

6. The Oath of Swaraj

The Temple at Raireshwar : To the south-west of Pune, there is a beauty spot called Raireshwar famous for its temple. In the year 1645, an extraordinary event took place there. Shivaji and a few Mavlas from the neighbouring valley had gathered there. Why had they come to this lovely spot hidden in deep forest ? What did they discuss and what favour did they ask of Lord Shiva ?

The Fiery Eloquence of Young Shivaji : Shivaji was still quite young but his mind was already busy planning big things. He opened his mind to his playmates and said, “My dear friends, today I am going to talk to you about something which is in my mind for a long time. My father Shahaji Raje is a Sardar at the court of Bijapur. It is he who has given me the charge of this Jagir. Everything is going on well and peacefully. But, friends, I am not happy. Must we always remain satisfied as bondmen of the Sultan ? Must we always eat out of other people’s hand ? We are surrounded on all sides by foreign kingdoms which are constantly at war. Our people get killed for nothing during these wars and family after family gets uprooted. Our country suffers destruction. And what do we get out of all this ? Nothing but slavery. How long shall we continue to tolerate this ? How long shall we lay down our lives for others ? Shall we allow this to continue just for the sake of a small Watan ? What have you to say about all this ?”

Shivaji was speaking with great emotion and his face was red with anger. In the middle of his speech he stopped and looked at his companions. The young Mavlas gathered there in the inner sanctum of Raireshwar were greatly thrilled by Shivaji’s speech. They had seen a new vision. One of them said, “Our young prince, tell us clearly whatever is in your mind. We are prepared, we are anxious to do your bidding.” “ Yes Raje,” they all said with one voice, “We are with you, we shall do whatever you say at the cost of our lives if need be !”

The Oath of Swaraj : Shivaji got fresh inspiration from their words. Looking at each one of them he said, “Friends, our path is clear. We shall all strive to attain our ideal, work for it till it is achieved. All should be ready even to sacrifice their lives for this ideal which is ‘Hindavi Swaraj’. We will have our own Raj, yours and mine and everybody’s. We refuse to live as slaves any more. Let us take this oath with Lord Raireshwar as witness; we give ourselves completely to the great task of establishing our own Raj, Swaraj.”

The temple echoed the words of Shivaji. “God thinks that this Kingdom should take shape as Hindavi Swaraj. We shall see that God’s wish is fulfilled.”

So the Mavlas left the temple, committed to the oath of freedom, of Swaraj. The mind of Shivaji was filled



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with great joy. As soon as he reached Pune he went straight to Lal Mahal to see his mother. He described to her all that took place at Rareshwar. Overjoyed, Jijabai thought with satisfaction that Shivaji would accomplish what was always in her mind.

Preparations in the Maval Valley : Shivaji soon got busy with his new activities. Along with his comrades he started intensive training in swordsmanship, riding, exploring the secret paths in the hills and getting familiar with the general topography of the land, its valleys and ghats and possible communication routes. He won over the Mavlas who became his most devoted followers, willing to lay down their lives for him at any time. Shivaji's enthusiasm increased a thousandfold. Shivaji made a detailed survey of all the forts and military establishments in the area. In this, his followers were of great help to him. In the course of time, he came to know the smallest detail of every establishment; secret pathways, underground routes, ammunition dumps and cellars.

Friends in Maval : All over the twelve Mavals there were Deshmukhs, guarding their individual 'Watans' (gifted land in lieu of service) to which they were more attached than anything else. There were constant quarrels between them leading to useless waste of money and manpower. Shivaji saw this waste and decided to put an end to it. He would visit the Deshmukhs in the area, talk to them, persuade them to desist from their folly and raise before them a very attractive picture

of the Swaraj of his dreams. He thus won many of them over to his side. He used force against those who were adamant. In this way he stopped the mutual warfare. Everybody was pleased with this happy result and all started singing the praises of Shivaji. Zunjarrao Maral, Haibatrao Shilamkar, Baji Pasalkar, Vithoji Shitole, Jedhe, Paygude, Bandal were some of the Deshmukhs in the Maval valley who began to look upon Shivaji as their leader. The dream of Swaraj was fast approaching the day of fulfilment.

Shivaji's Royal Seal : The Jagir was already being administered in the name of Shivaji. Shahaji Raje had cast a special royal seal for Shivaji. It read :

प्रतिपच्चंद्रलेखेव वर्धिष्णुर्विश्ववंदिता ॥
शाहसूनोः शिवस्यैषा मुद्रा भद्राय राजते ॥



The Royal Seal

'This seal will grow in splendour like the new moon. This seal of Shivaji, the son of Shahaji, receiving homage from the whole world denotes the welfare of the people.' This Royal seal in a way, foretold the foundation of Swaraj.

In those days most of the royal seals were carved in Persian. Shivaji's was in

Sanskrit. This was a significant change. There could be no Swaraj without your own language and your own religion. But at the same time, there should not be a hatred for other religions. The seal was a

guarantee to all the Mavlas that Shivaji's Government was for the welfare of the people. They were quick to grasp this point.

EXERCISES

1. Fill in the blanks :

- (a) To the south-west of Pune, the temple was a beautiful spot.
- (b) All over Maval there were guarding their individual Watans.
- (c) Shahaji Raje had cast a special for Shivaji.

- (c) What did Shivaji come to know in his detailed survey ?
- (d) What did Shivaji decide to put an end to ?

2. Write the answer in one sentence.

- (a) What words of Shivaji echoed in the temple ?
- (b) What did Jijabai think with joy and satisfaction ?

3. Write the answers in two or three sentences.

- (a) What was the ideal of Shivaji ?
- (b) What did Shivaji start doing with his comrades ?

Activity

Design and display a picture of the Oath of Swaraj.

