

11. The Discomfiture of Shaistakhan

Shaistakhan's Campaign : In spite of repeated efforts in which he left no stone unturned, Adilshah of Bijapur could not force Shivaji to surrender. Every Sardar of Bijapur who was sent against Shivaji was defeated. Adilshah at last gave up the fight, made peace with Shivaji and gave recognition to his independent Kingdom. Shivaji thus had peace for some time on his southern border.

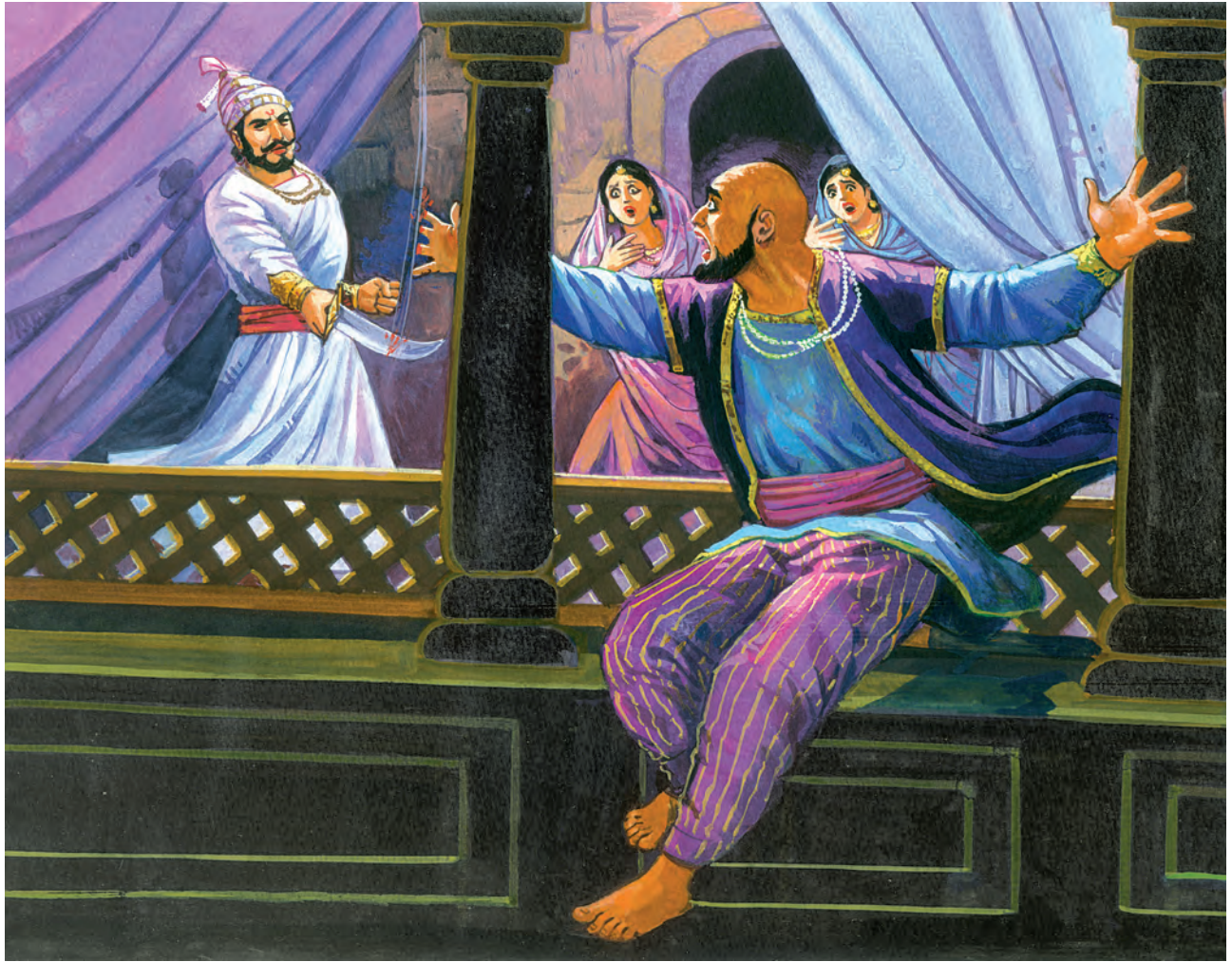
In the meanwhile, constant Moghul attacks from the north had practically ruined Maharashtra. Shivaji, therefore, turned his attention northwards and carried out raids in the territory of the Moghul Emperor, Aurangzeb. This enraged Aurangzeb and he sent Shaistakhan, his uncle, to deal with Shivaji and teach him a lesson. Shaistakhan with a huge army of 75,000 men and hundreds of elephants, camels and pieces of cannon marched on Pune. On the way he captured the towns of Shirval, Shivapur, Saswad and finally laid siege to the fort of Purandar. Nothing could stop his advance. But once the Maratha army surrounded him in a mountain pass. The Maratha troops moved very fast on their swift Bhimthadi ponies. They also travelled very light. They could traverse the hills and valleys in the shortest possible time on army rations consisting of onions and bajra bread. This type of warfare, perfected by the Marathas, was unknown to Shaistakhan. Tired of the continuous

harassment by the Maratha troops, he at last raised the siege of Purandar.

Firangoji Narsala : Shaistakhan then continued his march on Pune. First he captured the fort of Chakan. Firangoji Narsala fought to defend the fort with great bravery and skill against the army of Shaistakhan. For two months he kept Shaistakhan at bay, but he was helpless against the guns of Shaistakhan. Shaistakhan was much impressed with the way Firangoji defended the fort and offered him service with the Moghul Emperor. Firangoji however refused this tempting offer.

Shaistakhan in Lal Mahal : Shaistakhan came to Pune and made Lal Mahal, Shivaji's residence, his headquarters. One year passed, then another year. Shaistakhan would not leave Pune. On the contrary, his troops would raid Shivaji's territory, destroy crops and take away the cattle. In this way he started devastating the surrounding countryside.

A Bold Plan : At last Shivaji decided to teach Shaistakhan a lesson. In a way it was good that Shaistakhan was staying in Lal Mahal. Shivaji knew the place inside out, with all its entrances and exits, its secret passages, doors and windows. Besides, Shivaji's spies were keeping him well informed about the disposition of the Khan's troops. Shivaji, therefore, decided to enter Lal Mahal one night and kill Shaistakhan. This was indeed a very



Shivaji attacks Shaistakhan.

bold plan. Lal Mahal was so well guarded that even an ant would find it difficult to get through. 75,000 troops were camping outside the palace. No armed Maratha was allowed to enter the town. But Shivaji had made up his mind and there was none who could turn him away from his resolve.

Shivaji fixed the date to carry out the plan. On the night of 5th April, 1663, a marriage procession was passing along the streets of Pune. There was music, and fireworks accompanied the procession. Hundreds of people dressed in fine

clothes were in the procession. Some were in Palanquins, others in 'Menas', while many more were on foot. Shivaji with his band of trusted followers joined the procession to give the impression that they were a part of it. After some time the procession proceeded on its way, but Shivaji and his men moved away quietly in the direction of Lal Mahal. Shaistakhan was fast asleep at this hour.

Shaistakhan Learns a Lesson :

Shivaji made a hole in the wall and entered Lal Mahal. He had no trouble in finding his way about, because it was after all,

his own house. The Khan's bodyguards were half asleep. Shivaji's followers tied them up. Shivaji went deeper inside. Suddenly, someone rushed at him with a sword. Shivaji killed him. He thought it was Shaistakhan, but it was his son. There was a commotion. People woke up.

Shivaji went straight to the Khan's chambers and took out his sword. Terrified, the Khan started shouting 'the Devil, the Devil' and tried to escape through the window. Shivaji struck him with the sword which cut off three fingers of the Khan. The Khan could have lost his life, but he escaped with the loss of three fingers only. The Khan jumped out of the window and made for safety. To deceive the Khan's troops, Shivaji and his men raised the cry, "Shivaji has attacked. Run, catch him," and started to run themselves. The Khan's troops also started running in all directions.

In the confusion that followed, Shivaji and his men made their escape and reached Sinhagad. The Khan's troops spent the whole night looking in vain for Shivaji and his troops.

This incident took the fight out of Shaistakhan. He was afraid that if he lost only his fingers in the first attack, Shivaji might cut his head off in the second. Aurangzeb was furious when he heard of this episode. Shaistakhan lost the Emperor's favour and was transferred to Bengal.

This was the first serious blow to the Moghul Power. Shivaji had successfully bearded the lion in his own den. Gunfire announced the victory and a wave of joy went all over Maharashtra.



EXERCISES

1. Fill in the blanks :

- Shaistakhan laid siege to the fort of
(Purandar, Panhala, Shivneri)
- In Pune, Shaistakhan made his headquarters.
(Shaniwar Wada, Lal Mahal, Parvati)
- Aurangzeb transferred Shaistakhan to
(Assam, Karnatak, Bengal)

2. Write the answer in one sentence.

- Which towns did Shaistakhan capture on the way to Pune ?
- Why did Shaistakhan at last raise the siege of Purandar ?
- What was Shaistakhan afraid that might happen ?

3. Give reasons.

- Emperor Aurangzeb was enraged and sent Shaistakhan to deal with Shivaji.
- Shaistakhan tried to escape through the window.

4. Write the incidents or events chronologically :

- Shivaji and his men departed towards Sinhagad fort.
- Shaistakhan made Lal Mahal his headquarters.
- Shaistakhan captured the fort of Chakan.
- Shivaji taught Shaistakhan a lesson.

Activity

Arrange a trip to visit Lal Mahal.

