

15. A Memorable Ceremony

Why did Shivaji have himself crowned ? : Shivaji took the oath of Swaraj in the temple of Raireswar. He had to face numerous difficulties and calamities in his efforts to win Swaraj for his people. But with great courage and skill Shivaji overcame them all. Swaraj had stepped out of its childhood and was growing fast. Men like Baji Prabhu, Murarbaji, Tanaji nursed it with their blood. The new Kingdom was both respected and feared.

With a view to having this kingdom recognized by all other princes in the land, big and small, Shivaji decided to have himself crowned. After hundreds of years, a king was born in Maharashtra who would treat all religions equally and give justice and happiness to his subjects. Shivaji decided to have himself crowned so that everyone would come to know that Swaraj had been firmly established. He did not do it for self-glorification or personal happiness. He did it to give the newly founded Swaraj a firm footing.

The Capital of Swaraj : Shivaji selected Raigad as the capital of his kingdom. Raigad was a strong hill fort from where it was easy to administer the kingdom and keep a watch on the enemy.

Shivaji Raje inspected his troops at Chiplun. He visited Pratapgad and took the goddess Bhavani's 'Darshan'. In grateful memory he presented to the temple a golden canopy for the goddess.

Preparations for the Coronation:

Then Shivaji Raje ordered a golden throne to be made and had it studded with precious stones. He put a white royal umbrella over the throne. Invitations to the coronation were sent out to princes and kings, learned Brahmins, all the Sardars under his command and other officers. Gagabhatt came from Varanasi to act as the chief priest at the ceremony. Gagabhatt originally belonged to Paithan but had settled down in Varanasi. He was a great and renowned scholar respected in Varanasi.

Shivaji Maharaj made detailed preparations for the coronation. Men were sent out to bring waters of the seven rivers and the sea. Nearly fifty thousand people gathered at Raigad. Small tents, big tents, spacious shamianas to accommodate the guests could be seen everywhere.

The Coronation Ceremony : The Coronation Day dawned. It was indeed the most auspicious day. Musicians began to play on their instruments. Singers began to sing, music and singing filled the air. There was an atmosphere of joy everywhere. Shivaji Raje sat on a golden seat in full regalia. A canopy (chhatra) and the fans (chamare) were held over his head. There were priests, each one carrying vessels of ghee, dahi and honey. Gagabhatt himself carried a gold vessel filled with the waters of the seven rivers, Ganga, Sindhu, Yamuna, Godavari, Krishna, Narmada



The Coronation Ceremony

and Kaveri and of the sea. Gagabhatt held the vessel over Shivaji's head and started reciting the coronation mantras. From a hundred tiny holes in the vessel, water started dripping down on Shivaji's head. After ablution by the sacred waters Shivaji Maharaj got up and bowed before Jijamata and touched her feet. Jijamata held him in close embrace. Her eyes were filled with tears of joy. Her thirty years' efforts had at last borne fruit. The dream she had nursed even before Shivaji's birth had at last come true. The tears in her eyes were tears of joy and fulfilment. Shivaji Maharaj was also deeply moved. Glory be to both of them !

After meeting Maasaheb, Shivaji Maharaj sat on the throne. Maharani Soyarabai and the Crown Prince Sambhaji Raje sat next to him. His eight ministers stood on either side. Gagabhatt held the

canopy lined with gold and pearl tassels over his head and said, "Victory be to Shiva Chhatrapati, now crowned King, the ornament of the race of warriors." Everyone present followed suit and in one voice wished victory to Shivaji Maharaj. Guns were fired from fort after fort. The whole of Maharashtra echoed with one voice, "Shivaji Maharaj Ki Jai." Shivaji's coronation took place in 1674. From that year Shivaji Maharaj started a new calendar, the Coronation Calendar. He became a great king like those in whose name people start a new era. He struck his own coins. Some foreign envoys were present at the Coronation. The English had sent their envoy Oxinden with valuable presents. Subjects from far-off areas and places had also come to see this ceremony. The whole world came to know of the big event. Shivaji's fame spread everywhere.

EXERCISES

1. Fill in the blanks :

- (a) Shivaji selected as the capital of his kingdom.
(Sinhagad, Raigad, Panhalgad)
- (b) Shivaji's coronation took place in
(1674, 1675, 1647)

2. Write the answer in one sentence.

- (a) The water of which seven rivers was filled in the golden vessel ?
- (b) What Calendar did Shivaji Maharaj start from the year of his Coronation ?

3. Write the answers in two or three sentences.

- (a) Why did Shivaji Maharaj have himself crowned ?
- (b) Why did Shivaji select Raigad as the capital of his Kingdom ?

- (c) Why were Jijamata's eyes filled with tears of joy ?

Activity

- (a) From your teacher, obtain information about the coins that Shivaji Maharaj struck at the time of his Coronation.
- (b) Make a collection of various postal stamps. Make an exhibition of them in your class with the help of your class-mates.

