

4. Shivaji's Childhood



The Birthplace of Shivaji Maharaj at Fort Shivneri

Birth of Shivaji : Those were very unsettled days. Shahjahan from the North had despatched a big army to conquer the Deccan. Pune, the principal town of Shahaji Raje's Jagir was burned to the ground by Adilshah of Bijapur. Shahaji Raje was in real trouble. He found himself between the devil and the deep sea, and was constantly on the run.

Jijabai was pregnant and the great question which worried Shahaji Raje was

some place where she could remain in safety and peace. Then he remembered the Shivneri fort and decided to send Jijabai there. Shivneri was a strong fort near Junnar in Pune district. It had steep cliffs on four sides, strong fortifications and massive doors. This strong fort was then in charge of Vijayraj, a relative of the Bhonsales. He agreed to give protection to Jijabai. So Shahaji Raje left her there and marched against the Moghuls.

And then the golden day dawned. On the auspicious day of *Phalgun Vadya Tritiya*, in the year 1551 of the Shaka era, that is, on 19 February 1630, to the sound of pipes and drums playing in the 'Nagar Khana', Jijabai gave birth to a son. All the residents of the fort were overjoyed. On the twelfth day, with appropriate ceremony, the child was named 'Shivaji' as the child was born on Fort Shivneri.

Shivaji's Childhood : Shivaji passed the first six years of his life in highly unsettled conditions. Even so, Jijabai did not neglect his education. Every evening she would light the household lamps and then call Shivaji to her. She would shower all her affection on him and tell him stories of Rama and Krishna, of Bhim and Abhimanyu. On other occasions she would recite to him the devotional songs of Namdeo, Dnyaneshwar or

Eknath. Shivaji liked to listen to the exploits of brave men. Shivaji felt that on growing up, he should also display valour like them. Jijabai used to tell him stories of many pious persons and saints. That instilled in him, a respect and honour for all saints and great men.

Children from poor families came to play with Shivaji. Sometimes he visited them in their huts and shared their simple meal of onion and bhakri with great relish. They invented interesting games to pass the time. The children of the Mavlas were like birds in the forest. They would imitate the sound of the cuckoo or parrot or tiger to perfection. Their pastime was building small forts of earth and making earthen elephants and horses. They played hide and seek, or played with a ball or top. Shivaji joined them in all these games and became popular with them.



Veermata Jijabai tells Shivaji stories of brave men.



Shivaji with his Friends

Shahaji Raje towards the Moghuls :

Shahaji Raje returned to Nizamshahi all right, but he did not get any peace of mind there. Nizamshah himself was a fickle-minded person who readily believed all gossip. Hence, many conspiracies and petty rivalries infested the court. This led to the killing of Lakhujirao Jadhav openly in the court at the instigation of Nizamshah himself. Shahaji Raje could not withstand this. Infuriated, he left Nizamshahi and joined the Moghuls. Shahjahan, the Moghul Emperor, made him a Sardar at his court.

In the meantime, secretly joining hands with the Moghuls, Fattekhan killed Nizamshah. There was complete anarchy in the state. It became evident that Fattekhan was treacherously planning

to enable the Moghuls to swallow Nizamshahi. In return, the Moghuls rewarded him with the territory under the control of Shahaji Raje. Shahaji Raje was enraged and so he left the services of the Moghuls. He decided to teach them a lesson using all his might.

Founding of a New Nizamshahi :

In order to forestall the Moghul Emperor and Vazir Fattekhan, Shahaji Raje found out a child heir from the Nizam's family and on the fort of Pengiri near Junnar, declared him as the new Nizamshah. Thus, he established an altogether new kingdom which included the territory between the rivers Godavari and Nira. Shahaji Raje fought vigorously to protect this new state. Initially, Adilshah was with him in these efforts. But later,

the Moghul Emperor Shahjahan himself marched South upon Shahaji Raje and threatened Adilshah. Adilshah then signed a treaty of friendship with him against Shahaji Raje.

Shahaji Raje now began to fight the joint forces of the Moghuls and Adilshah using guerrilla tactics. But he could not sustain the war all by himself. In 1636, unwillingly, he signed a treaty of peace with Moghuls. He could not create his own kingdom as the times were not favourable for him. But his daring spirit kindled a confidence among the Marathi people. This proved useful for Shivaji in establishing Swaraj a few years later.

Jijabai and Shivaji in Karnatak :

After the downfall of the Nizamshahi established by Shahaji Raje, its territory was divided by the Moghuls and Adilshah amongst themselves. Shahaji Raje's Jagir of Pune and Supe lay within

Adilshah's share. He gave it to Shahaji Raje on his behalf. Now Shahaji Raje joined the Adilshahi services. Adilshah assigned to him, the task of conquering the territories in distant Karnatak, far away from Pune. Some time after the departure of Shahaji Raje to Karnatak, Jijabai and Shivaji also joined him there.

Shivaji's childhood in Maharashtra had been very hectic. He and Jijabai had to rush continuously from one fort to another. At that time, young Shivaji used to hear the stories of the brave deeds of his father. Jijabai and Shivaji got some peace when they arrived in Karnatak. Shahaji Raje defeated many kings in Karnatak. Adilshah awarded him with the Jagir of Bangalore. Shahaji Raje then made the city of Bangalore his headquarters. He lived there with all the trappings of a king and began to summon the court.

EXERCISES

1. Fill in the blanks choosing the correct option.

- (a) Shivaji was born on the fort.
(Purandar, Shivneri, Panhala)
- (b) Adilshah assigned the task of conquering the territories in to Shahaji Raje.
(Karnatak, Khandesh, Konkan)

2. Write the answer in one sentence.

- (a) What did Shivaji feel due to Jijabai's teaching ?

- (b) What games did Shivaji and the children of the Mavlas play ?

- (c) Why did Shahaji Raje leave Nizamshahi ?

3. Write the answers in two or three sentences.

- (a) Whose stories did Jijabai tell Shivaji ?
- (b) Why did Shahaji Raje declare the child heir from the Nizamshah's family as the new Nizamshah ?

Activity

- (a) Make a trip to Fort Shivneri and collect information about the birthplace of Shivaji Maharaj.
- (b) Make a list of traditional sports and write a note on any one of them in 10 lines.



Fort Shivneri - Maha Darwaja

