

7. Swaraj : First Conquest

It is no doubt true that Shivaji and his comrades took the oath of Swaraj in the temple of Raireswar. But it was a very difficult task. In those days, Maharashtra was governed by four different powers, the Moghul Emperor of Delhi, Sultan Adilshah of Bijapur, the Portuguese of Goa and the Siddi of Janjira. They were powerful opponents, firm in their authority. No one would dare utter a word against them. Under these difficult conditions Shivaji had taken the oath of Swaraj. There was no comparison between the vast forces of the enemy and a handful of Shivaji's Mavlas. But Shivaji's mind was made up and his firm resolve was his greatest source of strength.

Torana Fort : Shivaji controlled the Jagir of Pune, Supe, Chakan and Indapur.

All the forts in the Jagir were, however, in the charge of officers from the court of Bijapur. He who controlled the forts also controlled the surrounding territory and, therefore, all talk of Swaraj without the control of the forts was meaningless. A hill fort gave strategic support to the ruler and Shivaji decided to capture one at a suitable time. For this purpose he had selected the fort of Torana. It stands to the south-west of Pune in the Kanad Valley. It was a renowned fort, well-suited for defence. There were two strong 'Machis' on the way to the fort. A 'Machi' is a fortification of a natural plateau formed on the slope of a hill. One of these 'Machis' was the 'Zunjar Machi' and the other, the 'Budhla Machi'. 'Zunjar Machi', like its name, could offer powerful defence



Fort Torana (Zunjar Machi)

against the enemy. The only access to the fort was across the 'Zunjar Machi'. It is a very difficult passage with high hills on one side and deep valleys on the other. A careless person may easily lose his balance and end his life in the deep valley. Torana was considered one of the strong forts of Maharashtra. In the fort there is a temple of the goddess Toranjai. That is why the fort is called Torana. Strangely enough, this powerful fort was neglected by Adilshah. There were neither enough troops for its defence nor enough ammunition. Shivaji knew this and this was exactly what he wanted. He decided to capture the fort and thus lay the foundation of Hindavi Swaraj.

The drums of Swaraj begin to sound: With a few select bands of Mavlas, Shivaji descended into the Kanad Valley. Swift-footed like the deer and lion-hearted in courage, they raced to the top and captured the strategic positions in the fort. Tanaji Malusare hoisted the Maratha flag at the main entrance. Yesaji Kank, a trustworthy and loyal companion of Shivaji, posted his guards at important points; the fort was captured almost without any resistance and the sky was filled with shouts of "Shivaji Maharaj ki Jai". The first battle drums and pipes of Hindavi Swaraj had sounded and their echo reverberated throughout the valley. Shivaji named this fort 'Prachandgad.'

Blessings of Goddess Bhavani : Fort Torana then came under Shivaji's administration. He made a very careful survey of it and appointed officers such

as a Maratha Killedar, a Brahmin Sabnis and a Prabhu Karkhanis. The garrison included Mavlas, Kolis, Ramoshis, Mahars and such brave men from many other castes and communities. In Swaraj all castes and communities were to be treated alike and no distinctions made on the basis of caste. As repairs to the fort started, a surprise awaited the people. They discovered four metal pots filled to the brim with mohurs. The workers were overjoyed. They said that this was a gift to Shivaji from the Goddess Bhavani who had blessed his efforts. All the money discovered was brought to Shivaji. No one thought of taking anything from it for himself. After all it was the wealth of Swaraj. Shivaji felt greatly elated at this unexpected gift which would enable him to pursue his ideal of Swaraj with added vigour. He felt that he was working under the benevolent eye of the goddess Bhavani.

Shivaji utilised part of the treasure found in the fort to purchase arms and ammunition. The rest he decided to use for another project which was already in his mind. About fifteen kilometres to the east of Torana is the hill of Murumbdeo. Shivaji had his eye on it for a long time. This hill was steep and difficult of access and, therefore, of great strategic importance. Adilshah had actually started constructing a fort on this hill but had left it unfinished. This hill also was not well-guarded and Shivaji decided to capture it.

The First Capital of Swaraj : One day Shivaji climbed up the hill with a select



Fort Rajgad – Pali Darwaja

band of his followers and took possession of the partially completed fort. The money found on Torana was used to complete the fortifications of Murumbdeo. Shivaji named this fort Rajgad. Stone masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, water carriers, other workers - all the people got busy. They built the Rajmahal, Bara Mahal and eighteen workshops. Rajgad became the first capital of Swaraj.

Shivaji's Rapid Progress : From then onwards, Shivaji moved swiftly and captured one fort after another in Maval. The whole country known as Bara Maval – the twelve Mavals – was overflowing with joy and excitement. The Patils and Deshmukhs from many villages came and swore allegiance to Shivaji. But Maval had its own share of black-legs who were ever ready to put a spoke in the fast moving wheel of Swaraj. Jealous of Shivaji's success, they complained to the Adilshahi Collector at Shirval.

The Collector despatched messengers to Bijapur and informed Adilshah of Shivaji's rapid progress.

Shivaji the Shrewd Politician :

Adilshah was most surprised to get the news. He asked Shahaji Raje for an explanation. Shahaji Raje got himself out of this difficult situation by telling the Sultan that Shivaji Raje had probably taken over the fort for better administration of the Jagir. Shivaji also sent this message to the Sultan. "I have taken possession of the fort for better administration of the countryside. We did this only in the interest of the Sultan. There was no evil design at the back of this action."

The two forts of Kondana and Purandar too had strategic locations. Shivaji used his political skill and took control of both the forts. The next fort to come under his sway was Rohida. This was fast work indeed and there was nothing to stop Shivaji now.

1. Fill in the blanks :

- (a) Shivaji controlled the Jagir of Pune, Supe, Chakan and
(Indapur, Saswad, Welhe)
- (b) Shivaji decided to capture the fort of and lay the foundation of Hindavi Swaraj.
(Sinhagad, Shivneri, Torana)
- (c) became the first capital of Swaraj.
(Rajgad, Raigad, Pratapgad)

2. Write the answer in one sentence.

- (a) Which four different powers governed Maharashtra in those days ?

- (b) What officers were appointed by Shivaji on the fort of Torana ?
- (c) What message did Shivaji send to Adilshah ?

3. Give reasons.

- (a) Shivaji selected the fort of Torana to lay the foundation of Swaraj.
- (b) The workers brought the pots of mohurs discovered on the fort of Torana to Shivaji.

Activity

Arrange a trip to the nearest fort with the help of your teachers.

