony of Shahu was over. The royal procession entered the city of Shahunagar amidst scenes of gay festivity on January 4, 1750, and Ramraja ascended the throne the same evening in the presence of all the leading Maratha nobles and high State dignitaries.<sup>2</sup> For the coronation the presence of the *Pratinidhi*, the first officer of the *Chhatrapati* in the order of precedence, was essential. The then holder of the post, Jagjiwan Parashuram, being in prison along with his deputy, Yamaji Shivdev, the post was given by Tara Bai to a partisan of the *Peshwa*, Bhavanrao, son of Krishanji of Vishalgarh.<sup>3</sup> Another change made in the cabinet was for the post of *Amatya* or finance minister which was given to Bhagwantrao Ramchandra in recognition of his services rendered in connection with secret bringing up of Ramraja.<sup>4</sup> On the recommendation of Tara Bai, Shahu had given to Bhagwantrao the post of *Amatya* in 1728 but he was not pleased with him. Later, on Shahu's recommendation Shambhuji had taken him in his service, but he too was not satisfied with him. Distrusted both by Shahu and Shambhuji, Bhagwantrao was thinking of

<sup>1</sup> *Nanasahebchi Rojnishi*, 9.136.

<sup>2</sup> *Itihas Sangraha Peshwa Daftaratil Mahiti*, No. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Gopal Mahadev Pendharkar, a partisan of the *Peshwa*, was sent to Vishalgarh to fetch Bhavanrao.

<sup>4</sup> *Itihas Sangraha Peshwa Daftaratil Mahiti*, No. 44.

going over to the Nizam<sup>1</sup> some time before Ramraja came to the Satara *gaddi*. Without having any marked abilities Bhagwantrao always had the ambition to surpass the *Peshwa* in dignity and power. Besides these two changes no other change was made in the *Ashtapradhan*. The remaining offices continued to be held by their present holders.<sup>2</sup> Of course, the voluptuous *Senapati* Yashwantrao Dabhade's position was getting weaker day by day and the Gaikwar was stepping into his place. Four days after his coronation on February 8, 1750, Ramraja was married to two girls Tukabai Shirke and Sagunabai, daughter of Burhanji Mohite.<sup>3</sup>

The *Peshwa* thus obediently carried into effect the last wishes of Shahu and made a mention about it in his letters dated January 4, 1750, addressed to his lieutenants.<sup>4</sup> To say that he purposely brought on the throne an incompetent ruler in order to concentrate all powers in his own hands is a fact which is not fully proved by available evidence. The *Peshwa* and for the matter of that no other person in Maharashtra, including Tara Bai, had known anything about the capabilities of Ramraja. He was an utter stranger to all of them

<sup>1</sup> These negotiations were carried through the agency of Naro Mahadev of Aurangabad, Husain Khan and Gangaji Sankpal. (Rajwade, Vol. VIII, Nos. 172 to 182.) They came to naught on account of the death of Nizam-ul-Mulk in 1748.

<sup>2</sup> *Itihas Sangraha Peshwa Daftaratil Mahiti*, No. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Nanasahebchi Rojnishi*, 1.125, 136; also *Itihas Sangraha Peshwa Daftaratil Mahiti*, p. 3. Burhanji Mohite had lived happily at the court of Raghuji Bhonsle at Nagpur and was specially brought to Satara for this marriage. One of his sisters, Sagunabai, was married to Shahu and the other to Raghuji.

<sup>4</sup> *Itihas Sangrahatil Aitihāsik Tippanen*, Vol. I, p. 66.

## CHAPTER XIV

### TARA BAI AND RAMRAJA

#### 1. *The Unhappy Start of Ramraja's Career*

FROM THE very day of his accession, Ramraja found that the throne of Satara was not a bed of roses. His grandmother, Tara Bai, had jockeyed him into the throne to gain her own ends. Her ambition was to concentrate all power into her own hands as she had done in the time of her son, Shivaji III. This meant a revolution in the system of government for the three previous decades during which the *Chhatrapati* reigned whereas the *Peshwa* ruled.

Quite a good number of published papers show that Ramraja was not mentally so weak as his father was.<sup>1</sup> Given proper opportunity, he would very likely have made up for the neglect of his education and training in early life. He had the ambition to chalk out an independent career for himself and wanted to rule the State with the help of the *Peshwa* and other nobles who had enjoyed the confidence of the late ruler.<sup>2</sup> With this end in view he settled a handsome pension on Tara Bai<sup>3</sup> and took initial steps to take the threads of the administration into his own hands.

Though he wanted to co-operate with both the *Peshwa* and Tara Bai, he had no desire to submit tamely to the dictation of either. This co-operation with both could not be possible as the aims of Tara Bai and the *Peshwa* were antithetic. Till the death of Shahu they had worked in unison against Sakvarbai and her party; but no sooner had Ramraja ascended the throne than there was a parting of ways between the two. Tara Bai actually began her hostile activities soon after the last rites of Shahu were over. When she went back to the fort from the town below she administered the most solemn oaths to the commander of the fort, Prayagji Badal, and to other officers to remain loyal to her. She also began to

<sup>1</sup> In *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.132, 140, Bhagwantrao Ramchandra Amatya makes some reflections about the incompetency of Ramraja.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.17, shows the submissive attitude of Ramraja towards the *Peshwa*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.30 to 44.

recruit a party to oppose the *Peshwa* (ostensibly in the interest of the new king). She made an attempt to win over Malharrao Holkar to her side through Babuji Naik immediately after Shahu's death.<sup>1</sup> Holkar, though disaffected towards the *Peshwa* for the time being, made no response. She also thought of renewing her contacts with the Nizam by helping him against the *Peshwa*.<sup>2</sup> Another important chief whom she wanted to bring within her fold was Raghují Bhonslé but he too refused to oblige her.<sup>3</sup> The *Peshwa's* partisans were not in the dark about these activities and advised him to keep a proper watch at the fort.<sup>4</sup>

Tara Bai wanted Ramraja to free himself from dependence on the *Peshwa* in State affairs and rule the kingdom with her advice only and of her partisans; the *Peshwa*, on the other hand, wanted to train him up as a constitutional ruler who reigns but does not rule. Rajaram and Shahu particularly were kings of this type and the result was that the affairs of the Maratha State thrived from day to day in the hands of able ministers. This was also the desire of the deceased king so clearly indicated in the two rescripts. His coat being pulled in opposite directions, Ramraja felt harassed and decided to do away with both. This required the utmost amount of tact which Ramraja completely lacked. He displeased at one and the same time both Tara Bai and the *Peshwa* and also some prominent nobles like Govindrao Chitnis, Babuji Naik and Raghují Bhonslé. His sister, the petty-minded Daryabai Nimbalkar, was his only adviser at the time.

This indiscretion brought things to a crisis in Satara where almost all Maratha nobles were present since the day of the coronation. Tara Bai was furious when she found that Ramraja was not amenable to her control and was not prepared to do away with her political rival, the *Peshwa*. Senility had come upon her and so to her own undoing for ever Tara Bai began to denounce Ramraja as an impostor and not a true son of her son, Shivaji. This placed Ramraja in a very awkward position and also brought about a social crisis at Satara. "Ramraja personally knew nothing about his birth and was not responsible for the reproaches his grandmother heaped upon him. She alone was the author of his fate in

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.9.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.47.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.58.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.12.

having brought out of oblivion." It was she who had solemnly acknowledged him as her grandson and now when he had been accepted as one of the royal family and had married girls of high Maratha grandees, so scrupulous about their pure heredity, she strangely enough denounced him as an impostor. Burhanji Mohité, who had recently married his daughter to Ramraja, was highly offended at this turn of events and so were other Maratha grandees. "Hundreds of Maratha nobles assembled at Burhanji's house and started a sort of hunger strike, determined upon starving themselves to death. They showered reproaches upon the old grand lady saying, 'It was she who asked us to give our daughters in marriage to this king; and now she declares he is not a true son of his father. What a shameful development! You, Burhanji, must first kill us and then kill these newly married girls.' Burhanji felt greatly mortified and it was reported that Burhanji Bawa is proceeding to extremities and will end his life in a day or two." This social trouble disturbed the peace of the city for some time and guards had to be called out to meet any emergent situation in Shahunagar.<sup>1</sup>

The patience of the *Peshwa* was already exhausted. He had been staying at Satara for over seven months and had tried his level best to put Ramraja in a proper trim to discharge the functions of his office with courage and wisdom. But, he had failed partly on account of the vacillating character of Ramraja himself and partly on account of the intrigues of Tara Bai. Urgent matters of foreign policy and so also some pressing domestic affairs required his immediate attention. He, therefore, thought of leaving Satara where the atmosphere had become too hot on account of Tara Bai's open repudiation of Ramraja. But before doing so he made one more attempt to ease the situation and sent an urgent call to Raghuji Bhonslé to repair at once to Satara.

Tara Bai had banked on Raghuji's support because he had hitherto been an opponent of the *Peshwa*. But shrewd Raghuji moved with the times. He had no illusions about the *Peshwa's* formidable power,

<sup>1</sup> This city was founded at the foot of the hill by Shahu in 1721. He built the Rangmahal palace in the city and removed his throne to it from the fort of Satara. When Tara Bai came to live with Shahu she was housed in the fort up the hill.

and his own affairs were in a state of jeopardy. He was heavily in debt<sup>1</sup> as his campaigns had failed to bring him money. After cool deliberation he had come to the conclusion that it was not politic to oppose the *Peshwa*. He was, therefore, prepared to enter into a compromise with him if he was allowed a free hand in Berar, Gondwana and Bengal. The *Peshwa* was also in a mood to allow these concessions provided Raghuji did not meddle with Satara affairs. So when Raghuji arrived at Satara on April 1, 1750,<sup>2</sup> a meeting took place between him and the *Peshwa* and Raghuji immediately fell in line with him. Govindrao Chitnis was already a partisan of the *Peshwa*.

Leaving the affairs of Satara in the hands of his partisans, the *Peshwa* left for Poona on April 18, 1750, in order to perform the marriage and sacred thread ceremony of his son, Vishwasrao, and the marriage of his cousin, Sadashiv Bahu, who had recently lost his first wife. This seven months' forced stay of the *Peshwa* at Satara had been a complete waste and he wrote about it to Dixit: "I have now been at Satara for seven months. Constant bickerings are going on with the new *Chhatrapati*. He is entirely nerveless, unable to make up his mind and act on his own initiative. I wonder if you can suggest some means by which I can secure the master's goodwill and have freedom for myself to attend to the pressing matters of the State."<sup>3</sup>

Tara Bai had also left Satara a month before the *Peshwa's* departure. She had gone to Singhgarh in March, 1750,<sup>4</sup> ostensibly for the purpose of attending the death anniversary of her husband, Rajaram,<sup>5</sup> but really to mature her future plans in consultation with Chimnaji Narayan *Sachiv* and other opponents of the *Peshwa*. She had continued her game of winning over Jayapa Sindhia and Malharrao Holkar.<sup>6</sup> Her intrigues for the removal of Ramraja from power were

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.25.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.55.    <sup>3</sup> Rajwade: Vol. XI, No. 71.

<sup>4</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.71, refers to] the departure of Tara Bai for Singhgarh. This fort belonged to the *Sachiv*, Chimnaji Narayan who was favourable to Tara Bai (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.107).

<sup>5</sup> This anniversary was a regular religious ceremony observed by the Satara and Kolhapur branches of the royal family (*Peshwa Daftar*, 8.49, 50).

<sup>6</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.41.

reported to the *Peshwa* by Govindrao Moreshwar.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *Ramraja's Struggle for Power*

The departure of both Tara Bai and Balaji Bajirao *Peshwa* gave Ramraja the desired opportunity to assert his independence. He felt greatly annoyed at the *Peshwa's* departure from Satara without taking formal leave.<sup>2</sup> The flames of his anger were assiduously fanned by his raw and upstart advisers of whom his sister, Daryabai Nimbalkar, and Ghanshyam Mantri<sup>3</sup> were the principal ones. Daryabai had expected handsome *Jagirs* for helping her brother to the throne of Satara and Ramraja was also more than anxious to do it.<sup>4</sup> But both were sadly disappointed to find that the *Chhatrapati* was not after all his own master. This untutored youth, Ramraja, threw the gauntlet both before the *Peshwa* and Tara Bai. The wiser course would have been to play one against the other, although it is very doubtful that Ramraja could possibly succeed against the *Peshwa* even if he had attacked his position with the backing of Tara Bai; or, whether Tara Bai would have at all succeeded even if Ramraja had obeyed her implicitly.

Ramraja tried to win over Raghuji Bhonslé by paying him visits and by conferring money grants and robes of honour on him,<sup>5</sup> but Raghuji was a wary old bird. Knowing that both Ramraja and Tara Bai were after all broken reeds he had decided to befriend the *Peshwa* in order to rehabilitate his own position with his powerful support.<sup>6</sup> He told Ramraja plainly that his administration was hopelessly bad and besides other defects it lacked unity<sup>7</sup> of purpose. He sometimes even reprimanded him severely<sup>8</sup> for his vacillating policy. Finding Raghuji lukewarm Ramraja tried to corrupt other

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.58.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.44.

<sup>4</sup> He was so particular about it that he threatened to go back to Tuljapur if the *Peshwa* did not agree to the grant of *Inam* to Daryabai (*Peshwa Daftar* 6.73).

<sup>5</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.20, 22, 47, 76, 77. Another trick was played to create bad blood between Raghuji Bhonslé and the *Peshwa*, Balaji Bajirao. Raghuji received anonymous letters warning him to be alert against a surprise attack by the *Peshwa* (*Peshwa Daftar*, 6.38).

<sup>6</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.23.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.50

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.59.



*sardars* of the *Peshwa*<sup>1</sup> but even there he did not have any response. As the last resort he tried to recruit an army<sup>2</sup> and to carry on the administration on his own responsibility, but how could he do so with empty hands? He was hardly able to meet the expenses of his court; the salary of his personal staff was often in arrears, and he had also contracted debts.<sup>3</sup> In dire necessity he took resort to objectionable means for raising money. He pressed some nobles of his court to lend him money<sup>4</sup> and even attempted to plunder the illegitimate daughters of the late king Shahu. Nana Purandaré wrote to the *Peshwa* for funds every now and then.<sup>5</sup>

Ramraja made an attempt to draw to his side all opponents of the *Peshwa*—Yamaji Shivdev, Dadoba *Pratinidhi*, Chimnaji Narayan *Sachiv*, Babuji Naik<sup>6</sup> and even Shambhuji of Kolhapur—not knowing what great disappointment his own accession to the throne of Satara had caused to that prince.<sup>7</sup> Like Tara Bai, he also gave vent to feelings that he was waging war against the domination of the Brahmans, but there was not much enthusiasm for his Maratha cause. Instead of gaining followers he alienated almost all the senior members of his court by his insolent and childish behaviour. There was an open exchange of hot words between him and Bapuji Khanderao.<sup>8</sup> Govindrao was unhappy with him and so was Nana Purandaré, who had exhausted all means for securing the *Chhatrapati's* favour.<sup>9</sup> He had regularly written to the *Peshwa* about the vacillating attitude of Ramraja,<sup>10</sup> and had warned him that he was bent upon mischief and would doubtless assert his independence if strong, timely measures were not taken to check him.<sup>11</sup> He also apprised him with the panicky condition of the faction-torn city<sup>12</sup> and implored him to send more troops to maintain law and order.<sup>13</sup> He also suggested the removal of Daryabai from Satara<sup>14</sup> and threatened to resign if his suggestions were not accepted.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.19, 86.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.86, 87, 88.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.52.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.33, 81, 82.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.39, 75, 124.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.73.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.13, 103. Ramraja was calling Shambhuji to Satara for his help but at the same time he was pressing him to hand over the fort of Panhala to him. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 6.37.)

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.46. <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.56.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.42, 55, 66.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.80, 85, 87, 88, 91.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.40, 43, 48, 71, 72, 73, 84.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.49.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.89. Purandaré first made the request to Ramraja to remove from Satara both Daryabai and Naroji.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.90.

The unsteady Ramraja swung like a pendulum from this side to that. He sometimes offered to accept the policy of the *Peshwa* and at other times thought of marching upon Poona with Daryabai to put an end to the power of the Brahmans there.<sup>1</sup> At one time he made friends with Yamaji and encouraged him to oppose the *Peshwa*<sup>2</sup> and at another time he refused to allow his family to go out of the fort of Satara.<sup>3</sup> Now he acceded to the *Peshwa's* request to transfer the fort of Singharh to him and immediately thereafter went back upon his word and ordered the *Qiledar* not to hand it over to the *Peshwa*.<sup>4</sup>

In fits of fury he severely beat the personal servants of Tara Bai<sup>5</sup> and harassed and neglected the attendants of the late king Shahu who sought Raghuji's protection.<sup>6</sup> He alienated public opinion by harassing and plundering the four illegitimate daughters of Shahu—Santubai, Gajrabai, Laxmibai and Gunvantabai—and even the intercession of Nana Purandaré and Raghuji Bhonslé could not save them.<sup>7</sup>

Although he frequently expressed his desire to fall in line with the *Peshwa* and often made preparations to leave for Poona to effect a settlement with him,<sup>8</sup> he further compromised his position by occasional outbursts of anger both against the *Peshwa* and Tara Bai, which were faithfully reported to the *Peshwa* by his agents, Nana Purandaré and Vyankatrao Moreshwar. On June 6, 1750, Purandaré wrote to the *Peshwa* that "the king does not care to secure the good graces of Tara Bai. He has asked the *Sachiv* not to hand over to you the fort of Singharh. He is not sincere and fair in his dealings. He tries to upset all your measures<sup>9</sup> and looks upon your friends as his enemies." In another report wrote the faithful agent that "the king asked Yashwantrao Potnis to end the deadlock and pay off the salaries of servants." "If you can do it at once," said he, "otherwise I can make my own arrangements. I am not afraid of any body. I want to see what these *Brahmans* can do." And

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.79.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.74.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.60.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.68, 69, 97, 99.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.70,

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.78.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.36, 45, 57, 59, 63, 64, 83.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.71.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.28, 29, 51, 54, 92, 105,

in yet another despatch Nana Purandaré quoted the words of the king verbatim: "The *Peshwa* now comes and begs these forts of me. I know that well. I am in no way under any obligation to the *Peshwa*. I don't owe him a farthing. I won't give him a single fort. I would rather go and make friends with Yamaji Pant. He is a good *Brahman*. He will look after my affairs. I won't be afraid of any of you. I won't go and beg any favour of my grandmother. She is the root of all the mischief. If she comes to Satara I will keep her closely confined. Govindrao Chitnis has crossed me very much. I will depose him and give his office to another man."<sup>1</sup>

The *Peshwa* cool-headedly watched the situation from Poona, but when things came to a head in the month of June, 1750, he, on the suggestion of Nana Purandaré, insisted upon the removal of Daryabai from Satara. She was living in the palace with Ramraja and was most probably the prime mover in the closed-door meetings<sup>2</sup> which were reported to the *Peshwa* by his vigilant agent. The king had assured Daryabai that nobody could harm her so long as he was alive;<sup>3</sup> but the voice of the *Peshwa* prevailed and the brother and the sister had to part with tearful eyes.<sup>4</sup> The *Peshwa*, however, had no desire to be unduly harsh<sup>5</sup> to Daryabai and gradually won her over to his side by promising the office of *Sarlashkar* to her husband.

Tara Bai could in no case be as indulgent as the *Peshwa* was. When the political sermons<sup>6</sup> of her lieutenant, Bhagwantrao *Amatya*, were lost upon Ramraja, he advised Tara Bai to take power out of his unworthy hands in order to maintain the traditional dignity of the Maratha *raj*.<sup>7</sup> She was not slow to act upon the advice, and spare any efforts to throw Ramraja overboard.<sup>8</sup> The weak Ramraja could not hold out for long, and the want of funds soon brought him to his knees. Daryabai<sup>9</sup> joined Raghuji and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.65; also, 6.66.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.93.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.94, 95.

<sup>5</sup> The *Peshwa* first offered her terms on which she could continue to stay at Satara (*Ibid.*, 6.99).

<sup>6</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.129.      <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.132.

<sup>8</sup> Govindrao Moreshwar wrote to the *Peshwa* about Tara Bai's plans for the removal of Ramraja from power. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.58.)

<sup>9</sup> Daryabai was first an opponent of the *Peshwa* but she was subsequently won over by him. Her changed attitude is noticeable in *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.72.

other partisans of the *Peshwa* in advising Ramraja to make up his differences with Balaji Bajirao *Peshwa*. Ramraja, therefore, finally accepted the *Peshwa's* invitation to visit Poona<sup>1</sup> where Tara Bai had already arrived. But, before he left Satara he sent the programme of his visit to Daryabai Nimbalkar, and also accepted her advice of conciliating both Tara Bai and the *Peshwa*.<sup>2</sup> Anxious about the safety of the city, he asked the *Peshwa* to post a strong guard there during his absence.<sup>3</sup> The *Peshwa* readily complied with the order and entrusted the city to the care of one of his own partisans, Fatch Singh Bhonslé.<sup>4</sup> Ramraja left for Poona in August, 1750, along with Raghuji Bhonslé.

### 3. *The Poona Conference of 1750*

The *Peshwa's* withdrawal to Poona had a double purpose. The marriage ceremonies of his eldest son and cousin had to be performed. Invitations had been sent to all Maratha nobles, to the king and to Tara Bai, who was then staying at Singhgarh. The aim of Balaji Bajirao in assembling all those who counted in the politics of Maharashtra was to discuss threadbare with them some of the changes which had become necessary in the constitution of the expanding Maratha State in the light of the last wishes of Shahu, and also of the changed conditions both in the North and in the South following the deaths of Emperor Muhammad Shah and Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah I in 1748. He had tried to place the issues before his colleagues and the new *Chhatrapati* at Satara, but on account of the selfish bickerings of Tara Bai the atmosphere had become so tense there that a smooth and frank discussion was an impossibility. He had, therefore, decided to change the venue to Poona in festive gaiety.

For a time this hope seemed to fail because despite pressing invitations Tara Bai showed no desire to oblige, and yet no final decision could be taken in her absence. The spell of festivity ended, but Tara Bai did not come. The *Peshwa*, however, continued his

<sup>1</sup> Fatch Singh Bhonslé had an interview with Ramraja and wrote to the *Peshwa* that the king was ready to fall in completely with the plan of the *Peshwa* (*Ibid.*, 6.116).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.109.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.106.

<sup>4</sup> Fatch Singh Bhonslé was a staunch supporter of the *Peshwa* (*Ibid.*, 6.115).

efforts patiently and ultimately succeeded in persuading Tara Bai to visit Poona. She came down from the fort of Singhgarh and halted at Shivpur in the neighbourhood of Poona.<sup>1</sup> The *Peshwa* showed Tara Bai the utmost honour befitting her position. His brother, Raghunathrao, went to Shivpur to escort her to Poona and the *Peshwa* himself went some distance in advance to receive her. On her arrival in the city, early in June, 1750, she was lodged in the house of Babuji Naik and the *Peshwa* made a *nazar* of five thousand rupees. She was attended by Bhagwantrao *Amatya*, Chimnaji Narayan *Sachiv* and some of her other partisans. All those who were opposed to the *Peshwa* for various reasons—Yashwantrao Dabhadé *Senapati*, Chimnaji Narayan *Sachiv*, Babuji Naik and others—had now joined Tara Bai's party. Dadoba *Pratinidhi* and his deputy, Yamaji Shivdev, had formerly opposed Tara Bai as adherents of Sakvarbai; but after the immolation of the *Rani* they had veered round to Tara Bai's side. Among these Yamaji Shivdev proved most troublesome.

As has already been noticed, the king had also made up his mind to visit Poona, and arrived there from Satara with Raghuji Bhonslé in August, 1750. Ramraja was accorded a grand reception by the *Peshwa* and was lodged in the seven-storied mansion of Ramchandra Bawa, a unique building of its kind in those times. Tents were also pitched to make the accommodation more comfortable.

After the customary civilities the assembled statesmen sat down to discuss the constitutional and other administrative changes proposed by the *Peshwa*. The gathering was a representative one with leaders of all shades of opinion and thought. "Raghuji Bhonslé, *Sarlashkar* Appaji Somvanshi, Sindhia and Holkar from the North, Sadashiv Bhau, Ramchandra Bawa, Mahadoba Purandaré and Sakharam Bapu and others sat together for days and weeks and had heart to heart talks. Such a conference was, indeed, unique in Maratha history both in weight and variety of views." Balaji Bajirao *Peshwa* in a brief prologue told the assembly that the Maratha State had become a factor to be reckoned with in the politics of Hindustan, and in order to follow a vigorous foreign

<sup>1</sup> The negotiations for her visit to Poona are hinted at in *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.59.

policy it had become necessary to consolidate the home front by making some changes in the administrative set-up of the growing State.

In the first instance Balaji Bajirao proposed that the political atmosphere of Satara had become too uneasy for the smooth running of the administrative machinery and so in the interest of efficiency the administration of the State be concentrated at Poona under the direct supervision of the *Peshwa*. The *Chhatrapati* as before should have his residence at Satara. Thus Poona was to become the *de facto* capital of Maharashtra. The next thing he insisted upon was that the *Peshwa* should have the final say in all affairs of State and the other members of the *Ashtapradhan*, an out-dated body now, should in future cease to interfere. As a matter of fact the *Pratinidhi* and the *Sachiv* and the *Senapati* were the only members of the *Ashtapradhan* who still had some administrative functions; the other four were already thrown into the background. The *Peshwa* proposed that henceforth these three ministers should also cease to have any independent authority and should follow the lead of the *Peshwa*. The third important proposition was that in future each Maratha noble was to enjoy an exclusively independent sphere of influence, for the system of checks and balances and mutual interdependence introduced by Balaji Vishwanath had failed inasmuch as it had led to quarrels and bickerings among the Maratha *sardars* acting in the same region.

In pursuance of this changed policy, the *Pratinidhi* was deprived of his large *Jagir* in Berar which was given to Raghuji Bhonsle as the price of his friendship for the *Peshwa*. The *Peshwa* Balaji Bajirao also wanted to make both Poona and Satara safe against the intrigues of Tara Bai. He had seen that the strong fort of Singharh in the vicinity of Poona had become a centre of intrigue and since the last remains of Rajaram were buried there Tara Bai could not be stopped from going to that fort. So, in order to make Poona safe Balaji Bajirao had approached the *Chhatrapati* to transfer that fort to him in lieu of other territory which he was willing to give in exchange to the *Sachiv*. The king had hesitated and

had passed contradictory orders<sup>1</sup> which had given further offence to Tara Bai. For the final settlement of this question the *Sachiv* was brought to Poona with Tara Bai and was asked to abide by the king's order which had been finally passed for handing over the fort of Singhgarh to the *Peshwa* in return for other territory. On the *Sachiv's* showing some reluctance, he had been put into prison on June 14, 1750, and an expeditionary force commanded by Jiwaji Ganesh Khasgiwalé had been sent to Singhgarh to take possession of it. The fort had surrendered on the 6th July and the *Sachiv* had been liberated on 24th of the same month. He was later allowed to go home but he was sufficiently compensated for the loss of this fort.<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact the case of the *Sachiv* had been decided before the Poona conference, but since he was unwilling, he had come to Poona in the train of Tara Bai to try his luck once again with her help, but failed. He had paid the penalty for joining the cause of Tara Bai.

Another minister who had leanings towards Tara Bai was Jagjiwan Parashuram *alias* Dadoba *Pratinidhi*. As has already been pointed out, he was a partisan of Rani Sakvarbai and as such had been put into prison along with his *Mutalik*, Yamaji Shivdev, immediately after the death of Shahu. On the suggestion of the statesmen assembled at Poona both he and his deputy were released and brought to that place. The *Pratinidhi* possessed vast lands and some forts between Karad and Pandharpur to the east of Satara and his domain could serve as a base for intrigue against the *Peshwa* at the court of the *Chhatrapati*. The *Peshwa* wanted to make the *Pratinidhi* innocuous for any further mischief and so demanded from him the small fortified outpost of Sangola, not very far from Pandharpur. Yamaji Shivdev left for Sangola on the pretence of delivering the fort, but as soon as he had reached the place he raised the standard of revolt.<sup>3</sup> This created a problem for the *Peshwa*, for constitutionally the case of the *Pratinidhi* was different from that of the *Sachiv*. While the *Sachiv* was only a colleague,

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.36, 45, 57, 59, 63, 64, 83.

<sup>2</sup> *Nanasahebchi Rajnishi*, 1.43; *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.63.

<sup>3</sup> It seems that Yamaji had first made an attempt to settle the matter amicably with Sadashiv Bhau and failing that had sought the intercession of Raghunathrao. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.89.)

the *Pratinidhi* was constitutionally his superior although in practice he had become a non entity in politics for a long time. So, his case could be dealt with only by the *Chhatrapati* and not by the *Peshwa*. The *Pratinidhi* was sent back to Purandar and measures for bringing to book his mischievous deputy were postponed till the close of the Poona conference.

The constitutional and other administrative changes proposed by the *Peshwa* were accepted with a unanimity of opinion by all the leading *sardars* and were also approved by the *Chhatrapati*. The broad principles of policy had been discussed and decisions had been taken with regard to them. Only the elucidation and the enforcement of the decisions remained to be done. The session of this momentous conference thereupon broke up and Raghuji left Poona for his domains on September 8, 1750.

#### 4. *The New Administrative Set-up announced at Sangola*

Soon after the conclusion of the Poona conference *Peshwa* Balaji Bajirao sent his cousin, Sadashiv Bhau, assisted by Ramchandra Malhar *alias* Ramchandra Bawa, to overcome the opposition of Yamaji Shivdev at Sangola and to put into execution the policy decided upon at Poona. In order to give the whole thing an air of constitutionality the *Chhatrapati* was also requested to proceed to Sangola.<sup>1</sup> Yamaji Shivdev's opposition lasted only two weeks in the face of Bhau's artillery and Sangola surrendered to the *Peshwa's* forces on September 25, 1750.<sup>2</sup> The neighbouring fort of Mangalvedha was also taken. On the insistence of Yamaji Shivdev his principal, Dadoba *Pratinidhi*, was specially brought to Sangola from Purandar to confirm the surrender.<sup>3</sup>

The decisions of Poona were implemented at Sangola where the new administrative set-up of the Maratha State was announced by Ramraja. As has already been noticed, out of the nine ministers (including the *Pratinidhi*) four had already fallen into the background. Of the rest, only three—the *Pratinidhi*, the *Sachiv* and the

<sup>1</sup> Ramraja wrote to Burhanji Mohite about the settlement made at Sangola (*Ibid.*, 6.118).

<sup>2</sup> Ramraja himself ordered ammunitions for the bombardment of the fort of Sangola (*Ibid.*, 26.91).

<sup>3</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.93, 94.



*Senapati*—were active rivals of the *Peshwa* for power. The opposition of the *Sachiv* had been disarmed at Poona. The other two—the *Pratinidhi* and the *Senapati*—suffered political extinction at Sangola. The sulking Dadoba *Pratinidhi* and his hostile deputy, Yamaji Shivdev, were dismissed by the *Chhatrapati* from their offices which were given to the two partisans of the *Peshwa*—Bhavanrao<sup>1</sup> and Vasudev Anant, a nephew of Yamaji Shivdev. The *Senapati*, Yashwantrao Dabhadé, had sunk deep into vices and had become useless for active campaigning. He had, moreover, displayed a tendency of not falling in line with the policies of the *Peshwa*. He was, therefore, guaranteed a cash allowance for his maintenance and the *subah* of Gujrat was divided half and half between Damaji Gaikwar, the agent of the Dabhadés, and the *Peshwa*. Some changes were also made in offices of slightly lesser importance. Daryabai had been moving heaven and earth to have her reward for helping Ramraja to the throne. Her husband, Bimbaji Naik Nimbalkar, was formally appointed to the office of *Sarlashkar*, which had been promised to him a few months ago, in place of Trimbakrao *alias* Appaji Somvanshi. Babuji Naik's pretensions in the Karnatak were finally rejected and the province was assigned to the *Peshwa*.<sup>2</sup> Appointments were also made for the personal staff of the *Chhatrapati* at Satara. Govindrao Chitnis was made the *Chhatrapati's* principal manager with his nephew, Bapuji Khanderao, as the military captain and Trimbak Sadashiv *alias* Nana Purandaré as the *Peshwa's* representative. Yashwantrao *Potnis* and Devrao Lapaté were to be the *Chhatrapati's* personal companions and advisers. The expenses of the court of Satara were to be borne by the individual *sardars* in fixed proportions as used to be done formerly.<sup>3</sup> Trimbak Hari Patwardhan was appointed to reform the mismanaged affairs of Fatch Singh Bhonslé.<sup>4</sup>

These changes brought about a silent but significant revolution

<sup>1</sup> Bhavanrao had already been officiating in this office from the time of Ramraja's coronation. For the intrigues of Bhavanrao, Tara Bai and Yamaji see Rajwade, Vol. III, No. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Rajwade, Vol. VI, No. 278, and *Kavya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi*, No. 70 and 71 give the internal story of this affair.

<sup>3</sup> Chitnis: *Dhakte Ramraja Yanche Charitra*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.95.

in the constitution of the Maratha State. Henceforth the *Peshwa* was to be the supreme authority with his *de facto* capital at Poona and the *Chhatrapati* was not to rule but to reign at the old capital of Satara. The whole scheme had originated with Ramchandra Bawa and was enforced by the strong arm of Sadashiv Bhau. As a matter of fact, the broad principles underlying the changes were discussed and decided upon at Poona. At Sangola simply the details were filled. But the extraordinary grasp and boldness of decision which the young Sadashiv Bhau had displayed in the execution of the plan had greatly added to his prestige and had given rise to a suspicion in the mind of Balaji Bajirao, instigated thereto by his wife Gopikabai, that Bhau had exceeded his instructions and was becoming the *Peshwa's* active rival for power. For a time misunderstanding prevailed in the family politics of the *Peshwa* with Balaji Bajirao, Sadashiv Bhau, Ramchandra Bawa and Mahadoba Purandaré as the principal actors. Bhau threatened to accept the *Peshwaship* at Kolhapur, which Shambhuji had offered him but ultimately good sense prevailed and Balaji Bajirao made up his affairs with Bhau. Although there is no evidence to connect Tara Bai directly with this affair, it is suspected that she had a hand in this intrigue.<sup>1</sup>

### 5. Tara Bai Confines Ramraja

All the while Tara Bai had been watching with resentment the proceedings of her opponents and cursing Ramraja for being a puppet in their hands. But helpless as she was, she did not openly disapprove what had been done at Poona and at Sangola. All her old allies had been crushed or won over by the *Peshwa*. So, she had to recruit a fresh following before she could execute another *coup*. Although a Bhonslé, Raghuji had fallen in line with the *Peshwa* and so was the case with Fateh Singh. But the main target of her rage was Ramraja, the man whom she had raised to the throne with great expectations. Like a wounded tigress, Tara Bai left Poona in the middle of October, 1750, and angrily wended her way to her stronghold at Satara, visiting the temple of Shambhu Mahadev on her way. She reached there on the 29th

<sup>1</sup> Sardesai: *Marathi Riyasat, Madhya Vibhag*, II, p. 254.

October and immediately thereafter began her move to thwart the *Peshwa*. She, in fact, had begun intriguing while at Poona and had written to Shaikh Mira, the guardian of the Satara fort, to store ample supplies and prepare for its defence.<sup>1</sup> On her arrival she compelled all officers and guards to swear allegiance and obedience to her personally. Some were won over by money and some by other inducements. She carried with her the two queens of Ramraja and some valuables from the palace below up into the fort and there entrenched herself for a final trial of strength with the *Peshwa*. Her strategy was to capture the person of Ramraja and then to challenge the *Peshwa* in the name of the *Chhatrapati*, the fountain-head of all political power. Ramraja, the unsuspecting victim, was already on his way to his doom at Satara.

Ramraja left Sangola early in November, 1750, and after paying a visit to Shambhu Mahadev reached his capital, Shahunagar on 17th November. He had now finally cast his lot on the side of the *Peshwa* and Sadashiv Bhau, during his stay with him, had fully tutored him to assert his independence and to control the activities of his grandmother who should no longer meddle with state affairs. But Ramraja had much weaker nerves than Bhau's and straight way walked into the snare laid for him by his wily grandmother. He had vainly thought that Tara Bai would be reconciled by and by, and had to pay a heavy penalty for this error of judgment.

He first sent messengers to her for reconciliation and implored her to come down from the fort to the town below but when success did not seem to come nearer through this indirect contact he himself went upto the fort to make a personal effort to soothe the inflamed feelings of his grandmother. In the very first meeting she reprimanded him for what he had done at Poona and at Sangola and asked him to disassociate himself completely from the *Peshwa*. She further advised him to act according to her advice and to rule the kingdom with the help of the *Pratinidhi* and her other partisans. Ramraja had already weighed in his mind the pros and cons of the matter and had come to the conclusion that it was safer to befriend the *Peshwa*. It was almost impossible to

<sup>1</sup> Rajwade, Vol. III, No. 71 to 73.

uproot the *Peshwas* who had held all the strings of policy and government for three generations and it was also not possible to run the administration without them. Tara Bai in her obstinacy was not prepared to admit this unpleasant reality. She fondly hoped to snatch power out of the hands of the usurpers if only Ramraja would stand by her and would wield it with as much credit at seventy-five as she had done in the time of her son.

Ramraja had no stomach for a fresh bid against the *Peshwa* and refused to accept her advice and returned to his palace down the foot of the hill. This attitude of Ramraja added fuel to the fire and she decided to punish him before she would come to a reckoning with the *Peshwa*. Next day, on the 22nd November, was the *Champa Shasti* day dedicated to the worship of the family deity of the Bhonslé clan. Tara Bai sent messengers inviting Ramraja for the worship. The officers of his personal staff, who had an inkling of the stormy meeting of a day before, had become suspicious and advised Ramraja not to risk a visit but the silly king quietly slipped out of his palace and joined his grandmother in the worship.<sup>1</sup> He probably had another stormy meeting and his persistency in his decision sealed his fate. When the ceremony was over and Ramraja came to the gate along with his wives he found the gate shut in his face and was curtly informed by the keepers that it was Tara Bai's order not to let them pass.<sup>2</sup>

A strong ruler would have promptly borne down this affront offered by persons who were after all his own servants and might even have ordered the arrest of Tara Bai; but Ramraja helplessly turned away from the gate along with his wives and surrendered himself and his family to the furies of a woman who was to offer him the most miserable treatment for years on end. He was strongly guarded by two of her staunch adherents, Naroo Kaka and Sambhaji Tatya, who kept a vigilant watch on him and did not allow him to communicate with the outside world.<sup>3</sup> His

<sup>1</sup> He rejected the advice of even his sister, Daryabai, who was opposed to his visit. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.184.)

<sup>2</sup> *Purandare Daftar*, Vol. I, No. 243; *Rajwade*, Vol. VI, No. 553; *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.119, 120, 125.

<sup>3</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.127.

followers stood aghast at a little distance from the fort and had to retrace their steps down the slope when threatened with bombardment from the fort walls.<sup>1</sup> The doors thus closed on poor Ramraja were opened again only in October, 1751, when Tara Bai came down to live in the town below. But Ramraja continued to be a close prisoner in the utmost misery till Tara Bai's death in 1761. It was *Peshwa* Madhayrao who restored him to his throne on March 23, 1763, but having fallen in public estimation on account of his doubtful descent he became a mere figurehead, a pensioner of the State.

<sup>1</sup> Chitnis; *Dhakte Ramraja Yanche Charitra*, p. 11.

## THE LAST STRUGGLE FOR POWER

## 1. Tara Bai Raises a Storm for the Peshwa

AS SOON as she had secured the person of Ramraja she began issuing commands in his name and took active steps to take the reins of administration into her own hands with the help of her forlorn hope, Dadoba Pratinidhi and his deputy, Yamaji Shivdev. The Pratinidhi and Yamaji's brother, Antaji, stayed with her at Satara fort while Yamaji himself and his son, Gamaji, busied themselves outside raising men and money from the adjoining districts.

The high-handed act of Tara Bai was resented by all and the startling news spread like a wild fire throughout the length and breadth of the country.<sup>1</sup> It reacted adversely on the relations of the Maratha State with the neighbouring powers and subordinate allies. The Nawab of Savnur, on learning of the rift between Tara Bai and the Peshwa, withheld the payment of tribute to the Marathas.<sup>2</sup>

The Peshwa found all his plans upset, but he kept his patience and instead of adopting a defiant attitude for which he had enough resources, he adopted the same tactics of submission which had won him his lost office in the time of Shahu in 1747. He wrote to his agent at Satara, Trimbak Sadashiv *alias* Nana Purandaré: "I have not the least desire to stand in opposition to the lady sovereign, our master and protector. You must solicit her pleasure and impress it on her how our enemies would take advantage, when evil reports reach the distant Delhi. You must also find out whether the confinement of the *Chhatrapati* is a mere show or harmful to him and how far the two are likely to collude against us. I should be informed about the persons in their confidence and their opponents. What is the attitude of Daryabai

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.105. Trimbak Girmaji from Savnur makes a reference to the reports received there about Tara Bai's activities.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.159.

in this affair?" To this<sup>1</sup> anxious enquiry the reply of Purandaré was "that Ramraja is being strictly guarded by Tara Bai's men. He sends me piteous appeals to get him released." This reply of Purandaré disturbed the calm of Balaji Bajirao *Peshwa* and his next message to Purandaré was a curious mixture of submission and threat in the same breath. "If she persists," wrote the *Peshwa* to Purandaré, "in keeping the king a close prisoner and conducts the administration herself, the whole Maratha *raj* suffers disgrace in public. How is it possible for Her Highness to supervise from her snug perch on the fort political operations ranging over a wide area from Delhi to Rameshwar. It is not impossible for me at once to relegate her to her former confinement, but I refrain from such a drastic measure, remembering that we are the *Chhatrapati's* servants through three generations. Any coercive steps by me will appear like a rebellion against the master. This I wish to avoid at any cost. I can easily put the family of the fort guards under confinement and harassment so as to punish them for their treachery. I can also besiege the fort and prevent any communication with outside. But I desist. You must in polite language persuade the lady to the right cause. Please assure the king of our extreme concern for his welfare. Tell him to submit to Her Highness's wishes for a time. Assure Her Highness also that whatever she does I shall always remain her most obedient servant. You must quietly manage to win over the king completely to our views. You must on no account seek favour either from the priests or the guards in the employ of Tara Bai."<sup>2</sup>

Tara Bai was not the woman to submit either to threats or to hostilities. Every effort made to get Ramraja released stiffened the old lady in her attitude. She had made adequate arrangements for the defence of the fort by recruiting some *Mavlé* fighters<sup>3</sup> and asked Manaji Angré to send some ammunitions which he, however, refused.<sup>4</sup> The guns of the fort sometimes bombed the town below.<sup>5</sup> The other persons, who had incurred her wrath along with Ramraja, were Daryabai Nimbalkar, Govindrao Chitnis and Nana Purandaré, the *Peshwa's* agent. She made an attempt to capture Nana

<sup>1</sup> Sardesai: *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. II, p. 294.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 294-95.

<sup>3</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.130, 131.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.66.    <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.146.

Purandaré and Govindrao but she did not succeed.<sup>1</sup> This made Ramraja anxious for the safety of his sister and so he advised her to leave Satara forthwith. She, therefore, left for Pangaon in January, 1751.<sup>2</sup> The fort could be taken only after a thorough bombardment. Balaji Bajirao no doubt had the means to do it but he purposely refrained from it, knowing full well the delicacy of his situation. Tara Bai had already created a public impression that the *Peshwa* had usurped the *Chhatrapati's* *raj*. Despite the best of intentions, bombardment of the fort, when the *Chhatrapati* was in it, would have gone against the *Peshwa* in the eyes of the public at large. Moreover, Balaji Bajirao *Peshwa* had pressing business on hand in the Karnatak and could ill afford to embroil himself in two major conflicts simultaneously. He, therefore, left for Karnatak on January 31, 1751, leaving the affairs of Satara to drift as they might and waited patiently to see the political sky clear itself with the passage of time.<sup>3</sup> Of course, Balaji sent instructions to Nana Purandaré to take into his possession immediately all the valuables of Ramraja, to list them and to deposit them carefully in the fort of Purandar lest he might be charged with depriving the *Chhatrapati* of any of his belongings.<sup>4</sup>

While the *Peshwa* had his hands full in the Karnatak, Tara Bai moved heaven and earth to undermine the *Peshwa's* position. The *Peshwa's* agent, Trimbak Sadashiv *alias* Nana Purandaré, kept his master fully informed of the situation as it developed at Satara during the absence of the *Peshwa* in the Karnatak, and in an admirable despatch also made certain suggestions for solving the deadlock. He *inter alia* suggested that either the *Peshwa* should use force against Tara Bai so as to reduce her to submission, or leave her alone and conduct the administration as best as possible or bring in Shambhuji from Kolhapur as a counterblast to the power of both Tara Bai and Ramraja.<sup>5</sup> Mahadoba Purandaré also

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6,129.

<sup>2</sup> According to *Peshwa Daftar*, 26,153, she was at Barsi in January, 1751. Barsi is only 6 miles from Pangaon.

<sup>3</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 28,72, is dated February 8, 1751. Till then there was no compromise between the *Peshwa* and Tara Bai.

<sup>4</sup> *Purandare Daftar*, Vol. I, Nos. 321, 322, 323, 326 and 362.

<sup>5</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6,147.



suggested that the old lady be taken into custody and put into confinement, as during the time of Shahu, and the *Chhatrapati* be restored to his position. When the *Peshwa* declined to take such a step he became estranged from him.<sup>1</sup> Govindrao Chitnis was, however, against this course and the *Peshwa* entertained for some time a suspicion that he might be a partisan of Tara Bai,<sup>2</sup> but this suspicion did not last for long. Govindrao soon after assured the *Peshwa* of his loyalty for him.<sup>3</sup> Ramraja's plight was most miserable all the while. Completely fed up with politics he sent message to the *Peshwa* that he was prepared to surrender all authority to him in return for a pension.<sup>4</sup> How anxious the *Peshwa* was to secure the good graces of the *Chhatrapati* is to be seen from a letter written by Sadashiv Bhau to Nana Purandaré.<sup>5</sup>

Tara Bai first tried repeatedly to make Ramraja look her way but when she found him obdurate her hatred towards him became fierce and she became "so violent that in angry moments she began to use cruel and filthy language towards him. She at every moment declared that the *Rajah* was no son of her son Shivaji and that he was an impostor." Upon this Burhanji Mohité, the father-in-law of Ramraja, became furious and threatened to go to extremities if she did not release and give power to Ramraja.<sup>6</sup> This open repudiation of Ramraja by Tara Bai also led to some unpleasant complications. Interested parties took advantage of it and set up an impostor to impersonate Ramraja. When the false *Rajah* was put under duress he divulged his name as Santaji, son of Sambhaji Ahirrao and said that he was induced to impersonate the *Rajah* by Yashwantrao Prabhu.<sup>7</sup> Incidents such as these compelled the *Peshwa* to post Balwantrao Mahendalé, Gopalrao Patwardhan and Baburao Phadnis with a strong force to keep order at Satara. Nana Purandaré wrote to the *Peshwa* that he was dealing firmly with the armed forces of Tara Bai<sup>8</sup> which often came in clash with his.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Purandare Daftar*, Vol. I, Nos. 267, 275, 345, 354; *Kavya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi*, No. 103.

<sup>2</sup> *Rajwade*, Vol. VII, No. 243.

*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.158.

<sup>3</sup> Khare: *Inchal Karanji Sansthacha Itihas*, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> *Kavya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi*, No. 71.

<sup>5</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.152.

<sup>6</sup> *Purandare Rojnishi*, p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.141. <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.135.

Antaji Shivdev's parties were constantly moving about and creating disturbances in the city.<sup>1</sup>

Having failed to win over Ramraja, she made an all-out effort to draw to her side all those who were disaffected towards the *Peshwa*.<sup>2</sup> Dadoba Pratinidhi and his deputy, Yamaji Shivdev, with his brother and son were already on her side. Chimnaji Narayan *Sachiv* and Babuji Naik were her partisans for a long time and their hatred for the *Peshwa* had doubled on account of the loss suffered by them at Sangola. With their help Tara Bai tried to win over other prominent leaders to her cause which she now pretended was the cause of the *Chhatrapati* of the Maratha nation against the usurpation of the upstart *Kokanasth Peshwas*. She revived her intrigues with Sindhia and Holkar and tried to widen the differences which had sprung up between them with a view to alienating one or both of them from the *Peshwa*.<sup>3</sup> But these two loyal adherents of the *Peshwa's* house, though discontented on account of certain reasons, prudently kept away. She also appealed to the Maratha blood of Raghuji,<sup>4</sup> and Fateh Singh Bhonslé<sup>5</sup> to save the state from Brahman domination but none of them listened to her as Balaji Bajirao *Peshwa* had already taken them into his confidence and they were wholeheartedly supporting his policy. Disappointed from their side she revived her old treasonable tactics of making friends with the Nizam to overawe her adversaries at home. Tara Bai made an offer to Ramdas Pant *alias* Rajah Raghunath Das, the Diwan of Salabat Jang, that if he succeeded in ousting the *Peshwa* from power the vacant office would be given

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.157. Papers Nos. 139, 140, 141 and 151 of the New Series of *Peshwa Daftar* edited by Dr. P.M. Joshi (Government Central Press, Bombay, 1957) throw additional light on her hectic activities during this period.

<sup>2</sup> What Tara Bai and her partisans thought about the *Peshwa* is given in Rajwade, Vol. VI, No. 278. The "Bawa" mentioned in the letter is Mahadoba Purandare.

<sup>3</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.107.

<sup>4</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.148, 151. She was, however, able to obtain the support of Ranoji Bhonsle, a member of the Nagpur family. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26. 66.)

<sup>5</sup> Nana Purandare admirably summed up Fateh Singh Bhonsle's character and said that he was a plain, blunt man not fond of intrigue. He was always disposed to side with the *Peshwa* and accept his policy. He recommended to the *Peshwa* that this man should be kept in an amiable frame of mind. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.108.)

to him or to any of his relations named by him.<sup>1</sup>

Tara Bai also worked on the wounded feelings of Shambhuji of Kolhapur. He had been nursing a grudge against the *Peshwa* who, he thought, had failed to support him for the Satara throne. Shambhuji was always ready to take advantage of any opportunity that could help him in gaining the Satara *gaddi*. He, with his troops, had been hovering round the boundaries of the Satara State ever since the time when Shahu was not even dead.<sup>2</sup> The power of the *Peshwa* had stopped him from making a direct attack. When Tara Bai was at daggers drawn with both the *Peshwa* and Ramraja she even thought of supporting Shambhuji's candidature for the Satara throne and consequently sent him messages to come to Satara.<sup>3</sup> Shambhuji thought of taking advantage of this opportunity in the hope that Tara Bai would agree to do away with Ramraja and would support him for the Satara throne. He, therefore, moved towards Satara at the head of a force.<sup>4</sup> Shambhuji's shrewd wife, Jijabai, understood Tara Bai much better than her husband and warned him not to trust his step-mother; but Satara had so much charm for Shambhuji that he refused to listen to Jijabai's<sup>5</sup> fears and even thought of getting Ramraja assassinated.<sup>6</sup> Jijabai, however, ultimately succeeded in persuading Shambhuji to give up his plan of going to Satara by telling him

<sup>1</sup> *Kavya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi*, No. 99. In this letter written by *Peshwa* Balaji Bajirao to Holkar the former makes a reference to this intrigue. The under-current of intrigues came to the knowledge of the *Peshwa* because the correspondence by chance fell into the hands of Govindrao Chitnis, a partisan of the *Peshwa*.

The *Peshwa* also made a reference to this intrigue in 1758 (*Itihas Sangraha Peshwa Daftaratil Mahlti*, No. 8). *Peshwa Daftar*, 25.90, 101, also makes a reference to the intrigues of Tara Bai with the Nizam. This probably centred round Ramdas Pant. No. 207 of Rajwade's Vol. VI is also interesting in this respect.

<sup>2</sup> He had advanced as far as Wadgaon. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.34, 35.)

<sup>3</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.190, 203.

<sup>4</sup> Anandrao Girdhar reported to the *Peshwa* the plans of Shambhuji to put down the *Peshwa* (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.150, 188). Also see *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.136, 138, 149.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.203. Udaji's activities are reported in No. 151 of *Peshwa Daftar I* (New Series, edited by Dr. P. M. Joshi). The activities of other Kolhapur *sardars* are reported in No. 139.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.153, 200 and 26.101, 160.

plainly that the crafty old hag would imprison him also as she had imprisoned Ramraja and would then rule both Satara and Kolhapur.<sup>1</sup> Udaji, the life-long ally of Shambhuji, and a former partisan of Tara Bai herself, wanted to take advantage of this opportunity and made an offer of services to Tara Bai.<sup>2</sup>

The *Peshwa*, however, was not much worried from Shambhuji's side, for he knew his limitations and power; but to be on the safe side he had posted on the banks of the Warna, in the rainy season of 1750, two trusted *Sardars* of Inchalkaranji, Hari Ram and Manaji Paygudé, with a force of three thousand to keep a watch on the movements of Shambhuji.<sup>3</sup> They successfully did their job and reported Shambhuji's activities to the *Peshwa* regularly. This whirlwind of intrigue raised by Tara Bai created enough trouble for the *Peshwa* but through superior tact and patience he came out of the ordeal unscathed. Yamaji Shivdev was the cleverest and the most restless of the conspirators. Balaji Bajirao got him arrested and confined him in the fort of Kavnai (near Igatpuri). Tara Bai's activities now remained confined only to the neighbourhood of Satara.

## 2. *The Hostile Activities of Damaji Gaikwar*

Tara Bai's intrigue was, however, more successful in another quarter. Umabai Dabhadé, the wife of the first Dabhadé *Senapati*, Khanderao, had been a partisan of Tara Bai for long but this friendship had grown more intimate since the days of the Poona conference and the Sangola *coup* when Umabai had been forced to cede half of Gujrat to the *Peshwa*. These two ambitious and implacable women, therefore, made common cause and hatched plans in concert to overthrow the *Peshwa's* ascendancy with the help of Damaji Gaikwar, the agent of the Dabhadés. The trio was on the lookout for an opportunity to take revenge. Such an opportunity presented itself when both the *Peshwa* and his soldier

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.139.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.157. It seems that he was shortly after won over by the *Peshwa* because he was in the *Peshwa's* camp at Nizam-Konda at the end of March, 1751.

<sup>3</sup> Khare: *Inchalkaranji Sanshtacha Itihas*, p. 69; *Kavya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi*, No. 71; *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.163.

cousin, Sadashiv Bhau, were absent in the Karnatak with the main army, and Tara Bai had the person of the *Chhatrapati* under her control.

On Tara Bai's instigation, Damaji left Gujrat with a force of about fifteen thousand and marched into Khandesh where he was first challenged by Hari Damodar Navelkar, an officer of the *Peshwa* posted at Baglan with not too big a force.<sup>1</sup> When the news of Damaji's sudden appearance in Khandesh and Baglan reached Poona, Balwantrao Mahendalé, Bapuji Bhimrao and Mahipatrao Kavade hurriedly advanced northwards to succour the hard-pressed troops of the *Peshwa* in that region and made a junction with them on the southern bank of the Tapti. Damaji was still on the other side of the river. For a time the two armies faced each other but ultimately Damaji crossed the river and attacked the opposing force at Bahadurpura.<sup>2</sup> The seasoned Gujrat troops inflicted a crushing defeat upon the *Peshwa's* commanders and looted their camp.

Flushed with this first victory, the Gaikwar took the road to Poona and systematically devastated the country on his way.<sup>3</sup> When he reached Talegaon, his principals, Yashwantrao Dabhadé and Umabai, joined him.<sup>4</sup> On March 10, 1751, the party reached Nimbagaon Davdi, not very far from Poona. A panic seized the city and people ran helter-skelter for safety. The *Peshwa's* grandmother, Radhabai, and mother, Kashibai, took shelter in the fort of Singhgarh and some valuable property was also removed to that fort. Trimbakrao Pethé made preparations to offer opposition,

<sup>1</sup> He sent a detailed report to the *Peshwa* about his achievements against Damaji Gaikwar (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.151). He was an ancestor of Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi.

<sup>2</sup> About 10 miles from Amalner. A graphic account of the encounter is given in *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.161.

<sup>3</sup> Hari Damodar Navelkar wrote about this devastation to the *Peshwa* and made great efforts to resettle the province of Khandesh. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.152.) He seems to have been a very active officer and traced the route followed by Damaji Gaikwar (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.174). Graphic details of the devastation are also given in an incomplete letter by an unknown correspondent. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 6.165.) Mahipatrao Kavde pursued Damaji on the way (*Peshwa Daftar*, 6.144). Bapuji Bajirao Retrekar also gives details of the movements of Damaji (*Peshwa Daftar*, 6.154, 162).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.175. The ominous movements and preparations of the Dabhades have been referred to in *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.140, 143.

but in the absence of a well-equipped force not much could be expected from him. Therefore, some well-wishers of the *Peshwa*, with Pilaji Jadhav at their head, decided to wait upon Damaji with a view to dissuading him from making an assault on the helpless city. Jagjiwan Dhonddeo also saw him with a letter from the *Peshwa's* grandmother, Radhabai.<sup>1</sup> Damaji raved for some time and made some insulting remarks about the *Peshwa's* ladies, but ultimately turned away from the city.

Pilaji Jadhav had advised him not to march in the direction of Satara and had offered to mediate in his differences with the *Peshwa* but Gaikwar was obdurate. "I have," said Damaji, "given my sacred word to Tara Bai which I cannot violate; Gamaji, the *Mutalik*, has come to me with Tara Bai's letter."<sup>2</sup> And he forthwith left for Satara where Tara Bai had ordered Shaikh Mira to join him with his contingent of the newly recruited *Mavlé* soldiers.<sup>3</sup>

Satara became as panicky as Poona had been only a few days ago. Damaji pitched his camp at Varye and Mhasve on the river Venya.<sup>4</sup> Nana Purandaré went out of the city with whatever forces he had, to stem the tide of Damaji's onslaught and when he reached Jejuri he was joined by a force sent from Poona<sup>5</sup> and by the contingents of many other *sardars* loyal to the *Peshwa*.<sup>6</sup> This gave Nana Purandaré some confidence and he made a rash attack on Damaji's forces from his camp at Vaduth but had to fall back on Limb completely defeated.<sup>7</sup> The defeat was, however, soon revenged when the *Peshwa's* forces led by Balwantrao Mahendalé,<sup>8</sup> Trimbakrao Pethé and other valiant commanders inflicted a crushing defeat on Damaji on March 19, 1751, and

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.163. <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.163.

<sup>3</sup> Rajwade, Vol. III, No. 67, dated March 9, 1751; also *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.16. The preparations of Tara Bai were fully reported to the *Peshwa* by Trimbakrao Pethé who also said that Tara Bai contributed about seven thousand men. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 6.156, 174.)

<sup>4</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.168.

<sup>5</sup> Trimbak Vishwanath Pethé informed the *Peshwa* about the despatch of this force. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.178.)

<sup>6</sup> One of them was Hari Ram who was instructed by the *Peshwa* to join Nana Purandaré at Satara. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.170.)

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.178, makes a reference to it but describes the action as indecisive.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.164.

captured much booty.<sup>1</sup> This battle fought on the banks of the Venya broke Damaji's back and he along with his principal, Dabhadés, retired for safety to Mahar-dara valley, to the west of the town of Satara. There he tried to rally his forces for a final effort with whatever little help Tara Bai could give. Dabhadé, the official *Senapati* of the Maratha *raj*, was more of a liability than an asset to Damaji. With his depleted forces Damaji tried his luck twice over with the *Peshwa's* army which had now moved on to the Venya to encounter the enemy. The first of these actions fought on March 21 was indecisive, but in the last which took place on the 30th on the plain of Pawai, Damaji again sustained a defeat and his two sons and son-in-law had to seek shelter with Tara Bai in the fort of Satara.

When the news of the battle of Venya reached the *Peshwa*, then stationed at Nizam-Konda near Panagal and not far from the confluence of the Krishna and the Tungbhadra, on March 29, it exceeded his expectations and he praised the valour of his brave officers in very high terms.<sup>2</sup> By making a grand demonstration of his power he made the whole region from Haidarabad to Trichinopoly submit to Maratha domination and then leaving Sadashiv Bhua to complete his unfinished work he returned to Satara by the shortest route. In fact both the Nizam and his lieutenant, Janoji Nimbalkar, had promised Balaji Bajirao their help against Damaji and Tara Bai.<sup>3</sup> Ragonath Das, the *Diwan* of Salabat Jang, with whom Tara Bai had been carrying on some intrigue against the *Peshwa*, had also been won over to his side. Janoji Nimbalkar wrote to the *Peshwa* from the Nizam's court that *Rajah* Raghunath Das and the Nizam had ordered their officers to go to the help of the *Peshwa*. If they did not succeed then Raghunath Das himself

<sup>1</sup> The victory was jubilantly reported to the *Peshwa* by Trimbak Vishwanath from Poona. (*Ibid.*, 26.165; also 6.171.) Banaji Madhav also reported this victory from Aurangabad (*Ibid.*, 26.167), and so also Narayan Vyankatrao Ghorpade, *Ibid.*, 6.175.

<sup>2</sup> Rajwade, Vol. VI, No. 220; *Kavya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi*, No. 75.

<sup>3</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.181, 182, 183, 184, 187 and 26.179. The Nizam's offer seems to have been hypocritical as is evident from Banaji Madhavrao's letter. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.182.) None came from that quarter and merely contented themselves by expressing a desire to go and sending congratulations on the victory.

intended to march with his French battalions against Damaji and Tara Bai.<sup>1</sup>

On his arrival there on April 24, 1751, the *Peshwa* found Damaji Gaikwar completely besieged in the neighbourhood of Satara by the force of his captains who were going to starve him out by cutting off all supplies that could reach him from Tara Bai or any other outside agency.<sup>2</sup> What was now left for him to do was simply to dictate his terms to Damaji Gaikwar and his principal, *Senapati* Dabhadé.

Within a day or two of the launching of a new offensive by the troops of the *Peshwa*, Damaji found his position untenable and sued for terms. A personal meeting having been necessary for the settlement of the terms, Damaji was brought under safe conduct to the camp of the *Peshwa* by Satvoji Jadhav, Nana Purandaré and Ramchandra Bawa. While going back after the meeting he was asked to shift his camp to the vicinity of the *Peshwa's* own camp on the southern bank of the river Venya. On his having done so the *Peshwa* compelled him to agree to the cession of the half of the province of Gujrat to him. Damaji, thereupon, made the objection that he was only the deputy of the Dabhadé's and so the competent person to agree to the point was Umabai and not he. He, thereupon, saw Umabai and explained to her the *Peshwa's* demand and also resigned his post as the agent of the Dabhadé's by delivering the seal and insignia of his office.

The *Peshwa* became impatient on the prolongation of these negotiations and attacked Damaji's camp on April 30 when he was off his guard on account of the solemn assurances he had received from the *Peshwa* against treachery. He was actually taking his bath when the assailants burst in and in great disgust he forbade his men to offer any resistance. His camp was consequently looted at leisure by the *Peshwa's* troops and his two brothers, Khanderao and Jai Singh, were carried as prisoners of war to the *Peshwa* by Vithal Shivdev. Damaji, thereupon, walked alone to the *Peshwa's* tent and offered himself for arrest, vehemently protesting against

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.180. <sup>2</sup> Rajwade, Vol. III, No. 381.



the flagrant breach of a sacred oath.<sup>1</sup> The Dabhadés were also rounded up along with Umabai. The Dabhadés and the Gaikwars were confined in separate camps under heavy guards and were cut off from all communication. They were then asked to sign their consent for the cession of half of Gujrat to the *Peshwa*. On their having done so, they were transferred to Poona on May 11, 1751, to be kept there under guard in the house of Avji Kavde and Babuji Naik<sup>2</sup> till they handed over actual possession of the Gujrat districts demanded by the *Peshwa*.<sup>3</sup> The Dabhadés and the Gaikwars nevertheless kept up their intrigues with Tara Bai even from their confinement at Poona. But when news leaked out the rigours of their confinement were stiffened from 19th July onwards, and on November 14, 1751, they were removed to the fort of Lohgarh along with Ramchandra Baswant, a helpmate of Damaji.<sup>4</sup> Two of Damaji's sons, Fateh Singh and Manaji, continued to live with Tara Bai at the fort of Satara.

### 3. *Reconciliation with the Peshwa*

The final discomfiture of Damaji Gaikwar greatly distressed Tara Bai as it broke the spearhead of her resistance. But, the obstinate old lady still persisted in her opposition<sup>5</sup> to Balaji Bajirao. She thought perhaps that for fear of public opinion the *Peshwa* could not keep her under confinement as Shambhuji and Shahu had done; of course, Ramraja could do it but she had already brought him down considerably in public estimation by her open denunciation of him and, moreover, had him well under her control. Any attempt made by the *Peshwa* for the release of Ramraja or even to get news of his welfare gave unpardonable offence to Tara Bai. She got the *Havildar* of Satara, Anandrao Jadhav, and some other men beheaded on July 16, 1751, on the charge that they had tried

<sup>1</sup> *Kavya Itihas Sangraha Patren Yadi*, No. 99. In this letter the *Peshwa* offers his own explanation about the episode.

<sup>2</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.195. <sup>3</sup> Rajwade, Vol III, No. 385.

<sup>4</sup> He was later won over by the *Peshwa* and gave an undertaking that he would not enter into any intrigues with either Tara Bai or the Gaikwar. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 6.222.)

<sup>5</sup> Her stiff and haughty attitude is clearly to be seen in *Itihas Sangraha Aitihasik Tippanen*, 1.35, dated May 3, 1751.

to get news of Ramraja.<sup>1</sup> The fort was well provisioned and could hope to hold out for long. Her supporters—Puranik, Man Singh *alias* Babaji Jadhav and Moro Shivdev Thité—kept the keepers of the fort loyal to Tara Bai. Thus, there seemed no chance of a possible compromise.

The deadlock had lasted for over six months and Balaji was most anxious to end it as it had placed him in a very awkward position both at home and abroad. He was expecting trouble from the Nizam and wanted to make the home-front safe before he went out to face the enemy. He, therefore, made another effort to reconcile Tara Bai and implored her again and again to trust him and release Ramraja. It was of no avail and therefore the *Peshwa* left for Poona on May 22, 1751, leaving behind a strong force of five or six thousand near the forts of Chandan and Wandan under the command of Dadopant Vagh.<sup>2</sup>

During the last few months Tara Bai had enough taste of the *Peshwa's* power and had also realised that there was not much enthusiasm among the people for her cause. Her hue and cry for saving the *Chhatrapati's* *raj* from usurpation by the Brahman *Peshwa* had found no response even from such Maratha *Sardars* as Raghuji and Fateh Singh Bhonslé. Either they did not believe in the cry raised by Tara Bai or they found themselves unequal to the task of openly challenging the *Peshwa*. Her last hope having been shattered with the defeat of Damaji Gaikwar she stood face to face with the hard reality and the best course open to her was to patch up at least a working compromise with the *Peshwa*. But she was a hard bargainer.

The agent of the *Peshwa* wrote to him that Tara Bai was in a mood to effect a reconciliation if at least the management of Satara affairs is given over to her.<sup>3</sup> The cool-headed Balaji Bajirao had no desire to give unnecessary umbrage to this obstinate lady of moods and he had all along adopted an attitude of at least outward submission both towards Tara Bai and the *Chhatrapati*. There

<sup>1</sup> Rajwade, Vol. VI, No. 500; Chitnis: *Dhakte Ramraje Yanche Charitra*.

<sup>2</sup> Probably this force was called from Poona. Trimbakrao Vishwanath refers to it in his letter from Poona. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 6.186.) In another letter he mentions the despatch of some ammunitions. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 6.188.)

<sup>3</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.158.

were also some people like Burhanji Mohité who were earnestly striving for a settlement. Tara Bai, therefore, sent her written conditions to the *Peshwa* at Poona through Chinto Anant and Moro Shivdev Thité and on their acceptance agreed to leave the administration in the hands of the *Peshwa*. The *Peshwa* first demanded the release of Ramraja but to this Tara Bai was not prepared to agree on any account because she wanted to use Ramraja as a pawn in her political game. When the *Peshwa* found her adamant, he did not press for it.

The compromise<sup>1</sup> having been signed, Balaji Bajirao sent Mahadji Nimbalkar, Dhondo Govind and Dinkar Mahadev to fetch Tara Bai and Ramraja down from the fort. She, consequently, came down to the town below in October, 1751, and chose the mansion of Fateh Singh Bhonslé for her residence. She even paid a visit to Poona along with Ramraja. In order to flatter her vanity the *Peshwa* accorded her a right royal reception. He, however, did not succeed in inducing her to release Ramraja.

Having obtained her consent to concentrate all power in his hands, the *Peshwa* sent Tara Bai and Ramraja back to Satara and this time appointed a very clever and tactful agent to look after their affairs, Trimbakrao Pethé, a relation of his.<sup>2</sup> With a show of outward submission he kept the old dame in perfect good humour but slowly and quietly either dismissed or won over almost all her partisans. Nana Purandaré and Govindrao had already retired on account of personal reasons. He diplomatically liquidated Man Singh Jadhav who had acted as the prime-mover in all the activities of Tara Bai against the *Peshwa*. Gifts of land and money worked havoc on the shallow loyalty of Chinto Anant and Moro Shivdev Thité. But even the clever Pethé failed to get Ramraja released.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, Tara Bai was gradually rendered impotent for any further mischief. Henceforth she never openly challenged the authority of the *Peshwa*, but, on the other hand, gave occasional proofs of her friendly attitude towards him. When the Nizam marched towards

<sup>1</sup> The document of compromise is in the form of demand and acceptance and is to be found in Rajwade, Vol. VI, No. 276.

<sup>2</sup> He was a brother of Chimnaji Appa's wife, Rakhmabai.

<sup>3</sup> Burhanji Mohite made a reference to the bad relations existing between Tara Bai and Ramraja. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 6.202.)

Poona about November, 1751, she ordered Dadoba *Pratinidhi* and her other partisans to go to the help of the *Peshwa*. The *Peshwa*, however, declined the help saying that her blessings alone would be enough to enable him to overcome the enemy of the nation.<sup>1</sup> The compromise thus entered into between the two lasted till their deaths but there were frequent breaches of the conditions from time to time as each understood the other's game. Tara Bai insisted upon its being solemnly confirmed by Balaji Bajirao before the deity of Jejuri. It was done on September 14, 1752, and it was there that Tara Bai with an air of solemnity confessed before the deity that "this *Rajah* (Ramraja) is false. Everyone knows this. But he should not be killed. He should be treated as an illegitimate son like Fateh Singh Bawa or Yesaji Kusaji. He should be supplied with the requirements of life; if necessary, he should be kept confined but not killed."<sup>2</sup> She also suggested that Ramraja should be removed and Shambhuji of Kolhapur be placed on the throne of Satara.

#### 4. *Her Last Days*

Tara Bai was no doubt stopped from taking an active part in framing the policy of the nation but politics and diplomacy had become the very diet of her being. She, therefore, continued to take part in petty politics<sup>3</sup> but started no fresh conflagration for the Maratha State as she had done in the past. She kept up a regular court in the mansion of Fateh Singh Bhonslé in the town of Shahunagar to which she had shifted from the fort and all important people, including Balaji Bajirao *Peshwa*, paid their court to her there. She pretended to be the real *Chhatrapati* and occasionally made grants,<sup>4</sup> gave offices<sup>5</sup> and kept up a show of being superior in authority to

<sup>1</sup> Rajwade, Vol. VI, No. 235. The help was declined, first, because the *Pratinidhi* had no troops, and secondly, because he being an old opponent of the *Peshwa* might join the Nizam at a moment inconvenient to the *Peshwa*.

<sup>2</sup> Rajwade, Vol. VI, No. 257; Mawji and Parasnis: *Treaties and Engagements*, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> A large number of papers in *Peshwa Daftar*, Vols. 6 and 26, and in others provide evidence of it.

<sup>4</sup> This grant was made by Tara Bai on June 23, 1758, to Sadashiv Dixit Thakar in recognition of his services rendered in the past. (Rajwade, Vol. XXI, No. 113.)

<sup>5</sup> Tara Bai gave the office of Majumdar to Dhondo Mahadev *senakarte*. June, 1758. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 31.144.)

the *Peshwa* by encouraging and praising him on his victories. She congratulated Balaji Bajirao in very warm terms when he scored a victory over the Nizam in 1751-52. The *Peshwa* also tried to keep her in good humour by pretending to consult her about the affairs of the State and by leaving her free in her own limited sphere. But, Tara Bai gradually got fed up with both the *Pratinidhi* and his deputy, Yamaji Shivdev. She ordered the *Deshmukh* of Salim to chastise Yamaji, who, she was now thoroughly convinced, had been an undesirable and quarrelsome person.<sup>1</sup> She also tried to remove the inactive *Pratinidhi*, Jagjiwan Parashuram, from his post and wanted to give the same to Babuji Naik. This led to an open clash between the *Pratinidhi* and Babuji Naik in which the latter was worsted. He, thereupon, retired to his home at Baramati, but continued his activities both against Balaji Bajirao and Dadoba *Pratinidhi*<sup>2</sup> with the backing of Tara Bai.<sup>3</sup> Dadoba *Pratinidhi*, who had occasional skirmishes with Babuji Naik, kept the *Peshwa* fully informed about the activities of the Naik and Tara Bai.<sup>4</sup> Both the *Pratinidhi* and Yamaji Shivdev later became partisans of the *Peshwa*.<sup>5</sup> She kept up to the last secret political relations with all the leading Maratha *Sardars* such as Raghuji Bhonslé and his successors,<sup>6</sup> Fateh Singh Bhonslé, the Angré brothers, the Gaikwars and the Dabhadés.

Her relations with her step-son, Shambhuji, had improved much since the days of her open breach with the *Peshwa*. She always kept him under the vain delusion that he might be called to Satara at any time, and the dull-witted Shambhuji believed it seriously and flattered her by sending her conventional greetings on ceremonial occasions and by making anxious enquiries now and then about her health.<sup>7</sup> When his wife, Jijabai, tried to dissuade him from carrying on any more intrigues with Tara Bai and suggested that he should

<sup>1</sup> Rajwade, Vol. XVII, No. 41; *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.205. This restless spirit was never steadfast in his loyalty and had been carrying on negotiations to join the *Peshwa's* ranks (*Peshwa Daftar*, 6.133, 134).

<sup>2</sup> Babuji Naik was helped by Manaji Jadhav, another confederate of Tara Bai. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.200.)

<sup>3</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.205 and 6.204, 213, 215, 220, 221.

<sup>4</sup> *Altihasik Patren*, No. 443.

<sup>5</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.196, 211.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.207, 209.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.211, 213.

befriend the *Peshwa* instead, Shambhuji felt cross with her and told her that it was the opposition of the *Peshwa* that had belied all his hopes of getting the *Satara gaddi*.<sup>1</sup> The poor man did not know that Tara Bai was destined to outlive him by a year and was to take an active part in the succession issue of his own *gaddi* of Kolhapur.

Shambhuji died without any issue on December 18, 1760. In the interest of unity, the *Peshwa* had always been in favour of amalgamating the two branches of Kolhapur and Satara and had once tried to take Shambhuji to Satara but his plan had fallen through on account of the opposition of Shahu. On the death of Shambhuji, with whom he had maintained cordial relations throughout, Balaji Bajirao again thought of uniting the two States and sent troops under Hari Ram and Visaji Narayan to take possession of the Kolhapur *raj*. The move was, however, vehemently opposed by Shambhuji's adroit wife, Jijabai. "It is highly to be regretted," wrote Jijabai to the *Peshwa* on January 20, 1760, "that the *Pradhanpant* instead of offering condolences on the death of my revered husband, has sent troops under Hari Ram and Visaji Narayan to confiscate the State. Our friendship of long standing has thus been well rewarded. But you must explain to Raghunathrao that we four *Ranis* of the late *Maharajah* are alive, one of whom Kusabai, has advanced in pregnancy some months. The *Peshwa* has broken his solemnly given word...."<sup>2</sup>

Jijabai was not less intriguing than Tara Bai and wanted to raise up a Ramraja for Kolhapur also; she assiduously circulated the story of the pregnancy of Kusabai and followed it up by the news of a son being born to her on May 25, 1761.<sup>3</sup> She wrote about it both to Balaji Bajirao and to his wife, Gopikabai.<sup>4</sup> That the whole thing was a concoction was later admitted by herself before *Peshwa* Madhavrao after both Balaji Bajirao and Tara Bai were dead. For the time being, Balaji Bajirao's plans were upset and he could not take any decisive action in the Kolhapur affair on account of his entanglements in the North. Thereafter, came the crushing defeat of Panipat from which Balaji Bajirao could never recover and died leaving the Kolhapur issue unsolved.

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.203.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.251, 252.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.255.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.256, 257.

The unfinished task was, therefore, entrusted for settlement to Tara Bai in consultation with Nana Purandare who went to Satara for this purpose. So far as the winding up of the Kolhapur State was concerned, Tara Bai's feelings were much the same as Jijabai's and it seems probable that she might have encouraged Jijabai in her opposition to the *Peshwa*. Thereupon, Jijabai had adopted the same tactics which Tara Bai had done in pushing the candidature of Ramraja. But there was a difference of opinion between Tara Bai and Jijabai so far as the fixing of the person, who was to succeed to the Kolhapur *raj*, was concerned. Tara Bai, being herself a pastmaster in such intrigues, was probably not prepared to accept the story of the pregnancy and subsequent birth of a son to Kusabai. Both tried to push the claims of their respective favourites. Tara Bai favoured the adoption of a son of Shahji while Jijabai said that she had already made a promise to Maloji Bhonsle, who had performed the last rites of her husband, to adopt his son.<sup>1</sup> Tara Bai died before a decision was made and when the matter was taken to the busy *Peshwa*, Madhavrao I, he decided to keep his hands off the complicated business and allowed Jijabai to adopt whomever she liked.

Thus, till her death Tara Bai remained an important personality to be reckoned with in the politics of Maharashtra. She kept herself well informed,<sup>2</sup> and though her advice was not followed, she was occasionally consulted on all important matters of State. Her presence kept the *Peshwa* alert, for no false step was likely to miss her notice.<sup>3</sup> On the whole, during the last years of her life there was working cordiality between the *Peshwa* and

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.258.

<sup>2</sup> During the last half of 1752 she got regular reports of Maratha activities in the Karnatak and in the Northern Provinces. In *Peshwa Daftar*, 28.82, Janoji Ghatgey informs her about the death of Chanda Sahib and Ghazi-ud-din's advance to the south with Sindhia and Holkar. The news of Chanda Sahib's death was also conveyed to her by Murarrao Ghorpade in No. 85 of the same volume. That Murarrao was her partisan is evident from No. 140 of *Peshwa Daftar I* (New Series). In No. 141 is reported to Tara Bai the arrival of Ghazi-ud-din Khan in the Deccan.

<sup>3</sup> The *Peshwa* sometimes felt irritated at her interference and taunted her on her activities in the past. (*Itihas Sangraha Peshwa Daftaratil Mahiti*, No. 8.) Tara Bai also kept some *sardars* flattered so that the *Peshwa* might feel that she was not without support. (*Peshwa Daftar*, 26.222.)

Tara Bai.<sup>1</sup> Not long before his death, Balaji Bajirao was assured by Vithal Bayaji, on behalf of Tara Bai, that she had full confidence in him.<sup>2</sup> In the face of this assurance and two other published papers of the *Peshwa Daftar* one feels rather sceptical in accepting the suggestion of Grant Duff<sup>3</sup> and Vasudev Vaman Khare<sup>4</sup> that she died satisfied to see the discomfiture of the *Peshwa* at Panipat. The two papers show that a fair amount of cordiality existed between these two former rivals. Only a year after the happy tidings of Udgir it was Balaji Bajirao's unhappy duty to convey to Tara Bai the woeful tale of the national disaster at Panipat<sup>5</sup> and before he was able to repair to Satara in person there came to him a comforting present of three hundred excellent mangoes and two kinds of jams specially prepared for him by Tara Bai. But alas! they reached him too late.<sup>6</sup>

She soon followed her former adversary to the grave on December 9, 1761, but not before she had solemnly installed his second son, Madhavrao I, in his father's vacant place on July 20, 1761.<sup>7</sup> If she had had any feelings of hatred or revenge left in her heart against Balaji Bajirao personally or against his family she would have raised a storm at the time and it would have been difficult for young Madhavrao to control the situation because of the dissatisfaction of his own uncle, Raghunathrao, who would very likely have played into the hands of Tara Bai if an occasion for it had occurred. Tara Bai had seen four generations of the *Peshwa's* family and had known each member of it and his respective worth. In the dirty game of politics she sometimes came into clash with them, but it seems that her hatred was neither deep-seated nor prolonged. The clever *Peshwas* also knew the weaknesses

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes their relations were strained, but they soon made up their affairs. Such a compromise is mentioned in *Peshwa Daftar*, 6.214.

<sup>2</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 26.263.

<sup>3</sup> Grant Duff: *History of the Marathas*, Vol. II, p. 162.

<sup>4</sup> Khare: *Inchitkaranji Samsthacha Itihas*, p. 93.

<sup>5</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 21.204. This letter shows that Balaji Bajirao was completely overcome by the Panipat defeat and hence could not meet Tara Bai at Satara.

<sup>6</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 18.175. This letter is dated June 23, 1761, the very day on which Peshwa Balaji Bajirao breathed his last.

<sup>7</sup> *Ajithasik Patren*, No. 443.



of the lady through and through and were always careful to keep her in good humour by flattering her vanity by outward submission. It was her destiny to be served by people whom she had opposed and harassed. Ramraja was the worst sufferer at her hands and it was he who had to perform her last rites at Mahuli.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 38.34.35; *Aitihasik Patren*, No. 101. She was an important personality and her death was mentioned in private letters as a major event in Maharashtra.

## CHAPTER XVI

### CHARACTER OF TARA BAI AND HER PLACE IN HISTORY

#### 1. *Her Unimaginative Statesmanship*

TARA BAI sums up in her long and chequered life of about eighty-six years the history of her nation with all its vicissitudes. In the dawn of her childhood she had seen Shivaji's glory at its meridian; entered before adolescence the house of Shivaji as his daughter-in-law; wept over the death of the Father of Maharashtra; lived to lead the Maratha nation during the last and most critical stage in its struggle for independence against the Mughal Empire at the height of its power and score remarkable success in war and diplomacy against no less an adversary than Emperor Aurangzib; and yet was destined to pine away in virtual imprisonment at the hands of her own people, to hear of the disaster of the Third Battle of Panipat, and die in the hour of a nation's grief, unwept and unsung. In the hour of the nation's thickening gloom and despair she emerged on the political horizon as a guiding star of hope and courage, and behind the horizon she sank shorn of glory.

Tara Bai was undoubtedly a remarkable woman in history, but not the best nor the worst; nor yet an average mediocrity among her sex, who essayed to play a part in history. She was neither a martyr like Joan of Arc, nor a great statesman and ruler like Elizabeth of England, or Catherine the Great of Russia; nor was she even a Rani Durgavati or Chand Sultana in purity of motives; yet she was a woman who could not be ignored at any stage of her life, whether by Aurangzib or by the three generations of the ablest statesmen and soldiers of Maharashtra under the *Peshwa* regime. She was a stormy petrel and no dove of peace. Her abilities shone best in disturbed conditions, in chaos and anarchy, and she was at her worst when patriotism and her extreme selfishness for monopoly of power were at the crossroad of politics.

Naturally, one is curious to enquire why Tara Bai failed to fulfil the promise of political career in spite of her undoubted

abilities. She alone is perhaps not responsible for failure. Unscrupulous selfishness of Maratha notables, with whom she had to deal, partly accounts for bringing into play similar unscrupulousness and unpatriotic political somersaults on her part—the desperate attempt of a woman to hold her own against men. If she is branded as a traitor to her nation at a later stage of her career, it was because she was not born to rule over a nation that gives birth to the Grachi Brothers of Rome or Howard of Effingham of the Armada fame. A Shivaji is born only in the womb of a Jija Bai, and a nation braces itself up to suffer manfully when there is a Yesu Bai (widow of Shambhuji) to set a noble example of courting voluntarily with a child in arms, the risk of a fate worse than death in Mughal camp. But Tara Bai was a lesser character, a woman after all, whose passion to rule gets the better of her solicitude for her nation's interest, a mother who thinks of safeguarding her son's future at any cost, moral and political. She was constitutionally incapable of rising above personal and family interests in spite of all her abilities. Her courage, resourcefulness and dogged perseverance matched only her unscrupulousness, unholy passion for power and obstinacy in the wrong direction.

Time eternal is, however, the best judge of man and his deeds. So Tara Bai also had her praise and blame in due proportion from her own people. She was hailed at first by the Maratha nation as an incarnation of *Bhadra Kali* sent down to rescue them from oppression of demons and the destruction of the Mughals.<sup>1</sup> Later on, when Shahu came back to Maharashtra her mask was thrown off and she played the fury to undo her own achievements of earlier years, and died dreaded by her contemporaries and condemned at the bar of history as an evil genius of Maharashtra that retarded the growth of the Maratha nation to its full political stature in the eighteenth century. Modern schools of historians in Maharashtra are sharply divided in their estimate of Tara Bai's place in her country's history. The unhappy cry of *Brahmans versus Marathas* was raised for pure political purposes by Tara Bai in her desperate efforts to shatter down the *Peshwa* regime as we

<sup>1</sup> In this connection the following lines of a contemporary Marathi poet, Govind Kavi, are interesting: (see page 219)

have already noticed. It seems as if she had received in this political move a tip from Aurangzib in his grave. Aurangzib tried to make a capital out of religion; whereas Tara Bai raised the cry of caste and caste interests in utter forgetfulness of national solidarity and national interests. Tara Bai failed to rally even the Bhonsles around her, not to speak of Holkars and Sindhias. This was because her cry appeared rather strange to her own people who had not till then learnt to think in terms of caste and thought only in terms of *Vatans*, *Jagirs* and offices. Though the Brahman *Peshwas* were anxious to reform the Maratha society according to the dictates of Manu, they never carried their caste prejudice into politics and war. They gave no preference to the Brahmans but rather to capable non-Brahmans even of much lower social status than Bhonsles. The interests of non-Brahmans never suffered in the hands of the *Chitpawan Peshwas*; and therefore Tara Bai's cry proved a cry in the wilderness. Nevertheless, the mischief done by her outlived her and the malady preyed into the body politic of Maharashtra in later times.

Tara Bai has, however, her apologists who would lay all the blame for national disasters at the door of Brahmans. Mere sentiment and prejudice without the concrete of facts cannot create a national heroine. Great opportunities came to Tara Bai. If she had any political vision she might have seized them to raise her

---

Our goddess Tulja is blessing us,  
 The Emperor's power has come into our hands;  
 Victory is garlanding young Shivaji's neck.  
 Delhi is humbled;  
 The Lord of Delhi has lost his lustre.  
 Tara Bai the Rani of Rama is terribly angered.  
 Remember, you folks, God Shanker commands all this.  
 He has delivered into the hands of the great Destroyer  
 All the armies of the Lord of Delhi.  
 Indra's court is now laughing  
 At the misery of Delhi's Lord.  
 The Queen of Rama ranges in frown on the battle-field;  
 Take care oh! Mughals,  
 The final end is near.  
 The jewelled crest of the Bhoslas,  
 The giver of good fortune, Raja Shiva,  
 Now shines on the throne.  
 (Sardesai: *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. I, p. 362.)

eternally to the position of "Mother of Maharashtra" below the pedestal of the great Shivaji.

Her first opportunity came after the release of Shahu. If she could muster sufficient moral courage and spirit of sacrifice, she ought to have been foremost in frankly acknowledging the claim of Shahu and constituting herself as the virtual regent at the court of Satara. Shahu and the whole Maratha nation would have bowed down before her in awe, admiration and gratitude as the guardian angel of the House of the *Chhatrapati*. On the contrary, she became bolder in her political voice, declared Shahu an impostor, set up a rival court at Panhala and thus drove a ruinous wedge into the Maratha polity. Had she put herself at the helm of affairs as the adviser and guardian of docile Shahu, there would have been no room for the rise of the *Peshwas* to supreme power. By checks and balances of the old institution of the Cabinet of Eight Ministers (swelled to nine with the addition of the *Pratinidhi*) she might have retained power in her own hands if she had wielded it in the interest of the nation as a whole. But she missed this opportunity, kept open a perpetual sore in the body politic of Maharashtra, and left the field open for the rise of the *Peshwas*. Her denunciation of Shahu as the vassal of the Mughal Emperor and betrayer of national independence was a sham cry as her own intrigue with the Nizam and readiness to submit to Mughal suzerainty on securing the *sanads* of *sardesmukhi* for her son indicated. It was Tara Bai who threw the nascent Maratha State, born like phoenix out of the fires of Aurangzib's war, into a precarious condition, not unlike that of England torn by the wars of King Stephen and Matilda. It prevented the concentration of national resources at critical times and pursuit of a strong policy in internal administration. It was Tara Bai and not the *Peshwa* who was responsible for the break-up of a unitary state into a loose confederacy of later times. The open-door policy of Kolhapur for deserters from Satara gave a hard bargaining power to the self-seeking Maratha nobles and free lancers in war and politics. If the Nizam consolidated his power in the Deccan to plague the Marathas perpetually it was because of Tara Bai's treachery to the national cause and her intrigue with the Nizam, Bhonsles

of Nagpur, Angres and Gaikwars to pin down the *Peshwa*. Tara Bai was as much bankrupt in imaginative statesmanship as Emperor Aurangzib whom she had the credit to beat in war and diplomacy at the final stage in the war of Maratha independence.

## 2 Tara Bai and Aurangzib

No fort and no soldier, not even Santa and Dhana, proved ultimately too strong for mighty Aurangzib in the South. No Maratha statesman and diplomat, even of the calibre of Ramchandra Nilkanth, could see any way of escape from the last pull of Aurangzib's fast-moving iron net after the fall of Jinji and the death of Rajaram shortly thereafter. Any stout heart would have shrunk at this stage at the thought of prolonging a hopeless fight against overwhelming odds. There was no king, no capital, no government, no money in the treasury, no spirit for fight in a leaderless and bewildered people, no dearth of traitors around her and in the enemy's camp when Tara Bai stepped into the vacant place of her mediocre husband<sup>1</sup> to take the gauntlet against old and invincible Aurangzib, who was confident of making short work of "two children and one helpless woman."<sup>2</sup> Lest she should be accused of being a fire-eater by her people, impatient for peace at any cost, she made a bid for it and sued for terms knowing full well that Aurangzib would not cry halt in his hour of triumph. Thus she put Aurangzib in the wrong, brought home to the minds of her people dangers ahead and made them make one more supreme effort to save the heritage of the great Shivaji. Her clarion call summoned brave hearts to arms and echoed through every hill fort of Maharashtra. She decided to fight Aurangzib with his own weapons, bribery and destruction. She had no money, but she had the six *subahs* of the Mughal Deccan at her lawless disposal for giving in *Jagir* to the leaders of her predatory bands. Her writ had as much validity as that of Aurangzib, because it meant only a paper title to be made good at the point of the lance. It was otherwise a dead letter, because they both gave what was not their own. Unlike Aurangzib's *wazir*

<sup>1</sup> *Dilkasha*, 158a.

<sup>2</sup> Khafi Khan: 468.

her problem was not to make an unlimited quantity equate with a limited one. Beyond the Deccan she cast her glance on Gujrat and Malwa, and there she sent her bold captains to make lightening raids to the consternation of the old and helpless Emperor. She took to Shivaji's policy of making war support war and break the morale of the enemy.

She played her cards dexterously well against Aurangzib. Bribing and counter-bribing, intrigue and counter-intrigue went on but Aurangzib lost in every stake. His waste in men and resources against the Maratha hill forts changing hands rapidly was, as the illustrious historian of Aurangzib himself admits, only equal to "the labours of Sisyphus."<sup>1</sup> Tara Bai made her people realise that Aurangzib was far from a liability, nay, an economic asset and giver of bread to them. The Maratha free-booters wished the Emperor a long life and piously set apart a part of their spoils for giving *shirini* in mosques so that he might live to drain the gold and silver of Northern India, giving them an opportunity to enrich themselves at a little risk though.<sup>2</sup>

Aurangzib in utter despair sometimes thought of releasing Shahu, his last pawn in diplomacy against Tara Bai. But Aurangzib made a miscalculation of her motives and thought that Tara Bai and Shahu might unite against him. The rise of Greater Maharashtra out of the Maratha country, out of the fires of war of the closing years of Aurangzib, stands to discredit Aurangzib's statesmanship, whereas it only sheds lustre on Tara Bai's farsight into the future of Maharashtra. What Tara Bai had begun was only completed in later years by the arms of the *Peshwas*.

During this period, says Sir Jadunath, "the supreme guiding force in Maharashtra was not any minister but the Dowager-queen, Tara Bai Mohite. Her administrative genius and strength of character saved the nation in that awful crisis that threatened it in consequence of Rajaram's death...."<sup>3</sup> It was she who was riding a whirlwind so well that "not a single Maratha leader acted without her order."<sup>4</sup> Rao Bahadur Sardesai, the doyen of Maratha historians, has given Tara Bai her due by confirming the

<sup>1</sup> Sarkar: *Aurangzib*, Vol. V, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Sarkar: *Aurangzib*, Vol. V, p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> *Dilkasha*, 141a.

<sup>4</sup> *Dilkasha*, 140a.

testimony of Khafi Khan and Bhimsen Burhanpuri regarding her abilities. Rao Bahadur Sardesai says, "Tara Bai exhibited wonderful powers of organisation and inspired one and all with a sense of devotion to the national service."<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately materials are lacking at present for a proper appraisal of Tara Bai's administrative genius which had no scope for much display when war engrossed the whole energies of the nation. She in general followed Shivaji's policy of concentration of power and centralisation without killing the powers of initiative among her officials. War pressed upon her the necessity of decentralisation and allowing the continuance of the *saranjam* system (military assignments of feudal type) that had taken root in the troubled times of Rajaram.

### 3. Tara Bai and later Maratha Politics

If Tara Bai had died about the same time as Aurangzib, she would have been hailed as the glory of Maharashtra and an ornament of India's womanhood. But destiny decreed it otherwise, and cursed her with a long life and loss of powers as a punishment for her inner sin of selfishness and insincerity. What a fall from what a height for Tara Bai within a decade of Shahu's return to Maharashtra. God took away her only child for whom she stooped low in intrigue and falsehood against Shahu and yet the warning of heaven did not bring her back to the right path. Here was another opportunity for her to regain her lost position in the esteem of her people. It was quite within her to wind up the unhappy affair of a rival *Chhatrapati* at Kolhapur by backing Shahu against Shambhuji and thereby restoring the political unity of Maharashtra. She should have secured a pension for the family of Rajaram; and for herself a virtual regency at Satara. The *Peshwa* would have found Tara Bai at Satara a more formidable opponent than Tara Bai at Kolhapur. Had Tara Bai been at this juncture at the helm of affairs as the venerable aunt and adviser of Shahu with no axe of her to grind, she could have effectually checked the *Peshwa* from becoming overpowerful and would have thrown into shade the seven other *Pradhans* of the

<sup>1</sup> Sardesai: *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. I, p. 348.



state. This policy of checks and balances would have made the Council of Eight Ministers of the days of Shivaji an effective instrument of vigorous administration without impairing the authority of the *Chhatrapati*. She was rightly served by her co-wife and her step-son and was ultimately compelled to choose a voluntary exile at Satara. A third opportunity came many years later when King Shahu died heirless. Instead of exerting her considerable influence for the adoption of the reigning *Chhatrapati* of Kolhapur by Shahu and his wives, she took the whole nation by hoax by declaring a boy of unknown birth, Ramraja, as her grandchild. She was completely successful for a while, but later on, she repudiated Ramraja who wanted to get out of her hands. Till the last, Tara Bai admirably succeeded in keeping the whole nation in suspense because nobody could positively believe or disbelieve her. By this act of repudiation she played herself into the hands of *Peshwa* Balaji Bajirao who would have otherwise found it extremely difficult to impose his own terms on all the Maratha chiefs and the nominal *Chhatrapati* at the Poona Conference of 1750. Balaji played the better diplomat in continuing to recognise the captive Ramraja as *Chhatrapati* and posing as his saviour against an unscrupulous woman, mad after power. Thus, Tara Bai was responsible from the very start in liquidating a unitary state into a confederacy of mutually repellent elements.

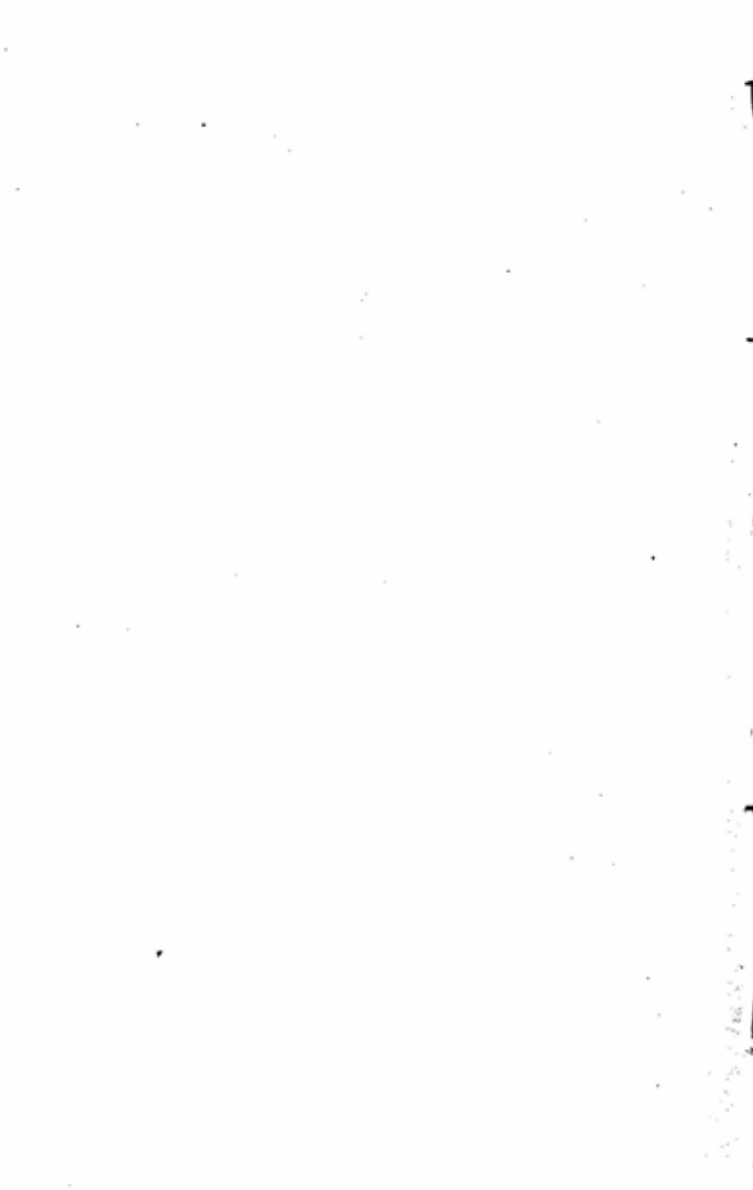
The evil of importing spurious impostors initiated by Tara Bai was practised during her life-time by Jijabai, widow of Shambhuji II of Kolhapur. Later on, a false Bhau after Panipat created a sensation and many honest people were deceived. Similarly, Nana Farnavis imported five hundred Brahman women in pregnancy inside the palace of Madhavrao, one of whose widows was in expectancy to bear a posthumous heir to her deceased husband to keep out Raghoba, and Nana would have perhaps practised the same bluff had the widow of Madhavrao borne a female child. A nation does always suffer from the original sins of its creators.

It is no use speculating on the "ifs" of Maratha history to prop up the greatness of Tara Bai. It may be argued that if Tara Bai had succeeded, Maharashtra would have got back national unity,

a strong and efficient centralised administration and the enlightened policy of the days of the great Shivaji. But Tara Bai's known character and policy only raise the doubt whether in the event of success, she would not have made confusion worse confounded. Not to speak of eight, even eighteen ministerial posts could not have possibly given the Maratha government a stable cabinet even if no Shahu had appeared on the scene.

There must have been something very remarkable about Tara Bai who successfully kept at bay Aurangzib and three generations of *Peshwas*. The career of a woman who could turn her prison in the Satara fort into a citadel of defence against the *Peshwa* and essayed to rule in her own right by throwing the accredited *Chhatrapati* into prison, has a thrill of romance in it. She died as the only legitimate authority, who did her last great service to the nation by investing young Madhavrao as the successor of Balaji as *Peshwa*.

The fate of Tara Bai is the usual fate of a deserter from a good cause in history. Admiration and regret hang in balance as the reel of her career shoots across the stage of Maharashtra. She deserves well of her people in spite of the lapses of selfish ambition which is after all only human. May her soul rest in peace!



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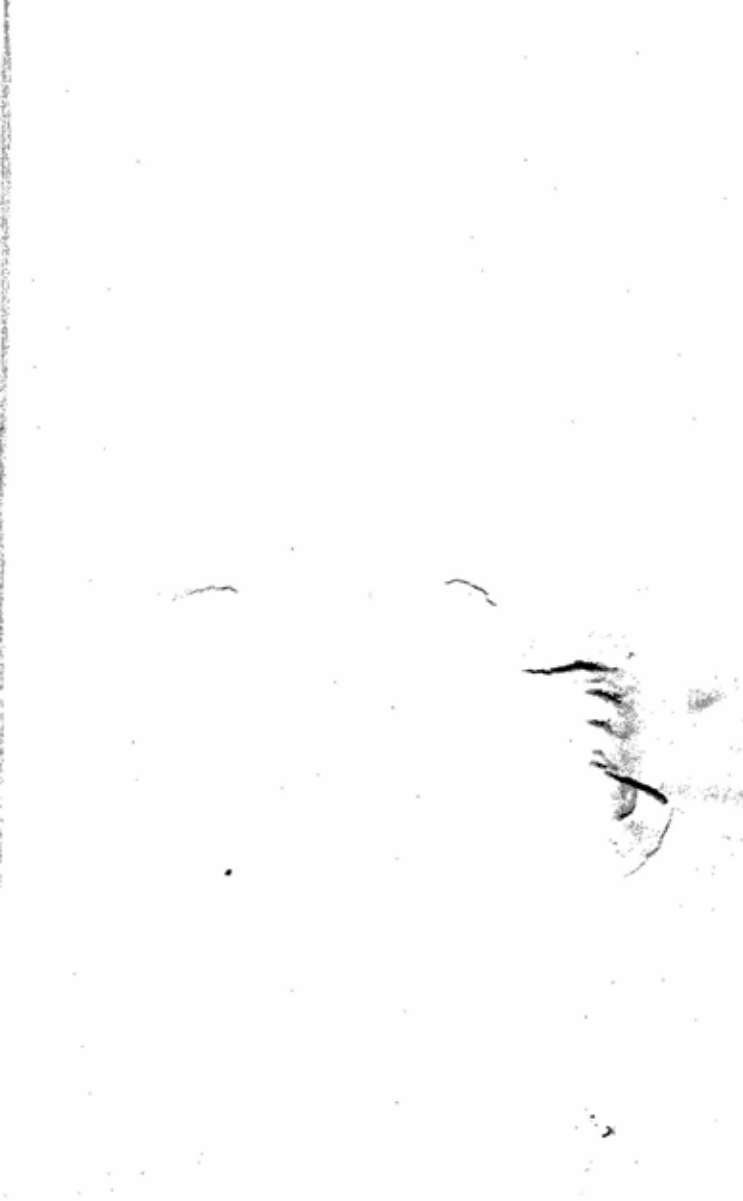
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