

## **Shivaji: The architect of Maratha navy**

**Dr. Nalini K Tembhekar**

Associate Professor, Department of History, Government Vidarbha Institute of Science & Humanities, Amravati, Maharashtra, India

### **Abstract**

Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha Kingdom, was required to assert his equality at Sea in order to safe guard the political and economic interests of his nascent state. Western side of his state was threatened by the Siddis, the Portuguese and the English. The Siddi was like a mouse in the house. Shivaji organized a navy in order to checkmate their activities. He was fully convinced that he who possessed an armada ruled the waves.

**Keywords:** Shivaji, Maratha Kingdom

### **Introduction**

Shivaji was the founder of Maratha Empire in 17<sup>th</sup> Century. He was a far Sighted person. He knew the importance of navy and established Maratha Armada. Hence he is known as the father of Indian Navy.

Maratha Country is fortunate in having a long coastline, with natural harbors for anchoring small and big ships, and big ships, and rocky islands to serve as sentinels of these harbors on the west coast. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Marathas were the first among other Indian powers, which could think of organizing Naval power.

The reason was obvious. They had to deal with the European powers who had occupied parts of Maratha Country on the west coast for establishing their factories, and also for striking their roots in the Indian soil.

The occupation of Goa by the Portuguese in AD 1510 marks a turning point in the history of the west Coast of India by 1570. The Portuguese power on the west coast was firmly established. The sovereignty of the sea had been for many years effectively claimed and exercised by the Portuguese. No merchant dared to launch his bark on the Arabian Sea or the Indian Ocean without first purchasing the Cartages (Permission Letter) of the Government of Goa. The English came to the west coast of India more than a century after the arrival of the Portuguese. The English laid the foundation of British power in western India at Surat, in 1618. When a treaty was concluded between Sir Thomas Roe and the Mughal Emperor Jahangir. Bombay was ceded to Charles II in 1661, as a result of the marriage treaty between him and the Infanta of Portugal In 1687 Bombay was made the Seat of English Government. The English who were well settled at Surat Since 1613 and had taken Bombay in 1665, were bound to come in conflict with the rising Maratha Power under Shivaji's leadership. In Islamic Period when the kingdoms of Bijapur and Ahmadnagar were established, approximately North Konkan (Kolaba) remained under the domination of Nizam Shah and South Konkan (Ratnagiri and Goo) under Adil shah. In the Chaotic Period following the clash of the Three Powers Delhi (Aurangzeb) Bijapur and Ahmadnagar. The Nascent Marathas wrested the whole of south konkan from the Bijapur Kings under their able leader Shivaji. North konkan-Part of

Thana and Kolaba was seized by him soon offer he assumed independence.

Prior to the Marathas, the Portuguese had Captured many a stronghold on the coast of Konkan (North and South) at places like Bombay, Bassein, Thana, Revodanda and Goa. The last was the seat of their Government.

As early as 1657 Shivaji took Kalyan and Bhivandi in North Konkan which was then part of the Bijapur territory along with a number of important places he Seized Cheul, an ancient part on the Coast of Kolaba, and fortified it. He then toured the whole region of South Konkan. His Started Construction of the naval fort of Vijaydurgin 1653.

The Siddi was very powerful and a Sworn enemy of the Maratha State. He carried fire and Sword Everywhere on the Maratha Coast. He was troublesome like a mouse in the house as Sabhasad puts it <sup>[1]</sup>. To prevent his depredation on water and to starve him out, a navy was essential, (This was few direct cause of the emanation of the Maratha navy).

The navy has been considered as an independent limb of the Maratha State by Amatya in his Rajaniti, a work on Maratha polity. Shivaji's main Stance behind the establishment of Navy was the acquisition of Sovereignty of the sea but he might not have lost sight of for economic aspect of the navy that was sea trade. Sovereignty of for home seas, therefore was the first objective of the Maratha navy and the economic factor was its corollary.

It appears that Shivaji must have started the construction of warships soon after he came into possession of Kalyan and Bhivandi (24<sup>th</sup> Oct 1657) situated on the Coast of Thane well-known for trade and ship- building activities. On 16 August 1659, the Governor of Goa wrote to his Majesty the king of Portugal. "A son of xagi, rebel captain of king Idalxa, has mad himself master of the lands near Bassein and Chaul. He is powerful and obliges us to have great care as he has made some ships of war at Biundy, Galiana and Panvel, Ports in the district of Bassein. We have ordered the captain not to allow then to put out in the sea and to impede their exit <sup>[2]</sup> this is for earliest reference to Shivaji's flat as yet available to us. His first Ships should have been built at Kalyan and Panvel near Bassein, for Kalyan was in those days a shipbuilding Centre. The neighboring forests offered an abundance of excellent

timber, and expert shipwrights could be lured away from the Portuguese port of Bassein and the English island of Bombay.

### Maratha Armada

We have different estimates of the numerical strength of Shivaji's navy. According to Krishnaji Anant Sabhasad Shivaji's fleet had two Squadrons, each having two hundred ships of different class. The total numerical Strength according to him was four hundred. Malhar Rao Chitnis also Says that 'For or five hundred Ship of different types were built and five to ten lakhs of rupees were spent for the purpose <sup>[3]</sup> If these figures appear high, English, Portuguese and Dutch records mention the figure is Certainly low. Cosme da Guarda Says that Shivaji's fleet Consisted of twenty, five ships only. Fryer saw on his way to Khare Patan to the South of Dande Rajapuri, a Strong Castle of Seva Gi's defended a deep Bay, where, rode his Navy, consisting of 30 Small Ships and Vessels, the Admiral wearing a white Flag aloft'. But different squadrons of Shivaji's fleet were stationed at different ports like Rajapur, Jetapur, Malvan and Suvarna durg, and Fryer does not pretended to speak of the entire fleet. The most reliable figures are supplied by the English factory records Oxinden wrote on 26 June 1664. "We are here alarmed to expect him by Sea; for which intent report speaks him to be fitting up some and building of others, to the number of 60 saile of frigotts its to surprise all jouncks and vessels belonging to this port" <sup>[4]</sup>. Foreign records mention the number of Maratha Ships on particular occasions but do not give the full Strength of Shivaji's Navy. There are conclusive evidences that Shivaji built new ships from time to time. He sent Dariya Sarang to an unknown destination at the head of 160 ships in November 1670, he had not completely denuded his naval. Bases of their protecting fleet and that the total numerical strength of his navy may be reasonably put at 200 ships, bog and small.

The Maratha navy contained five types of fighting ship, Ghurabs, Galbats or Gallivats, Pals Shibars and Manjhuas. How these ships were manned and armed in Shivajis days is not precisely known, but problem there was not much difference in the naval practice of Shivaji and that of the Angrias. The Ghurabs in the day of the Angrias carried sixteen guns and a hundred and fifty armed men, while the Gallivats had six guns and sixty fighters. The ship's crew were divided into two classes gunners and ordinary soldiers intended for boarding the enemy vessels <sup>[5]</sup>. Daulat khan and Mai Nayak Bhandari were the noted admirals of Shivaji. Most of the captains his fleet were Muslims by faith. Krishnaji Anant Sabhasad says that the chief Commanders of Shivajis fleet were Mai Naik, a Bhandari Dariya Sarang a Musلمان Dariya Sarang Commanded the fleet when it was sent on a mysterious expedition in 1670. Mai Naik led the Khanderi expedition in 1679. Daulat khan also occupied an important position in Shivaji's navy. The bulk of the common crew probably consisted of Kolis and Bhandar hardy races of fishermen of the coast, who were employed for their coverage and endurance. Shivaji also employed Europeans as they have enjoyed the reputation of being good gunners and sailors.

### Naval Expeditions

Shivaji's first naval expedition, which he personally led in 1665 was against Basrur, a place near Kundapur in south

Kanara, and the chief port of Shivappa Naik of Bidnur (Karnatak)

The Portuguese, the Dutch and also the English to same extent were involved in this matter. Shivaji acted very diplomatically. He simultaneously invaded Bardesh, to creat confusion in the minds of the Portuguese, and captured Kudal, Sawantwadi and plundered Vengurle to cheak the Dutch. The English were anxiously waiting for the Portuguese to get the possession of Bombay Island from them. As Portuguese navy to more towards the North to give effect this order of transfer of Bombay issued by the Portuguese king. Shivaji with his armada of 85 Shibads and three big galbats <sup>[6]</sup> assaulted Basrur and plundered it on 8<sup>th</sup> Feb.1665 The booty was utilized for building a strong navy and a few marine forts. No naval engagement took place in this raid. However, this expedition stands as a landmark in the history of Shivaji's naval career.

Next his expedition against the island fort of Janjira. In the seventeenth century the siddis of Janjira attained eminence as a naval power. The siddis with their stronghold at Janjira were a constant source of nuisance to the Marathas. On the sea they were a deadly enemy. His land forces could sweep the Siddis territory and reach Danda-Rajpuri on the mainland opposite to the Janjira fort without much difficulty. For a short period his army held the fort of Danda-Rajapuri. Here his progress was as though stemmed by the waves. His battery every year bombarded the fort but to no purpose. It may be admitted that Shivaji's navy was not enough powerful to overpower the sides <sup>[7]</sup>. In spite of his strenuous efforts the congest of Janjira remained unaccomplished. Realising the difficulty of capturing Janjira, Shivaji decided to make Khanderi as his naval base, eleven miles south of Bombay and thirty miles north to Janjira. No ship could enter or leave Bombay harbor without being seen from khanderi. Shivaji's earlier attempts to justify Khanderi failed owing to the combined opposition of the siddi and the English. In August 1679 Shivaji renewed his project of fortifying Khanderi. He landed Mai Naik and 150 men and four small guns were stationed for the protection of the island. When the English requested the commandant to withdraw, he firmly replied that he had occupied the island at Shivaji's Command and would not withdraw without his order. The fight lasted for five months the quickness of the Maratha navy, their superior ship of their opponents, the English were big and unsuited to quick movements in the shallon waters around Khanderi. However, their artillery was highly superior to that of the Marathas. Ultimately, the big numbers of the Maratha boats and their quickness prevailed and they got possession of the island of Khanderi. The siddi who wintered in the harbour of Bombay every year by the permission of the English was henceforth forbidden to do so <sup>[8]</sup>. But the occupation of Underi Island lying close to Khanderi, by the siddis, defeated the purpose of Shivaji, and the siddi meance continued to threaten the Marathas through the subsequent course of their History.

### Marine forts

The marine forts of Shivaji were of two types those which were built on rock islands, surrounded by sea on all sides and the second one were coastal forts or the head-land forts, constructed on the sea-shore with their entrances from the landside and rears facing the sea. Sindhudurg Anjanwel, Yeshwantgad or Reddi, Vijayadurg or Gheria, Jayagad,

Ratnagiri, Kolaba, Khanderi were some of the major marine forts of Shivaji either constructed or renovated and fortified by him during his period to fight mainly with the siddis, and protect the Marathas from the European powers on the west coast <sup>[9]</sup>. Shivaji poured lot of money in these forts Konkan. He used latest technology by barrowing the services of skilled artisans, particularly the Portuguese Sabhasad informs that, Shivaji began the construction of Sindhu durga in 1664. We have it that 20 khandis of lead were used at the foundation of the fort.

The Chitraguata Chronicle gives us a clear idea of the difficulties experienced by Shivaji in such undertaking. Shivaji had to purchase 200 khandis of iron to manufacture the tools for masons and about 3,000 men including 100 Portuguese experts from Goa were employed for the construction of such a huge project. It took three years to complete this fort <sup>[10]</sup>. The main function of these forts was to serve as store houses and guard the sea against the activities of the enemy. This purpose must have been fairly achieved by these forts during the period of Shivaji.

### **Mercantile Marine**

It is quite clear from the references in the East India Company's records that Shivaji had established commercial relations with Mocha (Western Arabia) Persia, Basera, Aden, Muscat, etc. Chaul, Dabhol, Kalyan, Bhivandi, Vengurla, Pen Rajapur, etc. were the main port towns engaged in Coastal trade during his period <sup>[11]</sup> Jadunath Sarkar has remarked, "A Merchant fleet is also the nursery of a national fighting navy" <sup>[12]</sup> A factory record of 1662 mentions that Shivaji was fitting out two vessels of Considerable burden which he intended for Mocha. Another report of the year 1664-65 says that Shivaji had possessed himself of the most considerable ports belonging to Deccan to the number of eight or nine, from when he sets out two or three more trading vessels yearly from every part to Persia, Bussera, Mocha etc.

A letter of 1674 mentions that he had at Rajapur four or five masted vessels which used to be employed in trade to Muscat and other places <sup>[13]</sup>.

We have not enough information regarding the articles of trade, but it seems that rice and salt were the two major trading commodities. It is Mentioned that in the storm of 1669 several of Shivaji's Ships and rice boats were lost one ship where of was very richly laden <sup>[14]</sup>. About salt, it is recorded that a salt fleet having for convoy a ship of 250 tons, and some frigatts had gone to Trombay from Bombay to purchase salt <sup>[15]</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

It is true that though Shivaji's fleet was numerically superior to the fleets of European nations in the Indian waters, but in the artillery and in the art of navigation it was vastly inferior, Shivaji himself cannot be blamed for these deficiencies. In twenty years one could hardly expect him to create a navy and bring it to perfection.

Only because of Shivaji's naval strength the Europeans dreaded him, wished his friendship and even sued for help to destroy their revel in the field. Though they helped the siddi against him and denied the same to Shivaji, yet Shivaji saw to it that no enemy united against him. Shivaji's naval officers could maintain Khanderi against the English and the Siddi combined. Hence Jadunath Sarkar says, "Nothing Proves

Shivaji's genius as a born Statesman more clearly than his creation of a navy and naval bases."

### **References**

1. Joshi S.N. (Editor) Krishnaji Anant Sabhasad, Virachita Chhatrapati Shri Shivajiraje Yanchi Bakhar, Chitrashala Prakashn, Puna – 1960, page No. 63
2. Pisurlekar P.S., Portuguese Marathe Sambandh Poona University, 1967, page No. 4
3. Sen S.N, The Military System of the Marathas, Orient Longmans Private Ltd, Calcutta, 1958, page No. 157.
4. Foster, The English Factories in India 1661-4, Page No.- 345, Sen S.N.Ibid 157
5. Derby, A Faithful Narrative of the Capture of the ship, page No-53, Sen S.N. Ibid page No.160
6. Dr Raj Kumar (Editor), 'Maratha Military Systems' Chapter- Maratha and the sea, common wealth publishers, New Delhi, 2004, page No.239
7. Dr. Apte, B.K.,The Maratha Navy and Merchant ships, state Board for literature and culture, Government of Maharashtra, Sachivalaya, Bombay India, Jan-1973,page no.17
8. Ibid-page No—72
9. Joshi S.N.(Editor), Krshnaji Anant Sabhasad, Ibid, page no.68, Dr. Raj Kumar (Editor)- Maratha Military System, Chapter-Maratha and the sea, page no. 243
10. Ahluwalia B.K (Editor),Shivaji and Indian Nationalism-Chapter- Dr. R.V. Ramdas – the architect of Maratha Navy, cultural Publishing house-Delhi, 1984- page No.127.
11. Kulkarni A.R., Maharashtra in the Age of Shivaji, Pune, 1969, page No.219-222, Dr. Raj Kumar(Editor) – Maratha Military System, Chapter- Marathas and the Sea, common wealth publishers- New Delhi, 2004, page no. 241
12. Sarkar Jadunath, Shivaji and his times, 5<sup>th</sup> ed, Calcutta 1952, page No.268-75
13. Paranjape B.G.(Ed)- English Records on Shivaji, Pune, 1931, Part II-page No. 7, Dr. Rajkumar (Editor), Ibid, page no.241-242
14. Paranjape B.G. (Ed) English Records on Shivaji Pune, 1931, Part I- 164, page No.132.
15. Paranjape, B.D. (Ed) Ibid, part –I- 189, page No. 146.