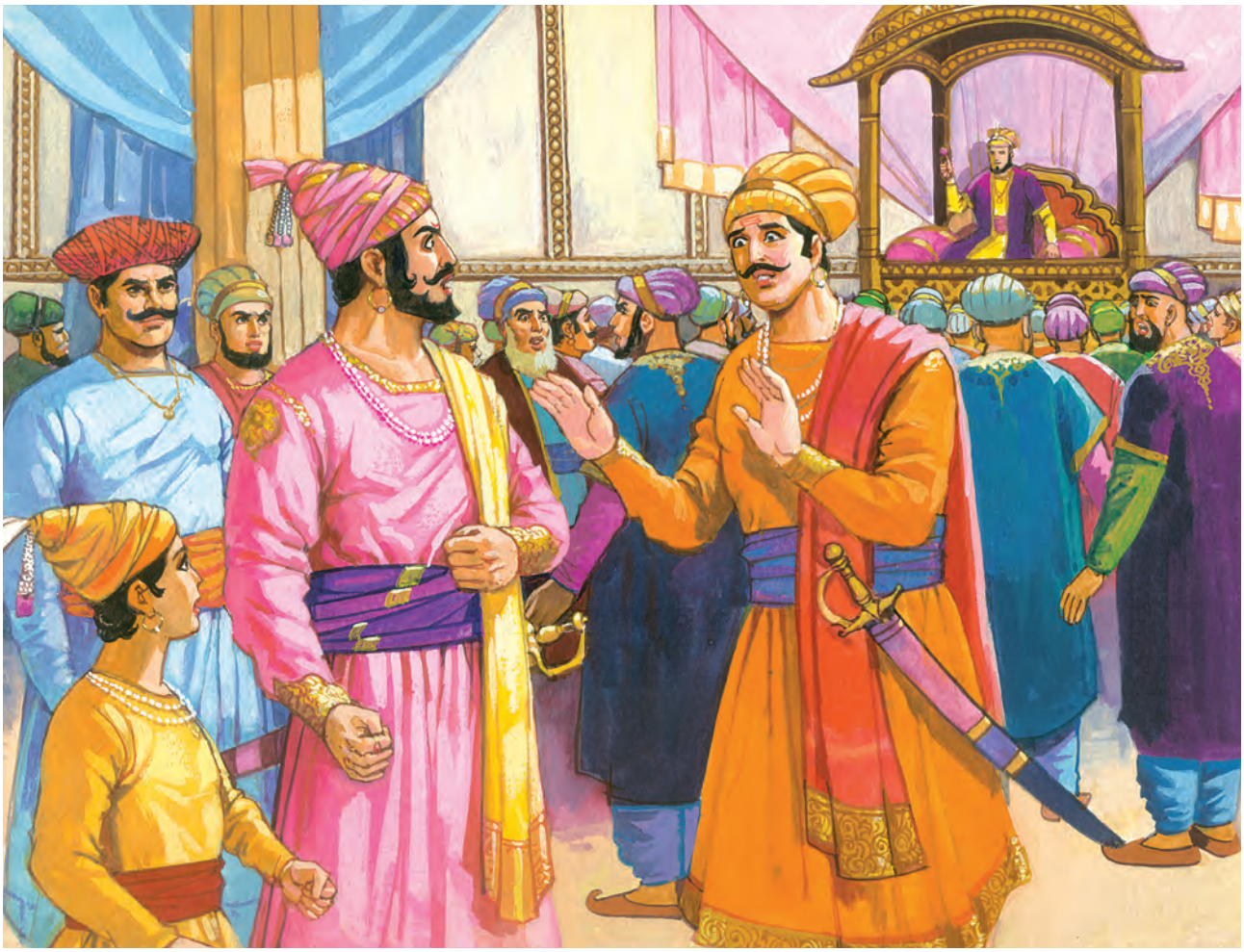
13. Shivaji gives the slip to the Emperor.

Putting his trust in Jaising, Shivaji left for Agra to visit the Emperor. Before leaving for Agra, Shivaji handed over the administration of his Swaraj to his mother Jijabai and took her blessings. With him were his son Sambhaji Raje, some chosen Sardars, and a few trusted people. He also carried with him a large treasure. In due course he reached Agra.

Shivaji Shows his Spirit at the Emperor's Court : On a prearranged day Shivaji Maharaj attended the Emperor's Darbar. Young Sambhaji Raje accompanied him. It was Aurangzeb's fiftieth birthday. After finishing court in Diwan-i-Khas, the Emperor entered the hall where matters of state were discussed. In front of him stood his chief Sardars in serial ranks according to their status. Jaswantsing Rathod whom the Marathas had put to flight on many occasions was in the rank ahead of Shivaji. The Emperor put Shivaji in one of the back rows. Shivaji became angry. After all, he was the King of the sovereign State of Maharashtra and his status demanded that he should



Shivaji Maharaj in the Emperor's Court

be in the front rank. This was a deliberate insult which he would not suffer lying down. Angry and insulted, he turned his back on the royal presence and made for his residence. He decided never to see the Emperor's face again.

The visit was thus a failure. The news of the incident spread everywhere.

The Emperor's Treachery : Aurangzeb ordered guards to be posted around Shivaji's residence. Shivaji Maharaj and Sambhaji Raje thus became, for all practical purposes, the Emperor's prisoners. Shivaji understood the Emperor's treachery. He realised that the Emperor would never let him return to Maharashtra.

Days and weeks passed. Then, one day, Shivaji Maharaj petitioned to the Emperor for permission to return to Maharashtra. He tried again and again, but every time his request was turned down. Then Shivaji Maharaj made up his mind to escape from the Emperor's clutches, come what may. To begin with, he obtained the Emperor's permission to send back to the South the persons who had accompanied him to Agra. The Emperor was happy. He thought that Shivaji Maharaj would now be completely isolated. The only persons left with him now were Sambhaji Raje and the two servants Hiroji Farjand and Madari Mehetar.

Soon after, Shivaji Maharaj pretended to be ill. He complained of severe pain in the stomach. Doctors were called. They started treating the patient. Shivaji started sending out huge baskets of sweets to Sadhus and Maulavis for his quick recovery.

Escape from Agra : In the beginning the guards outside would examine the baskets. In the course of time they got tired of this daily routine and stopped it. One evening Shivaji made Hiroji sleep in his bed and asked Madari to massage his feet. Then Shivaji Maharaj and Sambhaji Raje hid themselves in two of the many baskets that were going out. The baskets were supposed to contain sweets and allowed to pass unchecked. At a place previously fixed, Shivaji Maharaj and Sambhaji Raje got out of the baskets. Their faithful servants were waiting for them with horses kept ready for flight. In the meantime, Hiroji and Madari left the house in Agra under the pretext that they were going to the doctor to get some medicine. The two of them risked their own life and made a valuable contribution to the task of freeing Maharaj from imprisonment.

The Emperor came to know of Shivaji's escape the next day. He was wild with rage. His Sardars were frightened. The Emperor sent spies all over the country to trace Shivaji. All the search, however, was in vain. Once escaped, the Maratha lion was never again caught in the Emperor's net. In disguise, Shivaji Maharaj started towards Maharashtra. He left young Sambhaji Raje behind in a safe place at Mathura and in due course, reached Rajgad. Jijamata was overjoyed to see Shivaji safe and back home. Two

Shivaji Maharaj escapes from Agra.

months later, Sambhaji Raje also arrived safely at Rajgad. In this way, with great skill and daring, Shivaji gave the slip to the Emperor and returned to the safety of his Kingdom. This was in 1666.

EXERCISES

1. Fill in the blanks :

(a) Shivaji Maharaj attended the Emperor's Darbar. It was Emperor Aurangzeb's ..... birthday.
(fiftieth, fortieth, sixtieth)

(b) Shivaji Maharaj left young Sambhaji Raje behind in a safe place at ..... .
(Jhansi, Mathura, Delhi)

2. Write the answer in one sentence.

(a) To whom did Shivaji hand over the administration of Swaraj before leaving for Agra ?

(b) Who were the only persons left with Shivaji in Agra ?

(c) What did Shivaji do for his quick recovery ?

3. Give the answers in two or three sentences.

(a) Why did Shivaji leave the court of Aurangzeb angrily ?

(b) What strategy did Shivaji use to escape from Agra ?

Activity

Paint / Prepare a scene depicting the incident of Shivaji's escape from Agra.

PJQ6HC