3. THE GENIUS OF SHIVAJI

I

KONKAN COAST IN THE 17TH CENTURY -

India had been trading with Europe through land as well as through the Red Sea long before the beginning of the Christian era. This trade was particularly brisk during the first three centuries of the Christian era when the eastward expansion of the Roman Empire facilitated commercial intercourse between the East and the West. But the old trade routes through Egypt and up the Persian Gulf through Syria were closed in the seventh century when the Arabs conquered those countries. Thenceforward, the bulk of the overseas Indian trade was monopolized by the Arabs. The Arabs exploited their exclusive monopoly in the overseas trade between the East and the West, which annoyed the West. Furthermore, with the occupation of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, the overland trade routes fell under their control and became unsafe. As a result the Europeans were virtually compelled to stay away from this lucrative trade, particularly in spices, with the East.

The theory of Sea Power states that geographical and geo-political compulsions enable a nation to attain sea-power. In the 15th century, the virtual exclusion of the Europeans from the lucrative trade with the East, therefore, proved to be the driving factor for the European nations to initiate sustained efforts to discover an alternative trade route (essentially a non-Mediterranean sea-route) to the East/India. To Portugal, belongs the credit of the discovery. Prince Henry of Portugal, surnamed ‘The Navigator’, inspired a succession of Portuguese sea-captains to accomplish this job, though the new sea route to the East could not be discovered during his life time¹. In 1487, Bartholomew Diaz rounded the Cape of Good Hope and ten years later Vasco Da Gama succeeded in landing at Calicut taking the same route.

The Portuguese: The Portuguese, thus, were the first amongst the European nations to register their arrival in India via this new sea route. Vasco da Gama, under the patronage of the King Emmanuel of Portugal, explored a new sea route for India and
landed at Calicut in 1453. It should be noted here that Vasco’s small sailing ships (caravels), for his first voyage to India, were neither purpose built nor even the most suitable vessels for the journey into the unknown of such unprecedented duration. Admittedly, their sailing qualities, particularly their ability to sail close to the wind, were superior to those of most contemporary vessels and they had 20 canons between them, but neither they nor the tub like freighter that accompanied them could have matched the immediate impression created by the much large and more numerous ships of the Chinese Admiral Cheng Ho’s fleet. Vasco da Gama, anyway, was received with curiosity and courtesy by the local King Zamorin who also granted him certain trading privileges. Vasco sailed back to his country after a brief stay of three months in India. These three months were crucial to his understanding of the politico-economic situation of that part of the Western Coast of India. He returned to India in 1501 with a definite purpose which was cleverly backed by 14 well armed ships. The Arabs could not tolerate the Portuguese making dent in their share of lucrative profit gained from the Indian trade. The Arabs, therefore, immediately swung into action and declared war on the Portuguese with the help of the local potentates in 1502. Vasco, however, won a naval victory with a clever and effective use of the Portuguese flotilla of 14 well armed ships. The Arabs, according to Admiral Ballard, had some cannon of very short range, but the Portuguese secured windward position and so manoeuvred as to be able to bombard the enemy without ever taking them close enough to board: ‘the weather gauge and long range guns won Vasco the day.’ In this manner, a more numerous force of the Arabs and Malabar ships was defeated - an event which was destined to alter the political equation of the Indian Ocean drastically. Thus began the era of ‘armed expedition’, initiated by the Portuguese, in the Indian Ocean. The fierce demonstration of their naval prowess, at the same time, had earned them respect and won them allies on land. A beginning of landed settlement in India followed simultaneously with De Almeida’s appointment as the first Viceroy of the Portuguese territories in India.

In the meanwhile, the Portuguese were on the way to establish their absolute control over the entire Indian Ocean as well. Albuquerque had been sent in 1506 to conduct war against the Muslims in the Red Sea. He seized Socotra, an island near the Red Sea, and built a fort there. He took and fortified Ormuz in the Persian Gulf, and sank
every vessel in the port. He succeeded De Almedia as the Portuguese Governor (of Indian territories) in India in 1509. By that time Almeida had ensured that the sea route between India and Portugal remained under his firm control. In this process, the Portuguese naval proficiency was once again successfully demonstrated in 1509, when a combined naval challenge of Zamorin, Gujarati’s and the Egyptians near Diu was successfully warded off by the Portuguese fleet. Albuquerque had a more unwavering vision and was far more ambitious than his predecessor. He believed that the Portuguese could dominate the traffic of the entire Indian Ocean by capturing the strategic points and maintaining command of the sea. At the same time, he was equally quick to realize that ‘a domain founded on a navy alone cannot last’. He, therefore, embarked upon a policy of territorial conquest in India. Goa was conquered with the help of some Hindu support in 1510. Goa provided a wide and sheltered harbour for the Portuguese ships. In 1511, he seized Malacca and laid the strong foundations of the ‘Portuguese Power in the East’. After his death, his policy was followed by his successors. The Portuguese built a fort at Colombo in 1518, while in India their settlements grew at Nagapatam, San Thome, Chittagong and Hugli on the Bay of Bengal.

All this expansion did not go un-noticed and the native rulers soon realized the grievous challenge it posed to their sovereignty. When the Gujarat Sultan Mehmud Begda requisitioned the help of the Turkish ruler (in the year and reason) to put an end to the Portuguese menace, little did he expect that the Portuguese would prevail upon the allied force. The battle had far reaching implications. The Portuguese became a power on the sea coast which gave them an undisputed command of the sea-borne trade in western India. During the reign of Bahadur Shah II, a Portuguese fleet commanded by Nano Da Cunha, bombarded Diu in February, 1531, but failed. In frustration, Cunha destroyed and burnt Tarapur, Mahim, Kelve, Agasi and even Surat. However, Bahadur Shah could do a little against another Portuguese attempt on Daman with a heavy reinforcement from Lisbon. The Portuguese not only wrested Daman from him but also forced him to sign peace on humiliating terms. One of the terms of the peace read, 

“...that all ships bound for the Red Sea from the Kingdom of Cambay should set out from (Portuguese) Bassein; that no vessels should go to other ports without leave from the Portuguese; that no ships of war could be built in any of the ports belonging to the
King of Cambay..." A of Gujarat tried to expel the Portuguese from the island of Diu but met with failure. A contemporary Mughal painting illustrates the finer aspects of this naval engagement. The Portuguese, in turn, conspired against him and very soon captured Bassein from him. From Bassein, they started issuing Portuguese permits (Cartazes) to the Indian traders so that their trade should be under the Portuguese control. The Gujarati ships were forced to touch Bassein and pay customs dues to the Portuguese authorities. Very soon, Bahadur Shah was coerced to allow them to fortify Diu in return for the 'Portuguese help from sea and land' against the Mughal emperor Humayun. It was from here that the Portuguese theory and claim of the 'sovereignty over the sea' was floated. Moreover, the native rulers were prevented from fortifying their coastal settlements as the Portuguese portrayed themselves as their 'friends'. In the meanwhile, the resistance to the Portuguese power on the Indian land and waters continued. A Turkish fleet arrived at Diu in 1538 and joined the Gujaratis in laying siege to Diu, but it was not successful. In 1570-71, Goa was attacked by the combined forces of Bijapur and Ahmednagar and the forts of Daman and Bassein were besieged by the Mughals in the time of Akbar, but the command of sea saved the situation for the Portuguese.

The Portuguese remained the undisputed masters of the Indian trade in the 16th century. However, the 17th century saw a gradual decline in the power and prestige of the Portuguese in India. It was because a multitude of reasons. The most important being the corruption in their administrative set-up - the supervision of which was but difficult from Portugal. The second reason was the entry of other European players like the English, the Dutch and the French in the Indian Ocean. These were more modern and competitive in their outlook to have allowed the Portuguese to easily corner the benefits of the Indian trade. The third reason was the rise of the Maratha Swarajya under the leadership of Shivaji, which exerted more and determined pressure from the land side. In this way the Portuguese were entangled in a triangular conflict with the other European powers when Shivaji's Swarajya was conceived.

**The English:** The 15th and 16th centuries were the age of geographical discoveries and cut-throat mercantilism. The British East India Company was granted a Royal Charter on the 31st of December 1600, with an exclusive right to Indian trade for a period
of 15 years. As soon as it entered the Indian waters, it was challenged by the Dutch and the Portuguese. The Portuguese also thwarted the English attempt to get trading concessions from the Mughals who were the virtual masters of mainland India. The English fleet, apparently in an attempt to demonstrate their naval might, soon contested the Portuguese near Surat. The brief naval fight between the two powers took place near Swally in which Capt. Thomas Best, the commander of the English fleet, emerged victorious. The Portuguese prestige in India was given a severe jolt as they suffered heavy losses and the English came to be respected for their organized naval strength. What followed, therefore, was not un-expected. Sir Tomas Roe, as the Royal ambassador of the British Queen to the Mughal emperor, succeeded in securing numerous trading privileges for the English Company along with the permission to establish factories in different parts of the Mughal dominion, namely- Surat, Agra, Ahmedabad and Broach. For all practical purposes, the Company’s settlement at Surat was granted the status of the Company’s headquarters in India and the administrator of the factory at Surat, therefore, came to be regarded as the President of Indian settlements.

Unlike the Portuguese, who used power not only to coerce the native rulers for obtaining trading concessions, but also for territorial conquest in India, the English, by and large, behaved as peaceful traders and stayed away from interfering in the local political affairs, particularly in the first half of the 17th century. Isolated encounters of the English ships with Indian merchant ships, however, did occasionally take place for some reason or other. Interestingly, such encounters do provide us with an idea of the tonnage as well as arming of the Indian merchant ships to meet exigencies of robbery/piracy on the high seas. The English Factory Records mention an incident of the year 1625 in which a 250 ton Indian ship with 20 pieces of artillery and shots etc. failed to defeat a comparatively smaller and lightly armed English ship. The English Company, on the other hand, kept on acquiring new settlements, thereby expanding its base in India. It also took advantage of the decay of the Portuguese power in the Indian Ocean region and snatched Ormuz (at the Mouth of Persian Gulf) from them in 1622. In the second half of the 17th century, the Company’s character changed as the new charters empowered it to operate as a territorial power with the privileges of minting money, erecting fortifications, exercise of judicial rights over the English subjects and of making war and peace with the
native rulers. In the meanwhile, the island of Bombay was also acquired from the crown\textsuperscript{19} at a rental of mere 10 pounds on a yearly basis. By 1687 Bombay had been elevated as the headquarters of the company’s settlements on the West Coast of India. The natural advantages and a secluded character of Bombay Island\textsuperscript{20} were more suited for the Company’s political ambitions.

The French had also registered their arrival in the second half of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, and together with the Portuguese and the Dutch, they posed serious competition and challenges for the English Company in Indian waters. However, it was the rise of Shivaji as the head of an organized and highly motivated Maratha force in the Western India that proved to be more troublesome to the English (more so because of the military pressure he could exert on the English settlements through his infantry; the sack of Surat being one such example). The interests of the English and the Marathas clashed in that region and the close proximity of the English settlements to the territory of Maratha Swarajya brought them into conflict on numerous occasions. More so, after the acquisition of Bombay and its development as the chief settlement of the Company, Shivaji had to devise ways and means to fulfill his political ambitions in the teeth of a strong opposition. For Shivaji, any hindrance to the realization of his goal of Swarajya was to be dealt with on a priority basis. Hence, it was but natural that he would be keen to keep these powers under check.

\textbf{The Dutch:} The advent of the Dutch in the East was not a sudden event but was a consequence of some earlier attempts by the Dutchmen to lodge themselves in this region. The visit of the Dutch traveler Van Linschoten to India as the secretary of the Archbishop of Goa in 1583 added further impetus to their adventure in the Indian waters. Kail writes, “When he (Van Linschoten) returned home in 1589, he carried sufficient proof to indicate that the Portuguese claim to be lords of ‘conquest, navigation and commerce of Ethiopia, India, Arabia and Persia’ was not as effective as the title assumed by King Manuel I in 1501, particularly in the vicinity of the Sunda straits and the island of Java in Indonesia, where the Portuguese had no effective control.”\textsuperscript{21} With the formation of the United East India Company of the Netherlands in 1602, the Dutch found their way to the Indian waters in a much organized manner. However, the entry of the Dutch to the Indian scene was more aggressive as they were backed by a charter which
conferred on them the right to make war (particularly on the Portuguese), conclude treaties (with foreign powers), acquire territories and build fortresses, factories and strongholds. It was obvious that the Portuguese, who were already on the path of decline, would be the first to experience the Dutch onslaught on their possessions in the East. The Dutch wrested the Indonesian islands from the Portuguese in 1619, successfully blockaded the Portuguese Goa in 1639 and subsequently captured Malacca in 1641. In India, the Dutch trading company entered into the good books of many native rulers (many of them avowed enemies of the Portuguese) including the Zamorin of Calicut, who permitted them to establish factories in their country. A Dutch captain, Van der Hagen landed at Calicut in 1604 and had a personal meeting with the Zamorin (11 Oct, 1604). The Portuguese made an unsuccessful raid on the harbour of Calicut at the same time with the understandable intent of frightening the Zamorin, so that he should not allow the Dutch to settle in Calicut. However, the outcome of the meeting was a treaty concluded between the Dutch and Zamorin which stipulated: 'A close alliance, eternal and unbreakable for the oppression of the Portuguese, and for driving them out of the lands of the Zamorin, and also out of the whole of India... A fortress would be built which would remain in the hands and under the domination of the Dutch all the time. Hagen's visit to Calicut brought about the first political understanding between the Dutch and an Indian prince'. The treaty underlines Dutch policy in India - to ally themselves with Indian powers, to establish trading agencies and to openly attack the Portuguese whose monopoly of the Eastern trade they regarded as a grievance. Despite the Indian prospects, the Dutch were more attracted towards the lucrative trade of pepper and spices of the East Indies. They, therefore, competed fiercely with the Portuguese and the English and gradually established their supremacy and headquarters outside India. Referring to the Portuguese sources on the Dutch-Portuguese rivalry, Om Prakash remarks that 'the decade of 1630s witnessed catastrophic losses to the Portuguese country traders at the hands of the VOC. The Portuguese losses between 1629 and 1636 were estimated at some 155 ships destroyed or captured, besides goods worth 7.5 million xerifins lost. The Portuguese also lost Nagapattinam to the Dutch in 1658'. In India, Negapatam was designated as their headquarters after it was seized from the Portuguese in 1659. The Dutch were more organized and concentrated in the Malabar Coast as compared to the
Konkan Coast, which was the bone of contention between the various native powers and the Marathas under Shivaji. Hence, we do find a direct involvement of the Dutch in the affairs of the Swarajya. However, they were keeping a constant track of Shivaji's activities ever since Surat was raided by the Marathas in 1664. As per the Dutch accounts, during Shivaji's (first) raid of Surat in 1664, 'the only resistance offered was by Theodre van Adrichem, the Dutch director and Sir George Oxinden of the English factory, who barricaded their buildings and prepared to defend their property...the Dutch also gave asylum to the Mughal Governor. Aurangzeb recognized the courageous rescue of the governor and ordered that for a period of one year, the Dutch would be exempt from paying any custom duties in all their factories in Gujarat...'

The relations of the Dutch Company with respect to the other European Companies like the English and the French, nevertheless, fluctuated wildly. The events of Europe, particularly those concerning war and peace between these nations, had a direct bearing on the relation between these companies in India and elsewhere. As a result, at times we find the Dutch working at tandem with the English and the French against a common enemy; and at times, we find them indulged in fierce military rivalry among themselves. For example, the Dutch tried to take advantage of the rift between Shivaji and the English (in the 1670s). The Dutch governor of Sri Lanka Rijkloff van Goens, opened negotiations with the Marathas, promising the assistance of the Dutch navy in capturing Danda-Rajapur, if Shivaji would provide 3000 soldiers for the conquest of Bombay. We, therefore, can not generalize the trends of the inter-relations between these European companies, but it can be argued for sure that they were competing with each other for more than just economic advantages.

The French: The French were the last to enter and compete for the control of the Indian waters. As the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English had acquired immense riches by their eastern trade, so the French were also attracted towards it. The French East India Company was founded in 1664 and it established its first factory on the Indian soil in 1667 at Surat. When the French appeared on the Indian scenario, the western India, particularly the Konkan Coast was in turmoil. The humble beginnings of Shivaji's Swarajya had been made. Surat was sacked at ease by the Marathas making a mockery of the established Mughal rule in that part of India. The French company in India initially
adopted a conciliatory policy towards the native rulers. The Company’s representatives met Shivaji at Rajapuri in 1667 and obtained the permission to establish a factory there. They also obtained permission from the Sultan of Golkonda to establish a factory at Masulipatam in 1669. Their course, however, was far from being smooth and they had to struggle hard to establish their foothold on the Indian soil. In 1672, they had a naval engagement with the Dutch over the control of San Thome. The English, too, were not willing to let them settle down without hindrances. The fortunes of the French company were soon revived under the able command of Francis Martin who came as the Governor of the French settlements in India in 1672. He acquired Pondicherry in 1674 and it was gradually developed as their main centre in India. Like the Dutch, the French were also not concentrated in the Konkan Coast. Their area of interest and influence in India was the Eastern Coast, hence they were not as actively involved in the politics of the Deccan as the Portuguese and the English. This, however, does not imply that they were not interested in the affairs of Western India which housed their potential European trade rivals, the English. As the Maratha power further expanded in the early 18th Century, they came across the French more frequently for strategic requirements, and the French, as we shall see in the foregoing discussion, proved to be more than eager to comply with the Maratha or other native ruler’s requests. The role of the French in the 18th century Indian politics was more clearly defined (because of the Anglo-French rivalry in the Carnatic) than their involvement in the 17th century. Ultimately, however, they lost to the English in this rivalry and became dependent on them.

The Mughals: The Mughal power was at its zenith in the opening years of the 17th century. All the territorial conquests had been consolidated. The composite culture as propagated by Akbar had practically broadened the Mughal base in India. The Mughal Empire took care to maintain a large standing army to buttress its authority; but it failed to realize the importance of guarding the sea-coast by building a strong navy. The Mughals, in fact, did not pay attention to the development of naval force before Akbar established his control over Gujarat in 1571. Right from the Mauryan period, down to the pre-modern days, the office of Admiralty, in general, has to perform certain functions to perform, such as: To ensure the supply of ships and boats for purposes of navigation, to ensure supply of men (supposedly well versed in the knowledge of the marine matters)
for crew, to watch the river or other waterways, regulate tonnage, etc. and to administer
and promulgate the imposition, realization and imposition of duties. We indeed come
across the references of a dedicated officer - Mir Bahr, in charge of the small fleets of
boats maintained by the Mughals. At the same time, Abul Fazl also specifies at least a
dozen categories of the crew employed by the Mughals. Abul Fazl, though, mentions
about the use of boats fitted with artillery for specific purpose, but such references are
meager and do not indicate towards any concerted attempt by the Mughal rulers to
organize a navy. No doubt, Akbar and his officers were capable of raising and
maintaining a powerful navy on the European style, but they did not perceive any kind of
danger from the sea-route and thus remained negligent towards the formation of a
powerful sea-going navy. As such they seemed to be more interested towards the
maintenance of commerce in Bengal. In this way the ‘essentially continental outlook’ of
the Mughal Empire prevented the foundations of an organized Mughal navy. Shah-Jahan
did build a small coastal navy in Bengal and used it effectively against the Portuguese,
but by that time the successors of Vasco da Gama had ceased to be major naval power in
the Indian waters. Mughals seemed to be more content with the profitable commerce of
the oceanic trade and the safety of the Haj pilgrims from the West Coast of India. During
the time of Aurangzeb, we find a slight departure from this continental outlook. May be,
because of the political exigencies of the Deccan or otherwise that Aurangzeb was
handed over the responsibility of maintaining the safety of the Western Coast of his
empire to the Siddi of Janjira. The latter had cleverly transferred allegiance from the
Bijapuri rulers to the Mughals in view of the rapid success of Shivaji against the Bijapur
state. Moreover, the Siddi himself was hard-pressed by Shivaji who was exerting pressure
on his coastal possessions from land as well as from the sea through. In this process
Shivaji was making a gainful use of his recently raised naval fleet. In this way, we find
that the Mighty Mughals had to enlist the Siddi of Janjira in their service as they
themselves did not maintain an efficient navy. The Siddi-Maratha naval conflict occupies
an important part of the Maratha history.

**Bijapur and Ahmednagar:** When the Portuguese made their appearance in
India, the Vijayanagar empires was at the helm of its power in the south. In the Deccan,
the Bahmani Empire had split up into five Kingdoms, namely - Berar, Bijapur,
Ahmednagar, Golkonda and Bidar. In due course of time, the Kingdom’s of Berar and Bidar were amalgamated by Ahmednagar and Bijapur respectively in 1574 and 1609. It was, therefore, obvious for the Portuguese to interact with these Kingdoms for trading concessions and privileges. But the Portuguese, instead of confining themselves within the limits of legitimate trade, became unduly ambitious to establish their supremacy in the eastern seas. In 1510, Goa was bombarded and captured by Alfonso de Albuquerque from Bijapur. It was subsequently made the capital of the Portuguese India in 1530. On the other hand the Portuguese relations with the rulers of Vijayanagar were friendly.

By the close of the 15th century, the Kingdom of Gujarat under the command of Mehmud Begada had been exerting its power in the Konkan area. The prominent settlements at Daman, Bassein and Diu, etc. were a part of Begada’s territory. As noted earlier in this chapter, he failed to prevent the Portuguese in establishing a firm foothold in the coastal waters of Konkan. The volume of coastal trade was also quite high and equally lucrative during that period. Dabhol, Chaul, Cambay and Diu were the most important ports engaged in coastal trade in the early 16th century. The Portuguese obviously eyed upon these important trading centers. In December 1508, the Portuguese governor Almeida wrested the port of Dabhol from the rulers of Bijapur. The Adilshah of Bijapur further lost Goa to them in 1510. On the upper Konkan, Mahim was occupied next in 1516, and in 1521 the Portuguese captured the famous port of Chaul from the Sultan of Gujarat. From the rulers of Gujarat, the Portuguese encountered the most determined resistance and both the sides often resorted to plunder and pillage. In 1531, Diu was sacked by the Portuguese and the following year Daman was burnt by them. All the towns from Bassein to Tarapur were subjected to indiscriminate plunder and arson. Bassein was finally brought under the Portuguese control in 1535. The next addition was the port of Daman in 1558. With all these trading points under their control, the Portuguese system of Cartaz was effectively implemented. The system of Cartaz not only established the firm authority of the Portuguese in the Indian waters but also brought them immense revenue throughout the 16th century.

Late in the 16th century, the Mughal imperial forces under Akbar had extend the Mughal boundaries up to the Deccan and had reached up to the frontiers of Ahmednagar. At that time the Nizamshahi of Ahmednagar was fiercely contesting with the Portuguese
for the control over the Konkan Coast. To complicate the matters further, the death of the
Nizam had initiated intense court-factionalism which led to almost a civil war like
situation. Fortunately, however, for Ahmednagar, the able command of Malik Ambar
provided a new energy. Moreover, the coming of the Dutch and the English Companies,
and their open hostilities against the Portuguese in the Indian waters, provided further
opportunities to Ahmednagar to forestall its decay. A treaty had been signed with the
state of Ahmednagar which was the southern limit of the Mughal rule. But, early in the
17th century, the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan decided to expand the Mughal frontiers
further south. As a result, military expeditions were dispatched towards Ahmednagar and
Bijapur. The Mughals first succeeded in the wrapping-up the state of Ahmednagar in
1636. In the 1650s the pressure on Bijapur was mounted, and the most able Mughal
prince Aurangzeb was deputed as the Mughal governor of the Deccan to supervise the
military operations against Bijapur. However, owing to the illness of the Emperor and the
ensuing war of succession among the contenders of the Mughal throne, the military
operations against Bijapur were left incomplete by Aurangzeb, who rushed towards Delhi
in 1656. Shivaji was quick to take advantage of the chaos prevalent in the Deccan region.
To carve out a niche for himself, he also set out on a series of military conquests on his
own.

II

SHIVAJI: SETTING THE KEEL AFLOAT

Shivaji’s destiny was being shaped at Poona by the inspiring statesmanship of his
guardian Dadaji Konda Dev and ever encouraging mother Jija Bai. He was resolved to
carve out an independent path of conquest and consolidation for himself for the cause of
the Maratha people. Though it was a perilous course as he was not sure of the response or
support of his own Marathi brethren, many of them commanding big positions under the
neighbouring kingdoms, he decided to go ahead with the blessings of his mother.

He started his career of conquests from the surroundings of Poona as he had made
himself familiar with the paths and defiles of the hilly country in and around Poona. He
found the adjoining hill forts in a state of utter neglect as regards maintenance and
garrisoning. There he realized his possibilities, and embarked upon a systematic
acquisition of the most prominent of them. It is significant to put on record here that he applied both of the means, viz. force as well as deceit, to win over these forts and succeeded in his objective in due course. Since the area of his conquest was not, in any way, crucial or strategic to the grand system of the Bijapur state, the Bijapur authorities did not really suspect Shivaji's intentions and just asked Shahji Bhonsle to keep his son's activities under check.

A more vigorous policy of conquests was initiated by Shivaji after the death of Dadaji Kondadev in 1647. Credit goes to Shivaji for having chosen such areas for his conquest and consolidation in the initial phase which were not only far away from the Bijapur capital but were also comparatively unsettled in the wake of the dissolution of Ahmednagar. In short, it was the upper-Deccan region (the erstwhile Ahmednagar territory) which was zeroed upon by Shivaji for his military conquest. This was the region, which though conquered by the Mughals, was not consolidated by them. The jurisdictions of the Mughals and Bijapur were still overlapping in this region. The Konkan region, particularly the northern part was a part of this area. Shivaji found an opportunity and added to this confusion by formally collaborating with Aurangzeb, the Mughal Viceroy of Deccan, who was looking for a pretext to wipe-out the Bijapuri Kingdom. Fortunately for Shivaji, Aurangzeb had to rush to Delhi for the ensuing war of succession. The departure of Aurangzeb provided Shivaji (on the basis of his offer to serve the Mughals) the very pretext to his claim that he was seizing the Konkan territory for the Mughals.

The circumstances under which Shivaji undertook the conquest of the northern Konkan further gives an insight of the brilliance of his stratagem. It should be noted that by that time the southern reaches of his own Jagir of Poona had been well consolidated by way of the conquest and proper garrisoning of the fortresses of Torna, Rajgad, Simhagad and Purandhar. The whole plan of action seems to be carefully conceived as Shivaji had also stopped payment of the yearly dues to the Bijapur state (more so, to his father on the plea that the heavy expenditure on the maintenance of the Jagir did not leave him with any surplus to be sent to him. Shivaji seems to have started behaving as an independent authority by the time he actually embarked upon the conquest of Konkan in 1656. D. V. Apte has argued that the year 1656 marks the beginning of the
independent career of Shivaji. The records further suggest that Shivaji had appointed Shamrav Nilkanth, who understood Persian language, to the office of Peshwa. Further, for the proper administration of the area under his control, he nominated Ragho Ballal Atre to the post of Chitnavis (Secretary) and another person of the same name to be his military accountant, and then raised some new troops, stated to be more than twenty-five thousand in numbers. The administrative instructions of Shivaji for his conquered territory could be found from the year 1651. By that time, the Mores of Jawli had been eliminated and Mahad Ghat, the only pass between the Koyna valley and the Konkan, was secured with the masterful strategy of erecting a fort (Pratapgad), 1000 feet above the Koyna valley. In this way, Shivaji ensured that he was totally secured from any military threat from the eastern side when he was reducing the Konkan and extending the frontiers of his Swarajya up to the western sea coast.

The keenness of Shivaji to possess the sea coast of Konkan coast could be well established from the fact that he, professing himself a servant of the Emperor, entered into a correspondence with Aurangzeb, at the time when the latter was on the point of commencing war against Bijapur (in the wake of the death of the Sultan Muhammad Adil Shah in Nov, 1656). It is equally interesting to note that Aurangzeb ‘really listened to his overtures, assented to his keeping what he had wrested from Bijapur, and, with the alleged right of the Emperor to dispose of that Kingdom, consented to a proposal from Shivaji of taking possession of Dabhol and its dependencies of the sea coast’. The Factory Records of the British East India Company also refer to the political chaos of 1656 at the Bijapur court and present the picture in this manner: ‘Shahji Bhonsle made himself practically independent in his new possessions, while his son Shivaji openly defied his nominal sovereign by attacking Janjira (Danda-Rajapuri)’. A Portuguese letter of the year 1657 also makes a mention of Shivaji’s conquests on the Konkan Coast by recording, “Shahji’s son has taken possession of Upper Chaul”.

At the same time when Shivaji was trying to establish his military and political authority over the Konkan Coast, he came across the maritime powers entrenched at various pockets on the west coast. He seems to have quickly comprehended the cause of their success and dominance. Shivaji, therefore, immediately planned for his own naval establishment. This was indeed a practical and well-calculated decision that speaks
volumes of a political genius who would not only like to scrupulously guard his political fortunes, but would also like to add to the economic fortunes of his nascent Swarajya by an organized use of the navy. The first ever definite information regarding Maratha naval activities come from a Portuguese document of the year 1659 which, apart from the other things, also mentions that the Maratha shipbuilding activities had commenced at Kalyan-Bhiwandi.\textsuperscript{46} It is indeed true that one of the pressing compulsions behind laying the foundations of the Maratha navy, in the words of Sabhasad,\textsuperscript{47} was the desire of the Chattrapati to subdue the Siddi of Janjira. But, in the hindsight, it must be admitted that the prudence of the visionary were wide; and that the presence of the European maritime powers on the Western Coast were too evident to be ignored by a genius of Shivaji’s caliber. After all, his long term ambition was to establish a sovereign authority of his own.

III

NAVY OF THE SWARAJYA AND ITS DEFINED OBJECTIVES -

(A) Need for a Navy: Military, Commercial or other considerations - When Shivaji started exercising sovereign authority over his nascent Swarajya, he came across the Europeans in the Konkan waters.\textsuperscript{48} With his natural inquisitiveness and his desire to gain a wider understanding of the world around him, he missed no opportunity to study the caliber and the outlook of the Europeans. He admired their spirit of adventure, took note of the advances made by their respective nations in the weapons and mode of warfare, and appreciated the tenacity of purpose which generally governed their activities. Furthermore, his long and animated conversation with Manucci, the Italian artillery officer in the army of Jai Singh in 1665, on a wide variety of subjects, testifies to a mind that was at once alert and awake.

As a part of his policy of expansion, Shivaji was determined to extend his sway over the Konkan and enhance its resources. The capture of Kalyan and Bhiwandi by Shivaji in 1657 gave him a firm foothold in the Konkan and provided him the requisite incentive to realize his ambition. In the coastal surroundings, it must have been the
perceived threat from the potent quarters (particularly the Europeans) that impelled the
great visionary to set the keel afloat immediately in the waters of Kalyan-Bhiwandi in
1657. At the same time, he must have come to know about the helplessness of the native
coastal rulers (with the exception of the Mughals), who, in the matters of Oceanic and
coastal navigation, were constantly exposed to the merciless exploitations of the naval
fleets belonging to some of these European nations. The Portuguese were claiming
'sovereignty over the sea' and enforcing their injunctions on the Indian Ocean as a whole
since the early 16th century. The 'Cartaz' system established by them had virtually
brought the Indian shipping and navigation, particularly on the western coast, under their
monopolistic control. This system served, not only as a source of income to the
Portuguese, but was also a well-conceived method adopted by them to project their
uncontested naval supremacy over the Indian Waters. It seems, therefore, that Shivaji's
natural desire behind the foundation of the Maratha navy was to resist such pressure-
tactics of the Europeans and, at the same time, challenge it by the use of an organized
fleet. In this context, it is important to take note of the observations of Ramchandra Pant
Amatya. On the importance of navy Amatya writes, "Navy is an independent limb of the
state. Just as a King's fame for success on land is in proportion to the strength of his
cavalry, so the mastery of the sea is in the hands of him who possesses the navy. Therefore a navy should necessarily be built." 49 Hence the genuineness of the objectives
behind the raising of Maratha navy becomes intelligible at the very outset.

It is clear, therefore, that sovereignty of sea and the projection of Maratha military
might over the coastal surroundings were the first and foremost objectives of Shivaji,
which he wished to achieve by putting into use an organized navy. Though he faced a
severe crunch of resources and was also hard-pressed in the teeth of hostility of the
neighbouring rulers (from the land side), he was undeterred. He was well determined to
secure the freedom of the seas along the coastal extent of his Swarajya. Hence, despite
obvious limitations, ship-building activities were undertaken, though in a cautious
manner, initially. Shivaji was shrewd enough not to have aroused any kind of suspicion in
the minds of the Portuguese Governors of adjoining Thane/Bassein region when he began
boat-building enterprise at Kalyan-Bhiwandi. Not only did he declare that his naval
establishment was meant for struggle against the Siddi chiefs of Janjira, but also
requested the Portuguese authorities to supply ammunitions and equip his vessels. The contemporary Portuguese documents make us believe that the first 20 armed ships of Shivaji were constructed with the help of naval experts (shipwrights etc.) who were of Portuguese origin.\(^50\) Even at a later stage many Portuguese craftsmen were found working for the Maratha navy, particularly assisting in ship-building. It is said that through his minister Pitambar Senvi's influence (who was well posted in the affairs and rivalries of these European traders and knew how to read and write their language), Shivaji borrowed the services of a few naval and artillery experts from Goa and established his own ship-building yards and arsenals at Malwan.\(^51\) It is interesting to note that Jai Singh, the Mughal commander, who was deputed by Aurangzeb to 'clip the wings' of Shivaji, had, on one occasion asked the Portuguese authorities 'to refrain from working for Shivaji'.

Simultaneously, with the construction of a chain of coastal and island fortresses, navigational security and logistic support to the Maratha sea-going vessels were made available. To Shivaji, it was thus evident that neither the security of his realm nor its progress could be ensured unless he built up a navy of his own. In the early part of the 16\(^{th}\) century, Albuquerque, the Portuguese governor, had successfully established a maritime empire in the Indian Ocean. Though the Portuguese ruled the sea, they had made no attempts to usurp sovereignty on land. It was apparent that while the presence of the Portuguese fleet offered no menace to native powers, the trade they brought was extremely desirable. Yet, the Kings of Gujarat and the Deccan coast varied between fear and favour towards the foreigners: and twice at least the great combined attempts were made to annihilate the Portuguese fleets which were frustrated with stubborn valour. The Portuguese fleet had remained supreme since then. It is interesting to note that even in the second half of the 17\(^{th}\) Century, the activities of the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British and the French in India were confined - to a great extent - to pursue their commercial interests, apparently undistracted by territorial ambitions. As noted in the beginning of this chapter, they fought amongst themselves bitterly to seize the monopoly of the abounding trade and, being largely preoccupied with considerations of profits and dividends, their activities, mostly confined to their coastal settlements, aroused neither jealousy nor fear. Even in the period prior to the arrival of the Portuguese on the Konkan
coast, overseas contact was a crucial component in the commercial activities. From early times the Konkan coast had attracted international trade - though in a lesser volume as compared to the Gujarat or the Malabar Coast. The rationales for the importance of the Konkan coast are not too difficult to trace. In the first place, it must have acted as outlet to its hinterland of Maharashtra and Gujarat with easy accessibility through trade routes; and secondly, it also afforded sheltered sites to the ports because of the peculiar geomorphologic features. In the words of Dr. Ruby Maloni, “A peculiarity of the Konkan ports was that their location was not on the shores of the sea, but on the creeks in the interior. Navigable estuaries and creeks provided shelter against storms and pirates. Cargoes could be transported on the waters of the deep creeks, which were protected from erosion by the thick forests of the Sahyadri. There was also the facility of possible inland water connections between different ports.”

The Konkan port towns like Dabhol, Rajapur, Karwar, Bhatkal and Vengurla etc. lying between Bombay and Cochin (more particularly between Gujarat and Malabar) transacted enormous business particularly after the arrival of the Europeans in the Indian Ocean. There are many references of the indigenous people trading in partnership with the Europeans too. An example, corresponding to the reign of Shivaji, can be cited here of a ship owned by a Parsi merchant in partnership with a Portuguese trader Reynardson, which called at the port of Rajapur. The ship was loaded with betel nuts and coconuts. These ports had also acquired considerable importance and affluence by exporting a wide variety of goods, of which spices and textiles were the most conspicuous. It made sense, therefore, for any ruler who controlled this stretch of the coast to try and get maximum advantage by a proper administration/regulation of these ports. For the sake of records, it was primarily the economic motive that dominated over any other cause of the rivalry between the Ahmednagar and Bijapur Kingdoms throughout the 16th century. Moreover, the concerted attempt of the Portuguese to capture and dominate Konkan on the one hand, and the determined resistance of the Bijapur and Ahmednagar against them on the other, could well be appreciated in the light of economic motives.

It was innate that Shivaji could not have risked overlooking or undermining the economic prospects of the Konkan region. At the same time, he would have wanted to tap them in the interest of his newly founded Swarajya which was in need of finances to
stand up on its own. In this respect, a national navy would have definitely helped to realize his cherished ambition. Hence, from the very outset, his policy in the Konkan was clear and well defined. Not only did he want to secure his unchallenged supremacy over this region by defeating and expelling the agents of Bijapur and of Mughals, but also desired that the coastal trade should prosper without disruptions, whatsoever. In the Rajniti of Ramchandra Pant Amatya, the objectives of the commercial policy have been highlighted in the following manner, “Those merchants who reside in the foreign countries should be persuaded to come and settle ... by sending an assurance of safety to seafaring merchants at various ports, they should be given the freedom of intercourse in trade.” At the same time Shivaji seems to have entertained no thoughts of excluding any of the European traders or trading companies from participating in it, so long as they did not take undue interest in non-trading or local political issues. A fine testimony of Shivaji’s desire to accommodate the Europeans in trade and other commercial activities comes from the accounts of a contemporary French traveler Abbe Carre, who writes, “In fact along the stretch of the sea where he (Shivaji) was the master, there never passed a ship of Europe to which the governors (of those coastal areas under Shivaji) did not send refreshments with all the good offices that could hardly be expected by an allied prince. I passed that way in 1668 with two ships of the company and we were treated in a manner which was beyond our expectation. It was an act of his policy, but it was also due to the preference he felt for the people of Europe...” The nature of hospitality extended to the Europeans thus, testifies the desire of the great Maratha ruler to promote the commerce of his realm and ensure that his Swarajya prospered. On the other hand, Ramchandra Pant Amatya appears quite cautious when he elaborates on the state policy regarding the Europeans. He writes, “Their (i.e., the traders belonging to the European countries) intercourse should be restricted to the extent of only their coming and going (for trade)...therefore, if any place is at all given to them, it should be given in the midst of two or four famous great towns distant about eight to sixteen miles from the mouth of the sea...thus by fixing their place of habitation factories should be permitted to be built...” V. B. Kulkarni, a leading biographer of Shivaji, has aptly summarized Shivaji’s policy towards the Europeans traders thus, “Shivaji’s dealings with the European traders in India were marked by caution and kindness and, at the same time, by a determination not to
allow them to encroach upon his sovereign rights.” It was indeed impossible for him or any of his contemporaries to foresee that one of these trading communities was destined to impose its sway over the length and breadth of the country.

The prospects of overseas trade and commerce were indeed lucrative; hence it could not have been disregarded either by individuals or by the state. As a matter of fact, the keenness of the great Maratha to reap the rich harvest of overseas trade has been recorded by the contemporary European observers. The English Factory Records of the year 1662 report thus, “we are informed that (at Jaitapur port, some two miles up the river from Rajapur), Shivaji was fitting out two vessels of considerable burden laden with … which he intends to send to Mocha. The participation in the local salt and rice trade must have been considerable as these were the most essential commodities (Salt making and salt trade at Uran, Karanja, Pen, Panvel; Basrur rice etc. were important.) A British letter of the year 1670, gives us an idea about the personal/private trade carried, in fact, by none other but the Admiral of the Maratha navy. The letter mentions, “The General and Admiral of the fleet (of the Marathas) is one Ventgi Sarung…(to whom I) wrote a civil letter wishing him good success in his voyage, and promising him what assistance lay in my power in lading three of his own ships that are here (at Bombay) to take in salt…”

The oceanic, or for that matter, even the coastal navigation was not free from risk. If not the threat of the ships of the enemy country, equally intimidating were the pirates and interlopers belonging to various nationalities. The contemporary Portuguese, English or Dutch records are full of such references of interlopers. It is understood, therefore, that some kind of a minimum protection to the mercantile fleet would have called for the presence of armed boats/ navy etc. with each convoy. At the same time, the Swarajya could have attracted traders and commercial activities only if the coastal waters were made absolutely safe for plying of the trading vessels. Revenue could have poured in if the commercial activities were brought under control of the state apparatus. The Rajniti of Ramchandra Pant Amatya specifically mentions, “Harbours should be well protected: otherwise in the cases of need, necessary and useful things could not be brought from foreign places. If this happens, then what remains of the prestige of the Kingdom? There would be a loss of customs duties and other income…Trade should be
increased. Trade will cause the growth of income from customs." A careful scrutiny of the above mentioned passage leads us towards the conclusion that the Maratha authorities were concerned not only for the expansion of trade, but were also equally concerned about any possible cause of the loss of revenue. Hence, not only the big merchants, or, for that matter, the foreign merchants were favoured, but the local traders and even the Koli i.e., the fishermen community were provided proper facilities including protection during their movements. Given the nature of land and agricultural productivity of the Maratha Swarajya, it was but natural for the ruler to look for alternative sources of revenue. Though, we lack definite information about the nature or magnitude of taxes collected by Shivaji's administration from the ports, we come across evidences of different types of customs/port duties being collected by the rulers who exercised their authority on the coastal areas in the Deccan. An Adil-Shahi document of the year 1636 enlists the following taxes being collected from the port of Mustafabad (Dabhol): (a) Tapavan - 50 hons, (b) Bhavar Gast - 125 hons, (c) Gambani - 125 hons. In the absence of any contemporary document of similar nature, however, we are not in a position to determine the enormity of the customs rates or port duties. Shivaji, it seems, had fixed high tariff on the foreign goods in order to promote and protect the local trade. He must have wanted the local traders and manufacturers to ply from his ports and marts by offering lower tariffs, as he was in the process of establishing a naval system for his nascent Swarajya. Once the navy of the Swarajya was full-fledged and up to the required strength, a progressive taxation would not have been a bad idea. After all, he was providing the merchants - facilities and protection, in the age of rampant piracy. We must keep in mind that owing to the various kinds of risks involved in the seafaring activities, the Europeans, by that time, had already started the process of insurance of the vessels along with their goods.

Yet another probable use of the vessels for economic purposes could have been by way of subletting the cargo space to various small traders and earn money. In the 16th & 17th centuries, subletting of the cargo space by the ship owners in return for payment for local or point to point trade was a normal practice. In fact, it has been suggested that in the Indian waters, even the Europeans competed with the native merchants/ship-owners as far as subletting of the ‘extra’ cargo space was concerned. Ashin Das Gupta
points out that though the freight rates of the Europeans were high as compared to their Indian counterparts, the Indian traders ‘preferred’ them because of the better quality of vessels as well as proper arrangements of security on board these vessels to take on the high-seas pirates. The Maratha Swarajya under Shivaji would also have taken advantage of the situation by committing certain number of vessels exclusively for this purpose. After all, Amatya also warns, in no unambiguous words, about the catastrophic implications in case the naval establishment was maintained out of the income derived from the ports and exactions form the merchants.

In addition a strong flotilla of boats was required for the purpose of retrieving and obtaining flotsam/jetsam (add footnote) which, as per rules and traditions, belonged to the coastal rulers. In conclusion we may say that the main concern of Shivaji behind building a navy was, more than anything else, the strong urge of the great Maratha warrior and strategist to carry out his struggle by every means so that his long cherished dream of carving out a niche for himself and the Maratha land could materialize.

(B) Extent of Ship-building activities and an estimate of the naval fleet -

The long stretch of the coast forming the natural frontier of the newly founded Swarajya in the west, pressed Shivaji to arrange for its proper defenses. This could have been possible only with the help of a chain of coastal and island forts as well as an operational navy which could guard in the coastal waters. According to Sabhasad, the sea-going (naval) ships and the sea (marine) forts were the two arms of Shivaji’s navy, uniting which he ‘saddled the sea’. It should be made clear at the very outset, though, that Sabhasad, or for that matter any other contemporary Marathi chronicle, do not subscribe any particular date to the commencement of the Maratha naval enterprise under Shivaji. It is assumed that the building of vessels was immediately commenced once Kalyan-Bhiwandi was captured in 1657-58. A Portuguese letter of the year 1659 happens to be the first documentary record which tells us with certainty the year when Shivaji started building his naval fleet. This letter not only expresses the genuine apprehension of the Portuguese authorities towards such an activity, but also tries to ensure that the Maratha ships could not set sail to the sea without the Portuguese consent and
permission. This letter also mentions Kalyan, Bhiwandi and Panvel as the Maratha ship-building centers. More references of Maratha ship-building activities could be found in the European documents of the succeeding years. On the basis the information contained in these documents, we may ignore the assumption of Cosme da Guarda, the Portuguese biographer of Shivaji, who writes that Shivaji started his naval enterprise after his escape from (the Mughal confinement at) Agra. In fact, before his military rendezvous with Maharaja Jai Singh, the Mughal Commander of the Deccan, Shivaji had started the construction of the marine fort of Sindhudurg and had also got many of the coastal forts repaired. Hence, work on the naval enterprise was in full swing when Jai Singh arrived in the Deccan. It may be inferred here that Shivaji apprehended such an action by the Mughals, hence he wanted to secure the outlet towards the sea in case he faced a critical military threat from the land side.

Apart from the defense requirements of the nascent Swarajya from its natural enemies like the Siddi - operating from the island fort of Janjira, the coercive commercial practices of the European trading companies were also in the hindsight of the Maratha genius when he started constructing his own vessel under the shelter of the natural creeks under his control. Furthermore, the projection of the political authority through the naval force, indeed, would have matched his sovereign status in the coastal surroundings.

We have had a discussion of the naval bases, sea and coastal forts and their strategic importance in the preceding chapter. We will now try to form an estimate of the numerical strength and quality of the Maratha naval vessels under Shivaji. While accounting for the numerical strength of the Maratha navy during Shivaji’s time, however, we have to be particularly careful on two accounts:

1) We are talking about a pre-modern naval system where there was very thin line differentiating the vessels intended for purely commercial purposes and those meant for typical naval fights of that age. Most of the vessels, therefore, were designed principally to protect merchant shipping and to help repel invasion of the enemy;

2) Occasional, and very few references are appended to in the contemporary Marathi chronicles (most of the Marathi chronicles, which were composed long
after the death of Shivaji, often tend to mislead by exaggerating the number of the vessels) whereas, the Europeans sources have summarily discarded the Maratha navy by tagging them as a small group of ‘wretched country vessels’ intended for piratical purposes.

Notwithstanding these variants, it should be understood that navies have been built around battle fleet and that at the beginning of the naval contest, the battleship remain their primary component. During naval fights, therefore, all possible attempts were made to prevent any loss of one’s own battle ship and destroy as many of the enemy as possible.

It can not be denied that the major concern of Shivaji, when he undertook the construction of boats in the creeks of Kalyan-Bhiwandi, must have been to set afloat, as far as possible, specialized ships that would be primarily committed for warfare against the ‘identified enemies’ viz. the Siddi of Janjira, affiliated (at that point of time) with the Bijapur Sultans. Even Subhasad records that the main aim of the Maratha navy was the destruction of the Siddi of Janjira, who were like ‘rats in the house.’ Even a contemporary Portuguese document records that Shivaji, after having constructed his first 20 armed ships with the help of artisans of Portuguese origin, had declared that these ships were built to meet the menace of the Siddi of Janjira. Logically, therefore, these vessels must have been designed to withstand damage, and to inflict the same on the enemy. It is doubtful whether Shivaji had the requisite resources and the technical know-how at the time when he initiated the Maratha naval enterprise. We have evidences contained in the Portuguese records to suggest that Shivaji undeniably lacked, if not resources, the requisite technical competence in the beginning. He, therefore, had to request for the Portuguese help as far as the construction of the ‘first 20 armed ships’ of the Maratha navy is concerned. In addition, we have references in the English Factory Records that Shivaji needed the active help of the English flotilla in his endeavour to capture the coastal stretch around Danda-Rajapuri from his avowed enemy, the Siddi of Janjira.

The English factors in India also record the movement and activities of the Maratha navy under Shivaji from time to time, for they were the ones who were directly
influenced by the outcome of the conflicts between the coastal powers. Though the Factory Records do mention the numerical strength of the Maratha fleet at various points of time but, at the same time, they do not mince words in unfolding the ‘deplorable’ condition of the Maratha vessels.

Sabhasad Bakhar, the most reliable of the various Bakhars on Shivaji, provides us with a rough estimate of the numerical strength of the Maratha navy. The Bakhar also divulge details regarding the different types/categories of vessels of the Maratha fleet, which helps us to outline the spirit of the Maratha naval enterprise under Shivaji. Some other contemporary Marathi chronicles also list the different types of Maratha vessels along with their nomenclature. This is indicative of the fact that vessels for specialized purposes, keeping in mind the naval-strategy of the state and varied requirements thereof, were built by Shivaji. For example, flat bottomed boats would have suited the specific purpose of being used in the shallow and rocky waters of the various creeks; small rowing boats would have been employed for towing the heavy vessel (particularly from the coastal forts and bases) which could attain speed once it used sail after reaching out in the open waters etc. and deliver offensive on the enemy. Sabhasad writes, “Ships of various types, such as Gurabs and Tarandes, Tarus, Galvats, Sibads and Pagar were fitted and organized under two Subedars...A Suba consisting of two hundred ships.” As per this statement, the total number of boats (of various types as enumerated above) at that particular point of time seems to be somewhat around four hundred. Though Sabhasad does not assign any specific date for the commencement of the construction of the vessels, but going by the chronology of events, it seems likely to have been initiated before Shivaji set out on an expedition to punish the Desai of Kudal, Lakham Sawant. The Desai, of late, had started giving troubles in the Maratha territory of South Konkan. Sabhasad follows by recording the success of the Maratha fleet against the Siddi’s, “A battle was fought between them (the Maratha fleet) and the Siddi’s fleet, and the Siddi’s vessels were captured. Many (naval) battles were fought... so that Tarandes (of the Siddi fleet) could not sail in the sea.” Another very significant inference to be drawn from the above statement of Sabhasad is regarding the element of bargain, followed by the ‘capturing of each other’s ships during the naval battle’. In January 1665, Shivaji’s fleet captured some Mughal ships bound for the Red Sea. The acts of destruction/damage and
capture of the opponents’ vessels constituted to be the basic principles on which the Maratha naval strategy was based. This was literally true in respect of the ongoing struggle between the Marathas and the Siddi of Janjira. While Shivaji was bent upon the total destruction of the Siddi power, primarily based on the foundations of naval power, the Siddi chief could manage allies and sympathizers like the Mughals, the English or (even) the Portuguese on his side as and when required. In the 1670s, the direct involvement of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb along with the Mughal imperial fleet, from the side of the Siddi, further intensified the rivalry between the Marathas and the Siddi. As a result, the naval conflicts between them became fiercer and increasingly inhuman. A letter of the EIC written in December, 1672 mentions, “...King Aurangzeb having sent a fleet of 30 sails of small frigates from Surat to assist the Siddi of Danda-Rajapuri against him (Shivaji) by sea, which fleet hath done him much mischief, burning and destroying also about 50 of his vessels...” This incident also finds mention in the chronicle of Khafi Khan in the following manner, “The (Mughal) fleet sailed down (from Surat, under the command of Khan Jehan) to Janjira. One night it attacked the vessels of Shivaji and captured them with two hundred men. One hundred Maratha sailors were killed by tying stones to their feet and throwing them into the sea. From that day the animosity between the Siddi and Shivaji grew more violent. The Raja built a new fleet and there were frequent naval fights (between them)...”

A naval battle of that period, however, was confined only to inflicting damage or destruction of the opponent. But the practice of capturing enemy’s ships and crew as war trophy/booty also constituted an important element of the naval battles. For the Marathas, who were severely handicapped by the paucity of resources and time, this was indeed another method of projection of force and dread in the heart of their competitors in the Konkan waters. It should, however, be made clear that the same practice was adopted by the European Companies against each others too. This used to be a means of harming their opponent’s interests and, at the same time, further their own. Let us understand it by way of suitable examples: first of the Marathas with respect to the European Companies, and then, of the European Companies. As per the Portuguese documents, Shivaji’s fleet, on one occasion, seized as many as 121 trading ships from the Karnataka ports of Honavar, Mangalore, Barcelore and Gangoli (Cambolim). In addition, it has been
frequently noted by the Portuguese factors that the Marathas were in the habit of capturing and detaining their ships. However, such acts were reciprocated by the Portuguese too. Not only were the cargo vessels, but the naval warships too, were being targeted by each side. In a Portuguese letter of March 1665, there is a reference to a battleship of the Portuguese (navio) having been captured by Shivaji’s fleet. One more Portuguese warship (Pataxo) was taken captive by Shivaji’s fleet in November 1670, while it was sailing from Surat to Daman. In retaliation, the Portuguese captured eleven unarmed Maratha cargo ships and took them to Bassein... It is clear that such acts of hostility were committed by both the sides. Such acts (of capturing each other’s ships) might well have arisen as a result of violation of terms of treaty/agreement viz. plying of ships without the possession of valid passes, evading customs/port duty or unlawful entry into each other’s sphere of influence, etc., by either side. Moreover, those ‘prized trophies’ would have probably served the purpose of bargain (as an indispensable part of an unambiguous policy) so as to extract some explicit favour from each other. Such favours ranged from severing relations with the enemies to the supply of provisions or ammunitions (we have many references of the Marathas denying vital supplies to the English or Portuguese from the land side and at the same time Shivaji requesting the Europeans to supply guns, shots and other ammunitions). Since the nature of relationship between the Marathas and the Portuguese were officially friendly and that they refrained from being ‘avowed enemies’ to each other, let us suppose that the boats so confiscated were returned back to each other. But, when we talk about the Siddi, there could have been no question of returning back the ‘prized trophies’. The point is that, the strength of the fleet of Shivaji could have increased or decreased depending upon the objective and success of the campaign as well as the strength and quality of opponent he fought with. Hence, we cannot simply take for granted the numerical strength of the naval fleet of Shivaji to be four hundred which were further ‘divided into two units of two hundred vessels each’, as reported by Sabhasad. In fact, Sabhasad gives another (and much higher) figure of the Maratha fleet elsewhere in his narration. He writes, “...in this manner seven hundred ships were (put into) organized in the sea.” It may be possible that the number, as suggested by Sabhasad, could not have exclusively corresponded to the vessels of the fleet constructed in various dockyards/bases of Shivaji in such a short
span of time. Construction of such a large number of vessels required, in addition to time, resources and professional expertise too. Even if we accept as true, this number, it is certain that all of the vessels so constructed could not have been large enough or specialized or so adequately equipped that they fall into the category of ships purely meant for naval wars. Besides, we have to take into consideration the allies/subordinates of Shivaji too, particularly from the coastal areas, who might have counted as far as the numerical strength of the Maratha fleet is concerned. One such ally, worth mentioning, is the Koli chief, who played an important role in the reduction of the Jawhar Rajas.

The contemporary Portuguese documents further help us to have an estimate about the different kinds of vessels that constituted the Maratha naval fleet. A letter written by the Governor of Goa in April/May 1662 reads, "...Ragho Ballal, the (Maratha) Subedar of Dabhol, had requested him to allow five warships (Sanguiceis) and one Pataxo interned in the Karanja creek to go out to the sea..." Another Portuguese letter written by the Captain of Chaul to the Governor of Goa in August, 1664, mentions that Shivaji was building fifty ships in upper Chaul and that seven of them were ready to set out to sea. Many letters of the British EIC in India also provide us with information of similar nature. At times they tend to specify the quantity in respect of the different types of the Maratha vessels while they furnish details about the naval encounters. Some of those examples can be quoted here to emphasize our point. There was a struggle for the possession of Kalyan-Bhiwandi between the Marathas and the Mughals. It seems that it was wrested by the Mughals within a couple of years of its capture by Shivaji. It remained with the Mughals for nearly a decade. The Marathas had recaptured Kalyan-Bhiwandi in early 1670 and retained it. The ship-building activity seems to have been immediately resumed by Shivaji at Kalyan-Bhiwandi. A letter of correspondence between the Bombay and Surat Factory of the English East India Company dated 02nd of December 1672, reports, "We thought good to advise you that here is laid up in our harbour (i.e. Bombay) six small boats belonging to Sevagee with his consent, all new and late(ly) built at Cullian - Bundy (Kalyan-Bhiwandi)...." This particular incident assumes importance in the light of the fact that the Siddi, at that time, was being assisted by the Mughals with a formidable fleet - a large portion of which was constructed at Surat. While the hostility between the Marathas and the Siddi continued unabated in the coastal
waters of Konkan, another English record apprise us of the numerical strength of the Maratha fleet. It mentions, ‘Of the 60 or 70 vessels spotted...some came into Bombay harbour, and others kept the mouth of our port 2 or 3 days.’

Obviously the English administrators of Bombay were keeping a close watch on the naval activities of the Marathas. Under such circumstances, an outcome, favourable to the Marathas, would have put at risk not only the various English Factories on the Malabar Coast but also Bombay, which was gradually gaining prominence.

So important was it to maintain the required number of the fleet, that Amatya had suggested methods to avoid any loss to it because of the enemy activities. Amatya writes that even when the naval ships were sheltering in a creek, well defended by a fort at its mouth, ‘the fleet should not be kept in one place, it should be distributed in various places; and in the night - patrolling both by creek and by land - should be done round about the fleet.’

This philosophy (of distributing the vessels in various places) of Amatya finds its proper usage during the time of Shivaji and has been confirmed by the English sources. A letter of Bombay addressed to the Governor of the English Factory at Surat says, ‘...we are certainly informed that Shivaji, with a considerable fleet, is at Nagaon (creek) about seven leagues off of us, where he has made provisions for a siege or storm...’

The reference of the presence of the Maratha fleet at Nagaon could also be found in the contemporary Portuguese documents. A letter written by the Portuguese Captain of Chaul, dated 25th March 1677, states, ‘...Shivaji’s fleet was stationed at Nagaon: there were ten Galvats and thirteen other ships.’

The creeks could have served the purpose well only if the land adjoining it was under the control of the naval power. Though the undefended coast was always exposed to the depredations and firing of the navy, there was a bigger risk of the vessels placed in such creeks being damaged or destroyed by way of bombing or fire caused by the power which commanded the land adjoining the creeks. Nagaon or Nagothana, or for that matter any such creek was threatened from land; therefore, it was important to occupy them, as Shivaji did. It was the absolute control of the coast-line by Shivaji that discouraged the Siddi to winter his fleet in the Konkan creeks. Siddi was left with no option but to be always dependent on the British Bombay for the same. On the other hand the authorities at Bombay, at times, were reluctant to allow the Siddi to use their harbour. To deal with such a situation, the
Siddi tried to take Karanja, a small island near Bombay, apparently for the purpose of wintering of their fleet, but apparently.\textsuperscript{97}

When the Portuguese came to India, large ships were being built at Calicut and Cochin on the Malabar Coast, and around Masulipattanam and Calcutta. With the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian waters, war-ships had undergone notable changes in terms of technique and equipment (especially guns). At the same time, the Portuguese were very well aware of the desirability of building ships in India. It was felt that the Indian made ships were certainly stronger, if not always cheaper. On an average, Lisbon built ships seldom made three or four round voyages or lasted barely a decade whereas the high quality of Indian teak made the Indian vessels long lasting. Therefore, experts argued in favour of India-made ships and the King of Portugal frequently made legislations for building ships in India.\textsuperscript{98} Though various methods of boat-building have been described in various sources (ancient as well as medieval; Indian as well as foreign accounts), direct references from the region under the Marathas are quite scarce. However, in a study undertaken by Kirti Jain, an attempt has been made to throw some light on the boat-building traditions among the Son Kolis (a fishing community scattered along coast in the present district of Raigad, Maharashtra). It seems that not many changes have occurred in the manner of building a boat since the time the Arab travelers had settled down to the Indian coast for trade and adventure. Jain writes, “The construction of a boat starts with the lying of keel, a massive piece of teak timber supported on a branching stern about a foot above the ground at both the ends. This is stepped up to take the stern post and also the stem post, which also are massive pieces of timber. The length of the stem, stern and the keel depends upon the posed length, width and depth of the vessel. The keel is laid first and later the planks or ribs are attached. Usually the wood used for the stern is one piece. For the keel too, a single piece of wood is preferred. The planks are then fastened horizontally on either side of the keel. These planks are bent to the requisite curve over a slow fire started by burning of old rope coated with tar. Ribs of naturally bent wood are shaped and fitted alternately to suit the curve, and then secured the keel and the planks... The planks are joined by placing them side by side and by caulking them, the sealing agent being a mixture of resin and sweet oil taken in a ratio 1:2

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and boiled till the mixture reaches a one thread consistency. Coconut husk or hemp could have been used for the purpose of sealing the planks tightly.”

(C) **Naval troops and Administration of Naval Establishment**

During the era of the Roman Empire, their naval forces included legionaries for boarding actions. These were the troops, primarily trained in land warfare, and did not need to be skilled at handling a ship. Much later during the age of sail, a component of marines served a similar role: being ship-borne soldiers - who were used either during boarding actions, as sharp-shooters, or in raids along the shore. On occasions, naval vessels have also served simply as troop carriers or supply ships. When Shivaji initiated the naval enterprise of the Swarajya, it was obvious, therefore, that he was guided by the pragmatic considerations. He was building a navy from the scratch, as he perceived real danger for his Swarajya coming from the sea-side - first from the Siddi (for a contest to get a foot-hold along the coast) and secondly from the Europeans (for commercial and other considerations). Since the era of specialized naval warfare was still far ahead, hence, all he needed was to amass a good number of vessels and troopers, at least for the purpose of deterrence. Shivaji was far ahead of his contemporary rulers when he started working on these lines. He was, at least, thinking of securing his coast on the oceanic front which was not on the preference list of the mighty Mughals. The Mughals indeed had a sizeable flotilla which served as the means of localized force projection, particularly in the river routes and traffic in the eastern parts of India. But it could not be compared with anything which consisted of organized navy of the age of the sail. In the matters of Oceanic adventures, or even the annual Haj pilgrimage to Mecca - where the Mughals were more concerned about the safety of their vessels, they were content to hand over this responsibility to a third party on payment. If we believe the English records, the Siddi of Janjira were contracted for providing protection to the pilgrim ships going to Mecca in return for an annual salary (Tankha) of one lakh rupees. In addition the responsibility of Mughal Admiralty was also bestowed upon the Siddi chiefs in perpetuity. The Siddi performed this obligation till the year 1759 after which the English EIC was contracted for this job for the same amount.
As a matter of fact, the main purpose of the navy was to fight naval-battles and keep the enemy at bay in the vicinity of the coast. However, the contemporary Marathi chronicles approve of raids and plundering activities by the naval force in the enemy’s (Mughals, Europeans etc.) territories. Sabhasad writes thus, “The Raje’s ships began to plunder the cities and forts at various places belonging to the Mughals, the Firangs, the Dutch, the English and the Kilatav, and twenty-seven such sea powers, as well as various sea coast towns as Bednur, Sunda and Srinangapattan and subsist. They fought at various places and used to bring the Raje grains and other provisions, after providing for their own needs.”

Naval forces are typically arranged into units based on the number of vessels included - a single vessel forming the smallest operational unit. Vessels may be combined into squadrons or flotillas, which may be formed into fleets. The largest unit size may be the whole Navy or Admiralty. Sabhasad Bakhar provides us with definite information regarding the Admiralty of the Maratha navy. The Bakhar reads, “He (Shivaji) appointed two Subedars, a Musalman Subedar Darya Sarang (i.e. Sea Captain) by name and Mai Naik a Bhandari (by caste), constituting a Suba of two hundred ships...” Another piece of information of similar nature comes from a letter of the British EIC, dated 21 November 1670. It reads, “The General and Admiral of the fleet (which consists of 160 small vessels counted by my own servant, who I sent as a spy) is one Ventji Sarung with whom I have a correspondence these 7 or 8 years...” It is interesting to note that the number of vessels under Admiralty, as reported in the above mentioned contemporary source, is not very different from the quantum (consisting a naval unit) as specified by Sabhasad under one Subedar. Moreover, the originator of this letter claims to be in touch with the Admiral with the name Ventji Sarungee for the last 7 or 8 years. This letter also confirms that one ‘Ventji Sarungee’ was the head of the Maratha navy during the initial years of its foundation. This ‘Ventji Sarungee’ must have been the same as Darya Sarang of the Sabhasad Bakhar.

It can not be denied that Shivaji must have faced a practical difficulty while recruiting the men for his navy because of the Hindu religious injunctions in the matters of seafaring activities. As per the Dharamshastras, not only was the sea-voyage considered a taboo - hence banned, those who violated this ban were required to undergo
severe penances. Those who came from across the sea were despised as the Malechchas or the untouchables. This injunction must have acted as a deterrent, more so - in the case of the Brahmans, or, may be, for the whole of the community of the ‘dvija’ i.e., the twice born (comprising of the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas), who would not dare do anything in contravention of the religious law. Although we do not have any reliable data on the caste composition of the administrators/officers and the crew of the Maratha navy under Shivaji, it could be safely assumed that owing to the prevalent Hindu practices and traditions, there might have been only a few takers for the naval services from the populace belonging to the Brahman and Kshatriya castes. Such a situation must have been a big constraint for the naval establishment of Shivaji which, in a traditional sense, was surely shorn of the shrewd administrative expertise of the Brahman ministers and the dare-devil courage of the Kshatriyas. All these impediments at a time when the Maratha naval enterprise was in its infancy!

We come across the names of Mai Nayak Bhandari and Darya Sarang as the two Subedars of the Maratha naval establishment. If we look at the caste status of Mai Nayak Bhandari, we find him coming from the lowest rung of the Maratha society. The people of the Bhandari community were usually engaged in their hereditary profession of toddy tapping and few of them were also employed as boatmen. The other Subedar of Shivaji’s navy was Darya Sarang, who was neither Hindu nor even a Maratha. He was a Muslim. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the Bhandaris did not have a history of distinguished expertise in the seafaring activities or professionalism in seamanship. What is even more fascinating is that a Muslim was given the responsibility to practically lead the struggle intended to establish a ‘Hindu Empire’! This limitation faced by Shivaji and his navy has been explained by many a scholars as a ‘secular policy’ of the great Maratha genius, which, in terms of ground realities, is difficult to justify. The Maratha naval struggle was primarily focused against the Muslims (Mughals or Siddi). Hence, Shivaji, through his recruitment policy, proved that the interest of his Swarajya was above all the considerations. He was guided more by pragmatic considerations rather than an absolutely secular approach, when he was recruiting the crew for his navy. His recruitment policy, in other words, was driven by the urgency and exigency of the requirements of the job he had undertaken. His prime motive for having a Maratha naval
enterprise was to suppress the Siddi nuisance without delay. The Siddi needed to be kept under check if the coastal frontiers of his Swarajya were to be secured. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that Shivaji employed Siddi Misri (another Siddi) to fight against the Siddis of Janjira. In the contemporary documents, we come across references of other Muslims, presumably at pivot positions, in the naval service of Shivaji. He would have, however, tried his best, in the given circumstances and constraints, to attract the ablest of the talents from the upper caste Hindus and Marathas to the naval services of the Swarajya. In consideration to the traits of a true leader - who always leads by self-example, Shivaji also participated, in person, in the Basrur naval expedition of 1665 - undertaken during the formative years of the Maratha naval enterprise. He was urgently in the need of brave and able bodied men, who would be ever willing to risk their lives for the sake of the Maratha Swarajya. Those volunteers, of course, needed to have purely secular considerations and be above the mundane considerations of caste or creed or even the fear of 'pollution'. This was indeed a big ask in the 17th century Indian society. How far was Shivaji successful in his attempt, can not be ascertained with conviction in the absence of corresponding data, but the attempts of the Great Maratha indeed speaks high of his leadership quality and a firm determination for the sake of a worthy cause.

To accomplish his ‘declared’ objective of the destruction of the Siddi, Shivaji needed a large number of boats/ships and equally hefty number of crew to man them. Sabhasad, in fact, gives a rough estimate of the number of vessels built, and, at the same time makes a mention of the coastal and island forts that were constructed or repaired to support the naval vessels. But, he does not inform us about the procedure of recruitment of the men for the Maratha naval establishment. Shivaji seems to have taken into confidence the Kolis i.e., the fishermen community of the Konkan coast, to enhance the energy and efficiency of the Maratha navy. With their help, Shivaji made an attempt on the Ghodbandar too. Traditionally, the Koli people were engaged in the fishing activities in the coastal waters with their peculiar boats (dug out) and fishing nets. They had, therefore, the absolute knowledge of the nature of sea in the surroundings with the precise location of the submerged rocks, reefs and sand bars. Their services, therefore, would have been in great demand by the Maratha navy, especially in the initial phase, for
they would have constituted the bulk of the crew to practically maneuver the boats and ships in the coastal waters as the ‘expert’ sailors. It can also be assumed, at the same time, therefore, that these sailors were different from the ‘fighting crew’ of Shivaji’s navy. As noted earlier, in the pre-modern period, the naval warriors did not require any special expertise as far as the fighting skills were concerned. The naval fights basically involved ramming each other vessels (in order to sink them) or boarding the enemy vessel and have a close quarter battle (physical duel) with the enemy soldiers. There is a strong probability, therefore, that a majority of the fighting crew consisted of the people form the Bhandari and Koli caste and even the Muslims. In addition to managing the ship and constituting as the fighting crew, the services of these people could also have been utilized for the purpose of boat-building. A study of the Son Kolis a fishing community scattered along the present Raigad district reveals that they have preserved the tradition of boat-building with their community.112

For the naval vessels and the naval contingents thus recruited, sheltered anchorages were also the pre-requisites. With this objective in view, many coastal forts with maritime value, on the Konkan Coast were repaired and refurbished. To pose a determined challenge to the Abyssinian chiefs of Janjira, Shivaji also decided to have a maritime fortress of his own which would serve as his naval headquarters. For this purpose, a survey was ordered to be made. The shores of Malwan were chosen as they reportedly possessed all the conveniences and requirements of naval strategy. Thus, the mighty marine fortress of Sindhudurg on the shores of Malwan was conceived. It can be safely presumed that the traditional people belonging to the boatmen and fishermen community etc., who were well acquainted with the condition of coastal waters and its hydrographic features by the simple logic of their life-long experience and interactions with those waters, would have been the obvious choice for such an ambitious and equally crucial project of the Swarajya. The same considerations must have been there when soundings were to be taken in the off-shore waters before the construction and fortification works could commence on the island fortress like Suvarnadurg, Khanderi etc. It would not amount to any overstatement if we draw from the above discussion that the class of these maritime people who were the natural ‘experts’ of the nautical affairs, were encouraged to be a part of the Maratha naval apparatus in various capacities. That
their expertise was instantaneously required for the complex maneuvering of the naval vessels during the time of actual naval engagements can not be doubted. It could only be those people who, by reason of their precise knowledge of the bottom of the coastal sea along with their knowledge of the nature and behaviour of the tidal pattern of the sea at different points of time (a pre-requisite to facilitate the entry/exit of a vessel to a port etc.), must have played a significant role in the naval engagements at tactical level. As brought out earlier in the same chapter, the ‘sailing crew’ could have been different from the ‘fighting men’, hence the role of the hereditary boatmen and fishermen class as an integral part of the Maratha Naval troop could not be undermined.

As regards the salary or the mode of remuneration of the crew during the age of Shivaji, once again, absence of specific data prevents us from reaching any definite conclusion on this aspect of the Maratha naval administration. The contemporary document, the Royal Edict of Sambhaji II, prepared by Ramchandrapant Amatya, while elaborating on the Financial Policy, notes that “(State) Servants should be paid well and without any reluctance,” and that “…salary should be paid according to rules...” The same document also discusses about the administration of the forts at length and instructs, “In every fort salary, treasury, military provisions, and other kinds of articles necessary for forts should be collected and stored.” This implies that the entire establishment of the fort and the persons on the payrolls of each fort would be paid through local arrangement i.e. through the Havaldar or the chief administrator of that very fort. By logic, the administration of the coastal/naval forts should not have differed from the general administration of the Maratha hill and other forts. We have, therefore, valid reasons to speculate that the naval forts/bases must have catered for the payments of the defenders of the forts along with the sailors or marine troops attached to each naval fort. As such, the ruling on the naval policy was that the naval fleet should not be concentrated at one place and as far as possible, should be distributed in various places (naval forts/bases). Though Amatya raises an eyebrow on the ‘heavy expenses’ of the naval establishment of the state and warns against the catastrophic consequences of any attempt to meet out the expenses of the navy from the income derived from the ports, the heavy expenses he is referring to is not merely on account of the salaries of the Maratha crew,
but also relates to the charges defrayed towards the construction and equipping of the naval vessels. He, therefore, comes up with two solutions to meet such expenses:

(a) Revenue of a particular territory to be appropriated for the expenses of the navy.

(b) The naval forces to be maintained in proportion to the state income (from various sources, particularly trade and customs).

The second suggestion must have come as a big limiting factor for the maintenance of the required number, and more importantly, the quality of the vessels of the Maratha fleet. However, Amatya and Sabhasad are unanimous on the point that to meet the cost of maintaining a navy (as well as to instill terror in the hearts of the enemy), the enemy territory could be plundered.\textsuperscript{117}

(D) \textit{Operation and Bases of Shivaji's Navy}\textsuperscript{-}\textsuperscript{118}

A national navy practically operates from one or more bases that are maintained by the country or an ally. The base is a port that is specialized in naval operations, and often includes housing for off-shore crew, an arsenal depot for munitions, docks for the vessels, and various repair facilities. During times of war, temporary bases may be constructed in closer proximity to strategic locations, as it is advantageous in terms of patrols and station-keeping. Nations with historically strong naval forces have found it advantageous to obtain basing rights in areas of strategic interest. The Portuguese activities in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, in the Indian waters, justify this view point. As Albuquerque, the Portuguese governor of Goa, considered that the commerce of India could not be acquired either by peaceful methods or by alliances, he proposed to have strong fortresses (naval bases) at various points like Aden, Ormuz, Diu and Goa. Such strategically important points have been referred to as the 'choke points' by Pearson.\textsuperscript{118} Albuquerque also realized the bare truth that the Portuguese (in India, or any other place outside Portugal) would never be strong enough to engage an enemy on sea and land at the same time, and that, under such circumstances, the ships must be laid up and the forts properly defended.\textsuperscript{119} The Portuguese, in fact, had come across the spirited resistance of the Indians and their allies as soon as they arrived in the Indian waters. They were in no mood, therefore, to be complacent as far as protection and furthering of their economic

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interests were concerned. It had been the constant endeavour of the Portuguese administrators, therefore, to occupy and strengthen naval bases in India.

Talking about Shivaji, his decision to construct a navy from the scratch, and to maintain it as an independent department of the Maratha Swarajya, appears to be a premeditated policy decision. In the vicinity of his coastal possessions, he was faced with the challenge of European naval powers like the Portuguese, who, though on the verge of decline in India, were effective nonetheless. In addition the English, the Dutch and the French had significantly altered the naval equations and operations in the Konkan waters ever since their arrival in India. Shivaji seems to be fully conscious of the fact that for a navy to operate and function properly, naval bases were the prime requisites. He realized it well that during the time of naval fights, the naval bases act as the most immediate source of supply of war materials and also the place of safe refuge for the fleet in case of adversity. The bases, if properly fortified, and with ample store of water, ammunition and garrison, would successfully stand against the attack of any enemy. At the same time, the artillery and guns of the naval forts (on the coast) would keep the creek or bay safe for navigation. They would thus, discourage the enemy ships from entering the sea/channel or the river lane on which they stood. With all such considerations in mind Shivaji immediately undertook the noble project of construction and repair works of the coastal/island forts - which were to act as the bases for the Maratha navy, as soon as the political extent of the Swarajya reached the Konkan coast. At the same time the shipbuilding activities were pursued at a brisk pace. The vessels were properly equipped and manned to take on any adversary in the coastal surroundings of the Swarajya. The work on the first of his naval forts, named Sindhudurg, commenced as early as 1664. This fort played the role of the Maratha naval headquarters and could be likened to be the coastal capital of the Maratha Swarajya.

As such, Shivaji’s naval enterprise began with the capture of Kalyan and Bhiwandi in the year 1657. The Jedhe Karina mentions thus, “In the Hemalambi year Shaka 1579, an expedition was undertaken against the Portuguese at Kalyan Bhiwandi...Kalyan and Bhiwandi were captured, the Portuguese possession plundered and a post at Aseri was established. The Portuguese agreed to pay a khandi and a quarter of gold every year. Shivaji fortified the creek at Durgadi...He also made Kalyan a naval
base and built dockyards." The brilliance with which Shivaji comprehended the geopolitics of the region is worth admiring. On the one hand, enough of good quality teak was available in the surroundings of Kalyan - which could be utilized for the purpose of ship-building; on the other, the fortification of the creek of Durgadi would have afforded the much needed military and strategic protection to Kalyan which was destined to play the crucial role of a dockyard in the immediate future. The theory of military warfare, it should be remembered, also states that secured bases are necessary pre-requisites which facilitate the military leader the freedom of action against the enemy.

The Portuguese were the first to record the ship-building activities of Shivaji in the area around Kalyan. A letter, dated 16th of August 1659, of the Portuguese governor of Goa addresses to their King reads thus, “The son of captain Xagi (Shahji Bhonsle)...has taken over the lands near Bassien and Chaul is getting powerful, and forces us to be careful, as he has built a navy in Bhiwandi, Kalyan, and Panvel - ports in the district of Bassein...” It is interesting to note that the Jedhe Karina has also recorded that Shivaji founded Shivpattan at the foot of Rajgad as well as strengthened the defence of Prabhalgad (which was east of Panvel). Specific information about the ship-building activities of Shivaji in the Kalyan-Bhiwandi waters can also be found in the English Factory Records. A letter dated 22nd of October 1672 records, “Wee have thought good to advise you that there is laid up in this harbour six small vessels, belonging to Shivagee with his consent, all new and lately built at Culian Bhindi (Kalyan Bhiwandi)...” The above cited reference updates us about the importance of Kalyan as a ship-building centre during the heyday of Shivaji.

Simultaneously with the ship-building activities at Kalyan, Shivaji had also catered for the support system of his naval enterprise. His priorities were now to provide naval bases for safe anchorage of the various kinds of ships where the repair and maintenance works could also be undertaken. For an effective operation of his naval ships, naval bases were the key requirements. Such bases established at different parts of his coastal possessions. In this way, Shivaji worked on the principle that secure bases constituted the necessary foundations for power upon the sea. Ramchandra Pant Amatya highlights the importance of the naval forts in providing strength to the indigenous fleet and offering protection to the ships and sailors. He writes, “Whatever
may be our strength ...our fleets should be brought under the protection of sea-forts. The safety of ships and sailors should never be risked. In consideration of the above, therefore, many naval forts were constructed along the coast of Konkan; and those which already existed were occupied or captured and then suitably strengthened. Sabhasad, too, justifies Shivaji's decision of undertaking the construction of marine forts in the light of his constant pre-occupation against the Siddi of Janjira. The latter could not be subdued despite earnest military attempts of Shivaji, as he (the Siddi) had the island fort of Janjira under his control. Sabhasad writes, “Rajapuri was left (unconquered by Shivaji) in the sea and on that account the name of the Nizamshahi still continued there. As that place had to be conquered, the Raje built forts selecting (for their site) rocks at various places, as these commanded the sea and (these forts) would weaken the sea kings. Realizing this, he fortified some submarine rocks and constructed forts in the sea. Building such sea-forts or Janjiras and uniting ships with forts, the Raje saddled the sea.” The most significant aspect of Sabhasad’s narration is ‘uniting ships with forts’—which indeed highlights the importance of naval bases for an effective operation of naval fleet. The Europeans, as we will discuss in the subsequent pages, had been working on the same principle ever since their arrival in India.

The comments of the contemporary French traveler Abbe Carre further highlight the strategic significance of the sites which were selected for maritime forts by Shivaji. Carre writes, “He (Shivaji) selected the maritime places as they were easier to defend and more difficult to attack.” Amatya’s narration further upholds the keen observation of Carre as he writes, “On account of the fear of the fort, the enemy should not enter the creek of the sea.” It must have been the prime endeavor of Shivaji, therefore, to ensure that suitable arrangements to strengthen the defenses of such marine establishments, which acted as naval bases also, were made on a priority basis. It is interesting to note that in principle, there was no difference as regards the rules of construction, pattern and layout of the marine forts with respect to the hill or other forts. In case of a coastal fort, usually a strategic location was chosen on the coast which would command the nearby creek or port. We find gun holes and port holes on the ramparts of most of the marine forts. Guns and canons were fitted on most of these forts to keep at bay the enemy ships, approaching by sea/creeks. Most of the coastal forts were built in such a manner that
from three sides they was surrounded by water and form the land side, to make them
unapproachable, wide and deep moats were dug around the thick wall. Such forts were to
have adequate space, provisions and facilities to maintain a large garrison for a longer
duration. The Portuguese records suggest that Albuquerque, the governor of Portuguese
Goa, planned to have 'a garrison of 500 to 1000 men in each fortress; 300 men for each
factory and 1600 for the fleet'.\textsuperscript{129} It should be remembered that the absolute control of the
Portuguese over the Indian waters in the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries was very much facilitated
by their naval bases at Gujarat, Chaul and Goa. The Portuguese armada operated from
these bases and compelled the Indian ships to purchase the Portuguese passes for
navigation in the coastal waters. Pearson has, in fact, argued that 'whereas the Portuguese
armed vessels could enforce their authority by compelling the Indian ships to touch
Daman or Diu, pay taxes, and then proceed to their onward journey, the Indian rulers of
the coast failed to do so in the absence of an organized armada’. In this respect, Shivaji
tried to impose his sovereign authority over the coastal waters of Konkan by asking even
the European ships to buy the Maratha passes, and thus earned money. Here, it must be
noted that by doing so he not only disallowed the loss of revenue to the Swarajya, but
also augmented his own collections as the native merchants were, until then, buying
passes from the Europeans. In this connection Amatya has also outlined a specific policy
towards merchant ships. He writes, “If the ships of foreign merchants, besides those of
the enemy, not possessing permits are coming and going, then they should not be allowed
to move without inspection.”\textsuperscript{130} He further writes, “...if any merchant ships coming from
the hostile territory are found in the sea, they should be captured by making great efforts
(and) brought to the port...”\textsuperscript{131} It can not be contested, hence, that for the projection of
sovereignty over the coastal waters, a strong and effective flotilla was required.
Moreover, the requirement of naval bases at appropriate locations would have further
helped in doing so, as ‘any hostile ship’ had to be captured and taken to the nearby
port or base so that it could be dealt with suitably. It is not very clear whether Shivaji
was in a position to ask European/foreign ships to compulsorily touch any particular
Maratha port or base in the absence of an effective flotilla and strong naval bases, at least
in the initial phase of his nation building. However, contemporary European documents
have enough records to show that the capturing of each others’ ships was not an
uncommon practice. Moreover, the documents also point to the fact that the Europeans, indeed, were buying Maratha passes and avoided being openly hostile to Shivaji. This was good enough, a beginning, for Shivaji. We should remember the fact that Shivaji did not want to really antagonize the Europeans as far as their maritime activities were in accordance with the commercial practices prevalent at that time. Hence, his policy towards the Europeans, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter, was marked by ‘caution and kindnesses’. Shivaji, therefore, was not adamant on asking the foreign ships to touch his bases or get them searched as he did not want to pick up a direct naval fight with them so long as his purpose was served. Moreover, in the back of his mind, he was also aware that the Maratha navy, at that point of time, lacked fire power, and could not have competed well with the Europeans in an open naval-fight. On the contrary, only the Europeans could have helped him in acquiring guns and ammunitions which were urgently required for the Maratha vessels and the marine forts. Last, but not the least, he was still very much preoccupied with the Siddi nuisance, which he wanted to put to an end to, on a priority basis.

For the purpose of maintenance/overhaul of the ships, forts had special function to perform. Ramchandra Pant Amatya writes, “The sheltering (of the naval ships) should be done only in fortified ports... sheltering should be done every year in a different port which has got a fort facing the sea.” To fulfill this criterion, Shivaji had to contest for the control of a few strategic coastal forts with his enemies. One such fort was the fort of Chaul, originally built by the Portuguese, which was destroyed and captured by Shivaji in the 1672. Describing Chaul, Thevenot, a contemporary traveler, writes ‘Chaul was very difficult to enter but very safe, sheltered from every kind of weather’. We may also understand the reasons for the fortification of the desolate island of Khandari by Shivaji in the light of his failure to take the island fortress of Janjira from the Siddi. Bases were the requirements of every European Trading Company - operating miles away from their native territories. These Europeans were always keen on having such places which would afford them protection against the compelling enemies either on land or on water. An example may be taken of the rise and growth of Bombay. As soon as the British EIC got the possession of Bombay, a desolate island in the year 1668 ..., works on its fortification were immediately undertaken. The English factory records of the year 1669
mentions about the triple layer of fortification and garrisoning of Bombay.\textsuperscript{135} The work of fortification was speeded up in the wake of the (second) sack of Surat by Shivaji in the year 1670.\textsuperscript{136} Surprisingly enough, the British East India Company went ahead with the plan of fortification of Bombay knowing well that all the navigable channels to Bombay from mainland Thane were totally under control of the Portuguese authority stationed at Thane, and that no supply food/fuel or otherwise could reach Bombay (from the mainland via sea channels) without the ‘permission’ of the Portuguese governor. Moreover, Bombay was just a desolate island which was dependent on the Company’s factory at Surat for practically everything concerning administration. Still, the fact remains that not only was Bombay strongly fortified, but its defenses were also strengthened by bringing under control all the fordable creeks like, Mahim, Sion etc. To top all, the construction and repair of vessels were gradually undertaken at Bombay which further complemented it as a naval base.\textsuperscript{137} We have further information that gunpowder was also being manufactured and stored by the British at Bombay in good quantity.\textsuperscript{138} The defenses of Bombay were further augmented by way of the permanent deployment of specialized naval vessels in and around Bombay. This was intended to tackle the menace of the ‘pirates of Malabar’. \textit{In this way, for the British naval operations in western India, the Bombay fort proved to be a ‘naval base’ in real sense.} Sincere attempts were made to augment its natural defenses by various means, particularly after the transfer of the Headquarters of the British Company from Surat to Bombay in the year 1687. We should also remember that Bombay acquired fame as an excellent dockyard only after the decline of Surat. However, much before that, the \textit{Siddi} of Janjira could be found sheltering his fleet at Bombay, especially during the rainy season.\textsuperscript{139}

As regards Surat, it was undoubtedly Gujarat’s and India’s premier port city at the turn of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. It was the house of a large mercantile marine, unsurpassed in the whole Indian Ocean. It housed the mercantile establishments of various merchants coming from different nationalities. It was also known for its shipbuilding activities, though, in the absence of records, not much is known about the exact rate of production or tonnage or nature of the vessels during the 16\textsuperscript{th} or 17\textsuperscript{th} century. But, it cannot be denied that the vessels ferrying between the Gujarat ports and the Red Sea were overwhelmingly Indian. We get frequent references in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century Dutch documents regarding the
fame and importance of Surat as a ship-building center on the Western Coast of India. It is apparent that the Europeans (particularly the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English) placed orders at Surat (at Gandevi) for different types of ships.\textsuperscript{140} It seems that many of the vessels so constructed in Western India (under the orders of the local rulers) catered for some sort of defense mechanism in view of rampant piratical activities. One such example is of the Mughal ship \textit{Ganj-i-Sawai} which was mercilessly plundered by the (English) pirates in the year 1694. It is a fact that the Mughals were never interested in escorting their mercantile fleet. It seems they were confident of the guns/canons, which were placed on board these ships. In addition, there were a handful of soldiers/gunners deployed on board to take care of the security of the ships. We find an account of the dastardly act of the pirates, with respect to the passengers of the ship \textit{Ganj-i-Sawai}, in Khafi Khan’s narrative.\textsuperscript{141} But what appears to be more shocking in this account is the absolutely callous attitude of the Mughal authorities towards the defense of the ship. Jan Jilliszon, a Dutch navigator who was lent to the Mughal imperial service and was on duty on board the \textit{Ganj-i-Sawai}, in 1694, wrote to his superiors in wonder that the ship was so overcrowded with men and goods that scarcely a gun could be loaded or used (so that it could be successfully operated).\textsuperscript{142} In fact, many of the Indian merchant ships carried surprisingly large number of guns, which were perhaps a necessity because of the pirates. But what is really surprising, however, is not the number of their guns, but that they were never in a position to use them.

During the reign of Aurangzeb, it appears that special consideration was given towards the maintenance of an effective flotilla which could take charge of the coastal possessions of the Mughal Empire. It should be remembered that the Magh pirates of the Bay of Bengal were a constant source of trouble for the Mughal shipping and naval establishments.\textsuperscript{143} On the other hand, the Mughal possessions of Gujarat and the adjoining coast in the west too, were simultaneously being threatened by Shivaji who had swiftly gained predominance in those regions. Aurangzeb, therefore, was more than content to take the \textit{Siddi} into Mughal services. He accordingly appointed the \textit{Siddi} to the post of the Mughal Admiral.\textsuperscript{144} We come across references of many naval vessels being constructed at Surat to bolster the strength of the Mughal navy with bases at Surat and Janjira on the western coast.
Even the French, who registered their arrival in the Indian waters as late as 1664, looked to obtain a stronghold in the Konkan at the earliest. As such, they were permitted to establish their factories at different locations in the Konkan (including Rajapur, where Shivaji allowed them to settle a factory in 1667), but they were not content with mere settlements or factories. In view of the stiff competition in the Indian waters, they too, were looking for bases on the Konkan coast from where their flotilla could be meaningfully operated. The English Records makes us believe that the French Company designed to take the island of Karanja, which was in the close proximity of Bombay, as early as 1671. The French fleet had also taken the soundings of the water near the Karanja Island to study the possibility of establishing a base there. The ‘efforts’ seems to have continued for a couple of years after which the ‘project’ was abandoned by them.145

As far as Shivaji is concerned, he encouraged and supplemented naval operations146 by constructing many a forts and bases at carefully chosen sites along the Konkan coastline. Many of his coastal forts commanded the mouth of the creeks and were built on the banks of rivers (not in the open sea), or on a cliff or a spat of land (headland) more than half surrounded by the sea, if possible.147 At many places he strengthened the defenses of the already existing structures as per the operational requirements. In addition, his initiative to fortify the off-shore islands, and bring them within the operational control of his flotilla, was also strategically justified. We have already had a brief discussion on some of the most important coastal forts/bases in the preceding chapter. When we analyze these structures carefully, we find that most of them had ample defensive features. A large number of the coastal forts had sea facing walls from three sides, and from the land side the protection was provided by digging ditch or having a moat around the periphery. The gates opening on the sea sides also had protective features and were, at times, also regulated by tidal pattern. All of them had sufficient provisions to keep the garrison well fed and defiant to the enemy diktat for a longer time. This was in accordance with the policy enumerated by Amatya who suggests that apart from water and food, the naval forts must have sufficient ammunitions to keep the enemy at bay.148 In the most prominent of these forts, provisions for a fully functional dockyard also existed. The most notable examples were those of Kulaba, Vijaydurg, Sindhudurg, Jaitapur etc. It should always be kept in mind that apart from lucrative
economic prospects (which could be grasped by providing military protection to the ports and coastal mart), the freedom of escaping to the sea - particularly at a time when faced with a determined attack originating from the land side - was also one of the added and practical advantages of having such fortified bases. The English Company in India resorted to this practice quite often, as they were devoid of any territorial base on the coast.

**Operation:** The nomenclature and classification of the vessels possessed by the Naval Organization under Shivaji’s, in the first instance, provide us with a basis to understand the very purpose of those vessels. In this respect, it is also relevant to bring forth the characterization and classification of navy and its vessels based on its purpose or usage. The Oxford Military History book distinctly identifies three different types of navies (based on its usage). They are:

1. Green Water Navy
2. Brown Water Navy
3. Blue Water Navy.

A ‘Blue Water Navy’ is designed to operate far from the coastal waters of its home nation. Such navies constitute of ships capable of maintaining station for long periods of time in Deep Ocean, and will have a long logistical tail for their support. The Portuguese, English, Dutch and the French naval units in Indian waters were, in this way, essentially ‘Blue Water Navy’ which maintained their logistical requirements form the numerous small pockets on the Indian coast. It was to safeguard these ‘supply chains’ that the Indian coast witnessed the first ‘naval action’ by the foreigners. In fact, the first naval action in defense of the newly acquired ‘logistic bases’ in the Indian waters was just ten years after Vasco da Gama’s epochal landing in India. In March 1508, a combined Gujarati/Egyptian force surprised a Portuguese squadron at Dabhol, and only two Portuguese ships could manage to escape. In the following February, the Portuguese Viceroy destroyed the allied fleet at Diu, thus confirming Portuguese domination of the Indian Ocean. Pearson’s theory of ‘Choke Points’ is the best way to understand the need of bases for the navies which were operating far away from their home countries. The intensified rivalry between the British and the Dutch fleet in the Indian waters could also
be understood in the light of the same hypothesis. Incidentally, however, the naval wars between these two were the first to be conducted entirely at sea. Talking about the navy under Shivaji, it could be concluded that it was in its evolutionary stage. Shivaji, it seems, conceived the Maratha Navy mainly to fight the enemy so as to keep clear the coastal vicinity of his Swarajya rather than to pursue an overseas commercial or military ambition through it, in true sense. The Blue Water fleets, as such, required specialized, big and sturdy vessels, which could bear the extremities and risks of prolonged and extended sea-exposures. The navy of Shivaji indeed included some big vessels called Ghurabs (as noted earlier), but their tonnage and capacity was not anywhere near to those big European vessels which carried out successful journeys from Europe to India and back. This does not mean, however, that the Maratha Ghurabs were incapable of performing lengthy sea-voyages, but that the emphasis was, at least, not on such activities. It was, rather, to provide security to the coastal surroundings of the Swarajya and projection of Maratha sovereignty on the Konkan waters. We must also bear in mind, at the same time, that it was the age of sail, where much of the success of the voyage depended on the behaviour of weather and the navigational expertise. European nations had indeed taken lead in Oceanic voyages and geographical discoveries. They had mapped out the routes of their voyages. Their navigational skills were beyond doubts. Hence, they were in a better position to negotiate with the apparent risks and dangers of sea-voyages. Moreover, they were guided by Missionary Zeal and the lure of huge profits through commercial interaction with the overseas world. On the other hands, the Indians were raw in this field and were also quite ignorant about the new geographical discoveries. On the other hand, since Shivaji had initiated the process of carving out a ‘Maratha homeland’ in the teeth of opposition of the contemporary rulers, his outlook, at least initially, must not have been to look for overseas possession with the help of his navy. Moreover, as discussed in the preceding pages, the Maratha naval enterprise suffered from the limitation as far as professionalism in seamanship is concerned. Hence, as per terminological characterization, the Maratha navy under Shivaji could not fit into the category of ‘Blue Water Navy’.

In contrast to a ‘Blue Water Navy’, a ‘Brown Water Navy’ operates essentially in coastal periphery and along inland waterways of a country, where larger ocean-going
naval vessels can not readily enter. In this way, Regional Powers may maintain “Brown Water Navy” as a means of localized force projection system. Moreover, Amatya stresses upon the need to build ‘medium sized vessels’ which seem to be more pragmatic from the view point of strategy and tactics. The Maratha navy, as regards functions and operations, could be categorized into a green or brown water navy during the time of Shivaji. The geomorphology of the Konkan was such that big vessels could not have operated without difficulty in the Konkan rivers as they fluctuated greatly in depth depending upon season and tidal effects. Moreover, the coastal water was also shallow, full of submerged rocks and sand bars which hindered the movement of big vessels in the proximity of the coast. Another important aspect was the easy maneuverability of the medium sized/small vessels with (preferably) flat bottoms. The cost effectiveness of such vessels could not be ignored. It also implied that the Marathas would have large number of vessels to register their presence everywhere along the Konkan coast and, at the same time, even if some of these vessels perished in the course of action, it would not have amounted to a loss of such a magnitude which was not easily recoverable. Amatya probably wanted to stress upon administrative rather than economic or other functions of the navy. He, therefore, restricts to the usage of specific kinds of vessels in his narration. This is amplified when he suggests that each naval Suba should consist of five Ghurabs and fifteen Galvats, and that all subas should form a sar-suba. It means that specific and sturdy vessels (fully equipped with artillery, light-guns, hand-grenades, guns and ammunitions) were required to operate in the coastal vicinity of the Maratha Swarajya. This must have suited the aim of the projection of Maratha sovereignty on the sea by navy.

In contrast to the ‘Blue Water’ and ‘Brown Water’ navies, the ‘Green Water Navy’ consists of the flotilla of boats (of various sizes) especially for the purpose of navigation through rivers or various inland water channels. Though most of the military (naval) activities of the pre-modern times were carried with the help of the ‘Green Water Navy’, it is true that the economic benefits derived from maintaining a ‘Green Water Navy’ far exceeded its military value. Many of the Indian rulers, whose territories included river ways, had such kind of a flotilla. A study of the navy of the Assam rulers in the medieval times has been done by B.C. Kalita, which provides us with a deep
insight of the use of the flotilla of the Ahom Kings.\textsuperscript{150} It has also been recorded how the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb made use of his own flotilla to convoy his troops and ammunition to the remote province of Assam and fight against him in the year 1661-62. It is believed that for this venture, ‘a force of 12,000 cavalry, 30,000 foot and a flotilla of several hundred armed vessels – which included 10 ghurabs or floating batteries carrying 14 guns, which were towed by four rowing boats...’ were assembled. In this process, ‘dozen of armed river boats (of the Ahom King) were captured’.\textsuperscript{151}

III

**NAVAL ENGAGEMENTS: GRAND STRATEGY AND TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The rich heritages of maritime traditions indeed have played a crucial role in the matters of coastal and oceanic navigations in the pre-industrial era. References of the use of navigational charts and of mariners’ compass could be found in the texts recording the commercial voyages of the pre-industrial navigators.\textsuperscript{152} They had their own methods of charting the sea routes, depicting the land marks, determining the depth or shallowness of the sea water, calculation of time and tide etc. A profound knowledge of these aspects of navigation was particularly necessary for long and tedious voyages in the high seas. The role of technology, howsoever unsophisticated it was, cannot be undermined, at the same time. There has been a debate over sailing capabilities of the boats or ships having one mast plying in the Indian Ocean during medieval period. It has to be understood that it was difficult for such vessels, particularly with a square sail, to advance against the force of the wind. This was precisely the reason why the medieval sailors of the Indian Ocean region chose to sail along with the favourable winds of the monsoon ever since its discovery in the 1\textsuperscript{st} century A.D.

The early explorers, on the contrary, did away with this drawback of the sailing vessels with one mast. They modified their vessels by equipping it with two or three masts and by completely changing the pattern of the sail. Though we lack sufficient data (including archaeological remains) regarding the ships of these early explorers, but some paintings depicting the vessels used in the early voyages provide us with some vital clues. The vessels of the explorers (fitted with up to three masts) were rigged with lateen sails,
and, for a better maneuverability, an additional top sail was also there. Needless to say the speed of these vessels was enhanced considerably with these innovations which enabled the early explorers to sail across the globe in a reasonable time. Yet, despite this advantage, Vasco da Gama has to take help of an Indian pilot to land at Calicut. This brings into consideration, yet another significant aspect of navigation i.e., the familiarity and thorough knowledge of the coastal waters and coastal geography. In fact, the understanding of the geographical surroundings of the coast viz. the presence of submerged rocks, reefs, sand-bars, etc. along with the tidal behaviour of the sea can have significant implications on the economic and political fortunes of a coastal state.

Every state formulates a military doctrine of its own which is in harmony with its political policies, and geographical realities. The geographical location of a state affects its accessibility, vulnerability, manoeuvrability, strategic quality, political sensibility and national policy. In terms of terrestrial location, the Maratha Swarajya could be categorised as ‘Maritime location’, i.e., a territory having access to sea and also connected with land. A large stretch of the Swarajya, in fact, was coastal terrain, as it was the actual zone of contact between the land and sea. The coastal terrain, so far the strategic considerations go, offers at least two distinct military advantages to the state:

1. Offers opportunity for the deployment of naval forces for defensive purposes.
2. Offers opportunity of employing maritime commerce to sustain its defence effort.

A cautious appreciation of the hydrographical character of the coastline (viz. the presence of gulfs, bays, river estuaries, large lagoons etc. with sufficient entrance) and the character of the Ocean/Sea bed (viz. the nature of the favourable tides and streams, presence of sand-bars or submerged reefs stones etc.) further helps in extracting the military advantages offered by the coastal terrain. In case of the Maratha Swarajya, a survey of Shivaji’s political career reveals that he had also set ‘Military Tasks’ in pursuance of the state policy for the attainment of the following objectives:

1. Military Objectives - To destroy enemy and its war machine.
2. Political Objectives - To enforce political or associated demands on the adversary, and
(c) Geographical Objectives - To overthrow the enemy from strategically important areas.

The very task of the Maratha Navy was, thus, also specifically defined towards the realization of the Swarajya's defined 'Military Doctrine'. It has been brought out earlier that the Maratha navy, right from its inception, was considered as an independent limb of the state apparatus, hence it was expected that the Navy would set up its own 'Tasks' in consonance with the grand Military Objective of the state. To achieve such 'Tasks' it would have its own strategy and tactics depending on the availability of resources, technological know-how, the nature of the enemy, and, above all, the short-term and long-term goals. In the subsequent pages we will examine the strategic and tactical considerations of the Maratha navy which were put to use in the course of actual naval engagements during Shivaji's reign.

A better understanding of military strategy and tactics is possible only in the background of the task which is to be accomplished through military undertakings. Strategy may be defensive or offensive, or, at times - a combination of both, depending on the circumstances under which the troops operate. Hence, to have a better comprehension of the Maratha Naval strategy and tactics, let us start with the defined aim or objective of the Maratha naval establishment. Sabhasad puts forward the view that the Maratha navy was created to fight and defeat the Siddi of Janjira. The Portuguese sources also support this hypothesis. Hence, particularly with regard to the Siddi of Janjira, the 'Grand Strategy' of the Maratha navy out-rightly appears to be 'Offensive'. This is also evident from the long drawn conflict between Shivaji and the Siddi chiefs both on land and water. Here, the 'Military Objective' - of the destruction of the enemy and its war machine, was being served with the Navy as one of the 'means'. In fact, the prolonged naval war between these two parties could also be perceived as a 'war of attrition'. The question now is, was the Maratha naval policy under Shivaji the same with respect to the Portuguese, the English or, for that matter, any other European power? A study of the naval encounters between Shivaji's fleet and the Europeans gives us the impression that Shivaji was not completely hostile to these nations and that his military actions were mixed with caution. It may not be grossly incorrect to infer that Shivaji, by means of his naval policy with respect to the Europeans, was trying to achieve 'Political Objectives'.
i.e., to enforce political or associated demands on the adversary’ in the interest of the Swarajya. As regards his endeavours to oust the Siddi from Janjira, or his occupation and fortification of the desolate off-shore rocks like Suvarnadurg, or even the forcible occupation and fortification of the un-inhibited island of Khandери, they could well be understood in the light of his desire to fulfil the ‘Geographical Objectives’ i.e., to overthrow the enemy from strategically important areas and to prevent them from occupying one’.

From the documentary evidences cited above, we can well formulate an idea of the naval strategy pursued by Shivaji. In the first instance, the Martha naval fleet might have been used to mete out surprise on the enemy. The reason is obvious; the Maratha navy, more so, during its formative years, might not have been in a position to congregate the requisite number of specialized vessels so as to force a direct naval fight on a strong opponent. The Marathas under Shivaji, as such, followed the principle of surprise in almost all their encounters with the opponents. By resorting to the element of surprise the Marathas not only made the best use of the geographical features, but this principle also allowed them to put to the best use their resources and, at the same time, served their immediate objective of putting more pressure on their enemy. In the second instance, as reported, the Maratha fleet was to waylay the ships coming from Persia and Mocha. This assumption is also reasonable as the Maratha crew consisted mostly of the local coastal people who had inherited the profession of seafaring since generations. Among the Hindu castes, there were Bhandari, Son-Koli, Bhoi and Gabits; whereas from among the Muslims there were Daldis, the Kharvis, the Bhadelas and Vaghers. All these castes supplied crew for the navy.154 They were thoroughly acquainted with the minute details of the coastal sea-bed in their vicinity; hence they could have easily waylaid the vessels which were unfamiliar with that part of the coast and the timings of the tide. In this way the Marathas could have made a good escape with the ‘prize catch’. Even Sabhashad seems to refer to such a naval tactics while describing the success of the Maratha vessels against the ships of 27 nations. The third proposition is to transport an army, via sea or river, to a certain destination and then conduct a military expedition on land. This too, appears reasonable. By resorting to such exercise the army would have saved its energy (which would have been otherwise exhausted in forced marches towards the destination)
and be fresh for the campaign. It would also have helped in saving a considerable amount of time which could be utilised elsewhere. Moreover, such an action also carried with it the advantage of surprising the enemy as the blow could be delivered from unexpected quarters for which the enemy was largely unprepared. For Shivaji, whose nascent Swarajya was bordered by enemies from all sides, it made sense if he put into use his naval fleet to supplement and support any expedition on land if geographical situation permitted so. Late in 1664, when Shivaji undertook the mission to Kanara, he apparently planned to march his army down the west coast, get on board his fleet waiting at Bhatkal (the southern point of North Kanara district), and raid the coastal towns. But Khawas Khan, a Bijapuri general, who was sent by the Adilshah to deal with the Marathas, barred his path. The Basrur naval expedition of 1665 is another example of co-ordination between the navy and army to achieve a single objective. The Basrur expedition commenced with a contingent of about 85 frigates and 03 large ships from Malvan in the South Konkan with Shivaji aboard. By that time, the Portuguese had reconciled to the enlarged status of Shivaji in the affairs of Deccan. Hence the Portuguese, purposefully, did not interfere in the movement of the Maratha naval fleet so long as their own interests were not threatened. As a result, the Maratha convoy sailed past the Portuguese headquarters of Goa and proceeded further south to Basrur, an important port of Kanara under a small kingdom of Bednur. The Maratha fleet took the King of Bednur by surprise and the port of Basrur was at the mercy of the Maratha marine troops. The Marathas could lay hands on a considerably rich booty which was further utilised in augmenting their naval establishment. But the fleet or army was not always that privileged to cut across the occupied areas of the Europeans and reach their destination. In the next segment we shall scrutinize how the Portuguese, on more than a couple of occasions, foiled the Maratha attempt to cross through their territory or territorial waters to deal with their (i.e., the Maratha) enemies.

Let us now try to understand how the Maratha naval combats served to fulfil the desired politico-military-strategic objectives set by Shivaji.
SHIVAJI AND THE SIDDI: QUEST FOR JANJIRA AND THE
OCUPATION OF KHANDERI - It had been Shivaji’s ultimate intent to wrest the
island fortress of Janjira from the Siddi Admirals and bring it under his own control.
Throughout his life he pursued this aim - at times - quite vigorously, but failed to achieve
it. However, realising the importance and significance of such naval bases during the
course of his struggle with the Siddi, Shivaji settled for Khanderi, which would have
provided analogous realistic advantages to the Maratha naval establishment. Though
Khanderi was occupied and converted into a naval base at the fag end of his career, yet it
provided significant strategic advantage to the Marathas over their naval competitors in
the years to come. The crucial ‘Geographical Objectives’ of the Maratha military policy,
i.e., ‘to overthrow the enemy from strategically important areas and to prevent them from
occupying ones’ undoubtedly, was the underlining factor for this action. It was during his
endeavour to achieve this objective that he put to use his navy in a tactical and strategic
manner. Shivaji’s endeavour for Janjira and Khanderi, thus, provide us with the vital
fundamentals and give us a deeper insight of the naval strategy and tactics put into
effective use by him.

A brief survey of the history of the Siddi suggests that they held the southern
portion of the province of Kalyan as Jagir from the Nizamshahi government of
Ahmednagar. The above mentioned Jagir was bestowed in acknowledgement of the
services of the naval contingent maintained by them for the defence of commerce on the
Western Coast, and the conveyance of Mecca pilgrims - to and from the Red Sea.
Interestingly the post of Admiral was not hereditary and, as a rule, the most competent
naval officer of the Abyssinian unit in the service of the Nizamshahi State was elevated
to the position of Admiral. The Jagir comprising of the localities of Danda-Rajapuri and
adjoining areas was conferred to him for the maintenance of the naval apparatus. In this
way there was a small, but noticeably powerful presence of the Abyssinians along the
Southern part of the province of Kalyan since long. The control centre of the Siddi naval
contingent was Danda-Rajapuri (Rajapuri being a strong coastal fort along the Murud
creek). There was a little island off the Rajapuri harbour, known as Janjira, which was
strongly fortified and well garrisoned with fighting men as well as fighting ships. With
the disappearance of the Nizamshahi of Ahmednagar in 1636, the province of Kalyan was
divided between the Mughals and Adilshah of Bijapur. As per the territorial arrangement, northern part of Kalyan (up-to Nagothana) went to the Mughals, whereas the Abyssinian settlement became the new acquisition of the Bijapur rulers. As such, Bijapur government had, for a long time, ruled over parts of the Konkan including the famous ports of Dabhol, Anjanwel, Ratnagiri etc, hence the recent acquisition on the coast was to further augment its sphere of influence in the Konkan waters. The Adilshah proved to be prudent enough by not disturbing the arrangements followed by his predecessors - the Nizamshah of Ahmednagar, with respect to the Siddi. He was fully mindful of the fact that the mobilization of the Siddi to his cause would serve the maritime interests of the Bijapur state in a much healthier way. Hence, the Siddi Admiral’s position along with his Jagir was re-confirmed by the Bijapur government. The additional title of Wazir was also conferred upon the Siddi Admiral who was assigned the control over the entire coastal possession of the Bijapur state. In this way, the Siddi continued to perform essential naval services to the new masters and remained unchallenged in the Konkan waters. The above-mentioned arrangement further strengthens the point that if any land-based power wanted to exercise effective control over the Konkan coast, it would have been mandatory for him to either make the Siddi a partner to that scheme (as the Bijapur Sultan did with him) or render him powerless (for the realization of which Shivaji had concentrated all his efforts).

From the contemporary accounts, though, it is perceptible that the Naval Establishment of the Marathas had been raised (by Shivaji) with the prime objective of challenging and defeating the Naval squadron of the Siddi of Janjira, no detailed account of such operations have come down to us through the contemporary documents. Many a times - the number of vessels involved, the strength of the troops put to fight, the duration of maritime actions and the final outcome of such engagements are recorded, but there is no reference of the battle-plan or how the naval battle was fought. In the absence of such information, it is difficult to comment precisely on the vital aspects of Naval Strategy and Tactics put to use during these naval engagements. At best, we can extract some indispensable clues on the strategy and tactical considerations of both the parties.

Ever since the capture of Kalyan-Bhiwandi by the Maratha forces, Shivaji was keen on extending his sway over the entire coastal stretch of the Konkan down south.
This brought him in dangerous proximity of the Siddi of Janjira his immediate neighbour. A struggle for the mastery over the coast ensued between the two. Initially, this struggle was on the land with Shivaji vigorously propagating the claim of the 'Maratha Swarajya'. As a result, the Siddi, in the upper-Konkan, were being pushed to the brink. This struggle was violent and inhuman as each side tried to make sudden attacks and depredations and frequently indulged in loot, arson, murder and enslavement of the captured people. It seems Shivaji got an upper hand in this contest and occupied a sizeable portion of the Siddi's Jagir in the Konkan. The Siddi Jagir was virtually surrounded from the landward side by the Maratha troops, but a large portion of the Konkan coast was still controlled by the Siddi because of an efficient navy. Shivaji, therefore, immediately undertook the construction of vessels meant for naval fights, so that military pressure could be exerted on the Siddi from the sea-side too. This strategy would have proved advantageous as the Marathas were quite strong on the land as compared to the Siddi who had a smaller territory and a comparatively limited military contingent.

Early in the year 1659, Shivaji was hard-pressed by the arrival of the Bijapuri General Afzal Khan in the vicinity of the Maratha Swarajya. But, the Maratha military campaign against the Siddi continued oblivious of this great danger. While Shivaji himself proceeded to tackle Afzal Khan, another Maratha contingent was despatched to subdue the Siddi. Sabhasad Bakhar records the success of the Maratha army against the Siddi even though Kay Sawant, another strong commander of the Bijapuri force was assisting him. After getting rid of Afzal Khan, Shivaji devoted his undivided attention towards the reduction of the Siddi. Once again, as Sabhasad Bakhar records, the Siddi was humiliated in hard fought battle on land'. Janjira was tactically blockaded by the Maratha vessels. As a result the Siddi was hard-pressed for subsistence and provisions. From there started the story of the clandestine assistance provided to the Siddi by the Portuguese as well as the British. We have numerous evidences of these European powers siding with the Siddi in the event of a contest between him and Shivaji. The European action could be explained in terms of their desire not to have a stronger neighbour (in the form of the Marathas) in the vicinity of their own territorial possessions on the Konkan coast. Under such circumstances, Shivaji, could not have done much except for the punitive action on the Europeans either by closing the overland trade routes.
passing through his domains or confinement a few of their trading vessels and put some
demands on them in the bargain. Coming back to the Siddi story - since his stronghold
Janjira was blockaded and was also facing pressure from the Maratha fleet, the Siddi
decided come to terms with Shivaji. For the political survival of the Siddi, the sea-castle
of Janjira mattered a lot. Hence, the Siddi proved to be clever enough to save Janjira for
himself and relinquished (though reluctantly) his hold over the castle of Danda-Rajapuri
in return for peace.\footnote{157} Whereas, for the Siddi, the day was saved by negotiating peace
with Shivaji; for Shivaji, the territorial gains were substantial as it implied further
extension of Maratha control over the Konkan coast. The Maratha quickly organised their
recent territorial gain on the coast by permanently placing a strong garrison and erecting
strong fortifications at the approach routes to Danda-Rajapuri.\footnote{158} In this way, the
precondition of the physical control of the coast for a practicable operation of naval
vessels was fulfilled through the acquisition of Danda-Rajapuri. Danda-Rajapuri indeed
was a great gain considering its economic and strategic location. A study of the
contemporary British Factory Records further reveals that the British administrators, at
the same time, were eyeing to gain control over Danda-Rajapuri. Some of the
correspondences even point towards the British plans to favour Danda-Rajapuri in place
of Surat as the headquarters of the British settlements in India.

At the same time, the construction of Maratha naval vessels was earnestly pursued
at Kalyan-Bhiwandi. The Portuguese, though, were certainly not comfortable with the
urgency of the purpose and tenacity of Maratha naval vessels. An appraisal of the pace at
which the constructions of naval vessels were undertaken by Shivaji, and the fact that
skilled artisans with an expertise in boat building were pressed into the enterprise, was
enough to cause an alarm to the Portuguese administrators. They could well comprehend
that the Maratha warships were likely to pose analogous threat to the Portuguese as to the
Siddi in the days to come. In fact, the earliest Portuguese reference (of the year 1659) on
Maratha navy manifestly emphasizes their anxiety. It reads, “...He (Shivaji) has built
some men-of-war in Bhiwandi, Kalyan and Panvel, ports in Bassein taluka. To ensure
that these men-of-war do not set sail, we have ordered the Portuguese Captain not to let
them come out of these ports.”\footnote{159} From another Portuguese document of the year 1662
(By this time Shivaji had overrun the Konkan coast down south and had captured many a
important ports like Dabhol form Bijapur), their unease is more clearly perceptible. It was none other than the Portuguese Governor of Goa, who reportedly suggested (to his officers at Chaul) that they should find some courageous men who would secretly set on fire some of the Maratha vessels. This ‘instruction’ was communicated in the light of a request made by the Maratha Subedar of Dabhol, Ragho Ballal, to allow five Maratha warships and one Pataxo interned in the Karanja creek to go out in the sea. It should be recalled that the Maratha vessels form Kalyan, Bhiwandi and Panvel, before they could sail into the open sea, had to pass through the channels which were commanded by the Portuguese. Hence the Portuguese permission was required for the same. Some of the Factory Records of the British EIC also observe, with some concern, the maritime arrangements of the Marathas during the formative years of the Maratha navy. Early in 1663, the Surat factors of the British EIC report that Shivaji was “fitting out two ships of considerable burden for trading with Mocha...”\footnote{160} In yet another correspondence, the Surat factors on 26th June, 1664, record with concern that, “...Shiva(ji) was fitting out a fleet of 60 frigates for an attack on some unknown quarter, probably ‘to surprise all junks and vessels belonging to that port (Surat) and to waylay them on their return from Basra and Persia,’ or to transport an army up to Cambay creek (Sabarmati) for making a raid on Ahmedabad.”\footnote{161} At the end of November, however, it was learnt that the fleet had been sent to Bhatkal to co-operate with his army in his invasion of Kanara.\footnote{162} A Portuguese letter, written by the Captain of Chaul in August 1664, corroborates the information contained in the English document cited above. This letter reports that Shivaji was building 50 ships in Upper Chaul and that 07 of them were ready to set out in the sea. It also emerges that the Portuguese, by that time, were not interested in blocking the passage of the Maratha ships in view of the growing military and political stature of Shivaji). It is interesting to note that the British and Portuguese documents report to the presence of a large number of ships under the control of Shivaji. It appears realistic too, in the backdrop of Shivaji’s constant pre-occupation with the Siddi, and also because of the impending Basrur expedition undertaken by sea-route. It has to be kept in mind that by the year 1664, Shivaji had gained many a brilliant and strategic military victories, including the one on the Mughal Viceroy of Deccan - Shaista Khan. As a result his sphere of influence in the Konkan and elsewhere had considerably expanded. He had
acquired the status of a territorial power to be reckoned with. The daring raid of Surat in Jan 1664 could be seen as a purposeful show of his military prowess. Needless to say, all these military activities were pouring rich dividends for the Maratha Swarajya.

It is also said that Shivaji invested the money obtained from the Surat raid of 1664 in the construction of the marine fort of Sindhudurg. This invincible sea fort was designed to monitor the waters of South Konkan. Shivaji, moreover, was quick to learn from the initial reverses he suffered in the process of capturing the island fort of Janjira from the Siddi. He understood the importance of a strong naval fortress, because the Siddi were able to survive, after being deprived from any landed possession on the coast, only because of the unconquerable fortress of Janjira. The construction of Sindhudurg, in other words, would have rivalled the role played by Janjira.

In the meanwhile, the Siddi naval depredations on Maratha coast were growing violent day-by-day. It was, after all, the matter of survival for him. He was deprived of all his landed possessions on the coast, including his naval command office of Danda-Rajapuri, which was now with the Marathas. The only alternative for him to avoid certain starvation was to use his naval fleet for coastal raids in the Maratha territory. The Siddi, thus, had resorted to stealing rice, laying waste the Maratha coastal territory by putting it to fire and capturing and enslaving of Maratha people so that they could be sold. In addition, any vessel plying in the coastal waters of Konkan was prone to Siddi attack and destruction. It was only because of his uncontested hold over the island fortress of Janjira that he could indulge in such audacious activities on the coastal water as well as along the coast. Such audacious acts of the Siddi men led to the outbreak of war again between the Siddi and Marathas. Shivaji had continuously maintained military pressure on the Siddi and did not allow them to recover Danda-Rajapuri. Moreover, the Siddi sea-castle was also subjected to heavy cannonade year after year by Shivaji. Shivaji was unrelenting and did not allow the Siddi to concentrate on any one front. Fortunately for the Siddi, the arrival of the Mughal Commander Maharaja Jai Singh with a special force - to bring under control Shivaji's activities in the Deccan, provided some relief (though short-lived) form the Maratha pressure. Jai Singh tried to corner Shivaji by asking the Portuguese not to allow Shivaji any refuge in their territory. A contemporary Persian work Haft Anjuman tells us further that Jai Singh had also asked the Siddi chief to cooperate with the Mughal
plan by launching counter-offensive on the Marathas in the Konkan. The Siddi chief was also offered Mansab in the Mughal service.\textsuperscript{163} Under those circumstances, Shivaji had no option but to make peace (the Treaty of Purandhar) with the Mughal Commander by handing over at least 23 of his forts to the Mughals. It has also been suggested in the *Haft Anjuman* that Shivaji had demanded the possession of Janjira in lieu of the agreement and had even ‘offered to attempt the conquest of Janjira for the Mughal Emperor’; however, Jai Singh refrained from committing anything positively on this issue, and Siddi dominance on Janjira continued.

After escaping from the clutches of the imperial Mughals, Shivaji had returned back to his Swarajya definitely by the last quarter of 1666. He was careful enough not to infuriate the Mughals again by undertaking any military expeditions directed against their interests in the Deccan. At the same time, as the contemporary documents suggest, he made peace with the Mughals by formally accepting a Mansab from them. Being thus free from that quarter, Shivaji once again concentrated on the reduction of the Siddi. In the year 1667, after the monsoon had subsided, Shivaji again applied military pressure on the Siddi and personally directed the action. The Siddi was hard pressed, and with no hope of succour from the Bijapur government this time, he turned towards the Portuguese and made a frantic request to bail him out of the difficult situation. As such, the Portuguese had helped him earlier too, against the Marathas, on a couple of occasions by secretly sending him food and other necessities. On the basis of references in some Portuguese documents, it seems that that in lieu of Portuguese help, the Siddi had transferred his allegiance to the Portuguese in the year 1668. (Though this settlement/arrangement did not last long.) The very first clause of the treaty signed by Siddi, towards this effect, reveals that Siddi Fateh Khan (the then Admiral) had destroyed some Portuguese embarkations and seditiously wished to attack the lands and ports of the Portuguese. It also stipulated that in future, Siddi’s ships would not navigate without obtaining Portuguese Cartazes, nor his ships were to carry any defensive material (may be war materials). The Siddi was to pay the duties as was being done by the Mughal ships. It provided that the Siddi protection and fetched him a permit to carry 500-600 Khandis of provisions to the friendly ports every year.\textsuperscript{164}
The prospect of the Siddi joining the Portuguese camp against Shivaji was expected to tilt the balance of (naval) power in favour of the former. Shivaji, however, was undeterred by the new power-equations and he, in a dutiful manner, continued to apply military pressure on the Siddi year after year. His grand strategy was somehow to push the Siddi garrison of Janjira on the brink of starvation, thus leaving the Siddi with no other substitute but to surrender Janjira (to the Marathas). To achieve this objective, Shivaji deployed the Maratha naval ships around Janjira in the best possible way. The island fort of Janjira was thus, virtually surrounded and blockaded every year. Shivaji could anticipate some success in breaking the resistance of the Siddi, but the military assistance of the Portuguese at the eleventh hour prevented the Siddi from crumbling down to the Maratha pressure. It seems that the Siddi was so hard-pressed (as no military assistance was coming from the Portuguese) that he opened channels of negotiations with the English as well as the Mughals. The British administrators of the nearby territory curiously kept a track of the Maratha-Siddi conflict as the outcome of this conflict was surely going to affect their trading fortunes on the Konkan coast. The English factors at Bombay acknowledge the receipt of a message from Fateh Khan, the Siddi of Danda-Rajapuri, ‘whose island fortress of Janjira was being closely besieged by Shivaji’. The same letter contains an explicit hint of the Maratha naval strategy against Janjira. The letter reads, “... Though he (Shivaji) cannot storm the place (Janjira), only thinks to starve him (Siddi) out...” It also appears, on the basis of the above mentioned letter, that Aurangzeb (on receipt of a request for help from the Siddi) had also asked Shivaji to withdraw his force from the surroundings of Janjira. This letter further reveals the very mindset of the besieged Siddi admiral of Janjira. The letter records, “…so the Siddi resolves to hold it (Janjira fort) to the last, and then has thoughts of delivering it up to the Mughals, who have an army about Kalyan, commanded by Lodhi Khan.” It seems that the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb was also prepared to pay a sum of rupees three lakh to the British to bring Danda-Rajapuri (Janjira) under the Mughal control. The Bombay authorities, on the other hand, tried to create an opportunity for themselves out of this situation. One of their letter reads, “...the Portuguese Captain of Chaul has dealt falsely with him, in seizing one of his vessels after he has assured him contrary; so he (Siddi) will not trust them, and rather desires our friendship... This place is doubtless of great
concern, almost invincible if not blocked up by sea... The Company formerly have had an eye towards it, and now may be the very nick of time to compass it... If two or three ships were sent down from Surat and we empowered to appear with them (Siddi fleet) at Danda Rajapuri, and advantageous treaty might be made with the Siddi...

The Policy of Naval Blockade seems to have worked fine for the moment for Shivaji, as the Siddi was apparently desperate to enlist himself in the services of any one who would have relieved him from the ceaseless Maratha pressure. This also brings into light the crucial fact that mere possession of an isolated island base was not enough to sustain the naval operations and related expenditures. A base could serve its purpose only if its requirements and supplies can be continually guaranteed. The Siddi was deprived of any landed possession on the coast which could have supplemented the food requirements at least. The island of Janjira, at the same time, was too small to have produced any food grains or met any other requirement related to the military/naval apparatus. It was, thus, necessary to have a territorial status for the Siddi to enable him to operate efficiently in the coastal waters. At the same time, so long as Janjira was with the Siddi, he was difficult to get to, and could not be brought to task. Under such circumstances, to cut-off any kind of contact or supply to the island of Janjira was the only way out to coerce the Siddi into submission. For that, it required a strong naval fleet which could have defied the Siddi fleet. Shivaji, thus, continued with his Policy of Naval Blockade against the Siddi. The next year (i.e. 1670) the Siddi resistance seems to have finally shown the sign of cracking. Being exhausted by the constant struggle (now seeming hopeless too), the Siddi Admiral Fath Khan allegedly had made up his mind to come to terms with Shivaji. This decision came in the wake of acute scarcity of food and other provisions in Janjira. Moreover, the Portuguese, their newly crowned masters, failed to come to their timely rescue this time, because of bigger compulsions. The contemporary Mughal chronicler Khafi Khan throws more light on this event. As per Khafi Khan’s narrative, Fath Khan, the Admiral (chief) of Janjira, was almost going to hand-over Janjira to Shivaji and settle down with a rich Jagir as compensation, but somehow, three of his lieutenants got an inking about this plan. They immediately swung into action in order to prevent Janjira from going into the hands of an ‘infidel’. In a bloodless coup, Siddi the Admiral was put behind the bars. Siddi Khairiyat, one of the
three subordinates as well as the second in command of the *Siddi* fleet, was proclaimed the Chief. The Mughal help and intervention was immediately invoked. The Mughals also proved to be too eager to step in and oblige - after-all, it would have enabled them to put a close eye on the 'anti-imperial activities' of Shivaji.¹⁷⁰

No sooner did the *Siddi* Admiral transfer his loyalty to the Mughals, than his fortunes showed signs of considerable improvement. Early in 1671, the *Siddi* carried out a deceitful, though daring, attack on Danda-Rajapuri and wrested it form the Marathas. The recovery of Danda-Rajapuri was fundamental for their subsistence as well as effective naval operations. It is interesting to note that the *Siddi* fleet played an instrumental role in this success. It was an *Amphibious Operation* mixed with surprise. The *Siddi* vessels (around 40 of them) transported the troops aboard and landed most of them on the coast from where they went ahead to scale the walls of the fort from different sides and took it under control. It is said that within no time a large area around Danda-Rajapuri was occupied by the *Siddi* and the defences of Danda-Rajapuri were enhanced in such a manner that all the approach routes to Danda-Rajapuri were brought under the range of *Siddi* guns and canons. At the same time, the coastal defences were so strengthened that no vessel would ordinarily dare approach anywhere near the fort without risking itself to the bombardment of canons. Moreover, it would have required ships with long range artillery and mortars to make its impact felt upon the coastal fortress. The whole episode highlights the importance of a competent naval fleet and equally effective artillery for the protection or attack on the coastal areas. After getting counted as an indivisible part of the Mughal military apparatus, the *Siddi* enjoyed great favours and assistance from the Mughal Subedar of Surat. His area of effective and 'legal' naval operations increased considerably. Surat became the headquarters of the Mughal Imperial Navy looked after by the *Siddi* admiral who was now bequeathed upon with the additional title of Yakut Khan. The position of Janjira was not undermined as it continued to remain the safe abode of the *Siddi* political activities - largely independent of the imperial diktats. The *Siddi*, on the other hand, because of his inflated status as the Mughal Naval Commander, was also in a position to force his demands on the British factors at Bombay. He needed to winter his ships during monsoon season as Janjira and Danda-Rajapuri did not have enough space to provide shelter to his ships. Though, Surat

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¹⁷⁰ The original text contains a typographical error. It is unclear what the correct word is, but it appears to be 'activities' rather than 'activities'.
was an option, but, it was having the imperial ships including the cargo vessels. Moreover, Surat was a bit too far from the Siddi base of Janjira and Danda-Rajapuri where the threat of Shivaji's vessels was always alive. To counter the threat from the Maratha armada, it was reasonable to keep the Siddi vessels in the vicinity like Bombay. The Bombay port also offered complete safety from the Maratha vessels or any kind of sabotage by the Marathas (viz. putting the Siddi vessels on fire thereby causing a heavy loss).

The loss of Danda-Rajapuri was a big setback for Shivaji who aimed at complete domination of the Konkan coast by extending the limits of his Swarajya to the seashore. Moreover, his failure to take Janjira from the Siddi further disallowed the (intended) unchallenged domination of the Maratha navy in the coastal waters of Konkan. The Siddi had become more powerful, at least in the coastal waters, because of his alliance with the Mughals. Shivaji was, thus left with no choice, but to regain Danda-Rajapuri from the Siddi. A fierce struggle started once again with both the armies making inroads into each others' territories. As a result trade and commerce was greatly affected, as evident from the contemporary European records. Shivaji, however, was frustrated in his attempts to take either Danda-Rajapuri or Janjira. It is said that once Shivaji even offered a high Mansab and other significant rewards to the Siddi chief in exchange for the control of Janjira fort but to no avail. The control over this un-subdued island fortress helped the Siddi to successfully contest the sovereignty of the Marathas on the Konkan waters for years to come. It was because of his repeated failure to grab Janjira that Shivaji decided to occupy and fortify the desolate island of Khanderi having an area not more than even two square miles. The location of Khanderi was indeed strategic from the point of view of navy. In fact, the Portuguese, in the past, had also worked on the idea of using Khanderi for their own purpose but that idea was shelved by them as they could find no source of fresh water on that island. Moreover, this island was uninhibited and was being used only as a source of fuel (wood). What made Shivaji vie for its possession and subsequent fortification was sheer vision and imagination. He knew that by possessing it, he could keep an eye over the movement of ships (Including those of the Siddis as they wintered at Mazagaon every monsoon) to and from the British port of Bombay. The British could also visualize the danger posed to the navigation of Bombay because of an
enemy post at Khanderi, hence they immediately protested against the action of Shivaji. The Siddi was equally alarmed and even tried to resist Shivaji in fortifying Khanderi by joining hands with the English. But the alliance failed to achieve any success against the befitting reply and equally firm determination of Shivaji. The fright of Siddi could be presumed from the fact that he captured another small island (that too inhibited only by rats!) in the vicinity called Underi. It was the turn of Shivaji now to voice protest. He asked the British to direct (their ally) Siddi to vacate Underi, but nothing came out of this effort and the status-quo was maintained. Shivaji, in any case, did not live long after the Khanderi-Underi episode to have altered the situation significantly in favour of the Marathas. But, so long as this great visionary lived, he tried to exercise his full authority and sovereignty over the Konkan Sea with the help of his naval establishment.

THE EUROPEAN FACTOR:

Shivaji’s higher ambition, no doubt, included within its scope - the complete subjugation of the Konkan coast. But he knew that the realization of this plan depended essentially on the raising of a capable naval contingent. As he successfully over-ran the Konkan coast in the early phase of his military/political career, he noticed the scattered commercial/military/naval pockets of the various European maritime powers on the western coast. They virtually dominated the coastal shipping by virtue of their superior guns and navigational technology. The Portuguese had long dominated the west coast by forcing the indigenous vessels to buy their protection through the purchase of ‘passes’. The passionate conflict between the British and the Dutch was almost in the process of settling down with the Dutch deciding to settle further East. The French were the new entrants to the scene. All of these European powers were trying to extract maximum advantages out of the situation. They made all sorts of legal/illegal alliances with the hapless native rulers along the coast - most of whom lacked any decent naval presences in their respective coastal surroundings.

Going by the very purpose of their business in this part of the world, the European powers were far away from making any conscious efforts to work for a sovereign status
for themselves initially. However, their attempts to undermine the sovereign authority of
the native rulers could not be totally ruled out in the pursuit of their commercial interests
(for example, the attempt to monopolise trade in certain commodities; by indulging into
hostile acts like seizure of native crafts, making them pay ransom, etc.). Such acts of
high-handedness (i.e. European infraction upon the absolute political authority of a
sovereign) would have been the last thing that Shivaji would have tolerated. He was,
therefore, quite alert regarding their activities. At the same time, he was mature enough to
overlook the significance of the European presence on the west coast. He could well
comprehend that, in the Oceanic matters, only the European powers were capable of
contributing positively to naval resources of the Swarajya. Their navies were powerful
and their ships were large and strong, well equipped with muskets, artillery and other
ammunition. Even their neutrality could have favoured a speedy attainment of his prime
naval objective, viz. the overthrow of the Siddi of Janjira. On the other hand he was also
mindful of the advantages of the commerce brought by the Europeans for his
countrymen. It was thus, the farsightedness of Shivaji that he did not show needless
penchant towards any such policy which would alienate the European merchant-
adventurers. As noted earlier, the state-policy as enumerated by Amatya, viz. ‘the foreign
merchants should be allowed to settle...’ also recommended a similar approach.
Moreover, with strategic considerations in mind, Shivaji chose not to be discourteous to
the European merchant-adventurers as far as possible. We have already noted elsewhere
that he had requested the Portuguese on a couple of occasions to allow his naval vessels
to pass through the Thana creek as those vessels were ‘meant to be used against the Siddi
of Danda-Rajapuri’.
He also used to buy the Portuguese passes for his vessels initially
and used to pay custom duties to them too. When he raided south Konkan in the 1660, the
British Factory of Rajapur was also plundered by the Maratha troops, but he showed
eagerness in encouraging them to British reopen their factory by promising to
compensate them for the losses they had suffered. As regards the Dutch, he was
successful in persuading them to support his cause in return for Maratha help for the
Dutch military ventures. Regarding the ‘newcomer’ French - they were immediately
allowed to open a Factory at Rajapur and certain concessions were also granted to them.
In return, the Marathas could secure some guns and ammunitions from them and gained
in strength and confidence. Let us now discuss the strategic relationship of Shivaji with the European powers.

a) **Interaction with the Portuguese:** The Portuguese were well entrenched on the west coast when Shivaji was leading the Maratha people towards the realisation of their *Swarajya*. They commanded an extensive coastline on the north Konkan coast, the limits of which coincided with that of the Ahmednagar, and, later on, the Bijapur state. It is believed that in the year 1636, the Adil Shah of Bijapur commanded a shoreline of 300 kilometres. This shoreline remained with him until Shivaji began to make inroads into it in the 1660's. By 1675, the Portuguese and the Adil Shah ceased to have common borders as Shivaji had taken over the entire coastline belonging to the Adil Shah by then. In this way, the Portuguese came to share their eastern boundary in the Konkan with the ever-changing and expanding western frontiers of the nascent Maratha *Swarajya*. It is true that the Portuguese power in India was on the path of virtual decline in the second half of the 17th century. The Dutch and the English were aggressively expanding their respective spheres of influence in India at the cost of the Portuguese. But, the Portuguese still were too good to keep hold of their ‘*Estado*’ and pursue its interests in the face of local pressures and threats. The Portuguese navy was practically too good for any of their Indian counterparts including the Marathas. Moreover, the Portuguese were also aware of weakness on land. They, therefore, were shrewd enough to sound politically more accurate and diplomatically polished while interacting with the native powers. We have already noted how shrewd the Portuguese were while dealings with Shivaji, who had become strong enough to cause serious hindrances to their commercial activities. Though, they professed friendship with the Marathas in general, they had also simultaneously tried deceitful methods with the purport of causing impairment to Shivaji’s naval endeavour. The exasperation of the Portuguese, particularly from the Maratha vessels, becomes quite manifest by the year 1667, as the Portuguese Vice-Rei Conde de San Vincente wrote to the King of Portugal, “I am afraid of Shivaji’s naval ships. We did not take sufficient preventive steps and so he has built many a forts on the Konkan Coast. Today he has several ships and they are large ones…” It is interesting to note, however, that despite the threat potential from the Maratha navy, the Portuguese, at times, preferred to help Shivaji (though in a covert manner) in his struggle against the
Mughals. The dual policy of the Portuguese in dealing with the contenders of the Deccan is evident from the contemporary Portuguese letters and correspondences. In a letter dated 31st March 1665, addressed to Jai Singh, though the Portuguese Viceroy of Goa assures him that no help would be rendered to Shivaji during the course of Mughal action against him, on the other hand, the Viceroy confidentially issued contradictory orders to the Captain of Bassein on 18th April 1665 directing him, “...you should order (to your people) that nothing should be done from which they (the Mughals) could have suspicion (that the Portuguese show favour to Shivaji). However, if without the risk you could secretly give any aid with munitions or food-stuffs to Shivaji you should do it for money, because it is not desirable that if he is driven from his lands, the Mughals should remain the lords of them. But this should be done with such great caution that never should he (Jai Singh) be able to guess, much less to verify it. To Shivaji you will write how much better it is for him and for us that his retreat, in case it should be necessary to do so, should not be Chaul, but rather to Goa, where he would be more safe and we would not have to break with the Mughal...”

As regards their naval policy towards the Marathas, the Portuguese apparently refrained from entering into a direct altercation with Shivaji’s navy. They did not try to needlessly restrict the movement of the Maratha vessels in the Konkan waters as a policy matter. At least, this appears from the Portuguese Viceroy’s reply to Jai Singh when the latter complained to that the former ‘gave back the ships (of Shivaji captured by the Portuguese navy) to Shivaji. The Portuguese ambassador to the Mughal was directed by the Viceroy vide a letter dated 22nd August 1665, to answer that the Portuguese could not keep back ships of Shivaji because ‘he was not at war’ with the Portuguese. In the beginning of the year 1665 too, the Portuguese (after being certain that Shivaji did not intend to use his recently fitted naval vessels against their headquarters at Goa) did not come in way of the Basrur expedition of Shivaji. The Maratha army was apparently aboard the 85 Maratha frigates which sailed past the Portuguese Goa without any hurdle in February 1665. It is evident that the expansion of the Maratha territory around the Portuguese frontiers and the impressive growth of the Maratha navy in the 1660s were sending disturbing signals to the Portuguese. As a result the Portuguese were a bit perplexed as to what should be the policy they should adopt with respect to the Marathas.
Finally, they seem to have settled down in favour of a policy which helped maintain "balance of power" in their immediate surroundings. The Portuguese, therefore, did not openly show any hostility towards Shivaji, but secretly sympathised with the detractors of Shivaji. We find the Portuguese thus, generally inclined in favour of the Siddi of Janjira or the Adil Shah of Bijapur whenever they had a conflict with Shivaji. Such a policy was practiced when they had signed a 'Pact of Friendship' with Shivaji in the year 1667 and further reiterated the 'Pact' in the year 1670. This was in stark contrast vis-à-vis the Portuguese role in the Mughal-Maratha conflict. The Portuguese seems to have realised their 'not so secure' (if not vulnerable altogether) military position on land. Their settlements were surrounded by the native powers including the mighty Mughals which posed a continuous threat to them. Moreover, in the 17th century they were facing severe shortage of men and military provisions to man their holdings. Such a situation had arisen due to the lack of finances as their commercial enterprise did not allow them such huge profits as were pocketed by them in the 15th and 16th centuries. Their 'exclusive monopoly over Ocean and Oceanic-Trade' in the Indian surroundings was ruthlessly undermined because of the aggressive policies adopted by the Dutch and the British. The Portuguese, under the prevailing circumstances, had, therefore, no options but to keep all the parties in good humour. They, however, put to use, in the best possible manner, their navy in order to overcome the handicap as enumerated above and stay in contention. Navy was still the real compelling means they possessed, through which they could easily get a good reckoning. As most of the Indian rulers lacked a vision regarding navy, the Portuguese exploited this weakness of the Indians to their own advantage. Hence while dealing with Shivaji, the Portuguese used their navy to apply pressure on him.

b) Interaction with the British East India Company: The relationship between the British and Shivaji had a jittery beginning. The British factory at Rajapur became the target of the Maratha troops early in 1660 not because of any long-standing enmity, but because of the Rajapur factors' role in the struggle between Shivaji and Bijapur. The Rajapur factors provided security to the governor and declared that the said Junk belonged to them when asked specifically by Shivaji's men to hand it over to them. The relation between the Company and Shivaji were thus, strained with the Marathas
resorting to capturing and detaining a few of the English agents and officials. The Marathas had undertaken this particular military campaign by land. Any collaborating action by the Maratha navy, which could hardly have been in any organized form at that time, was out of question. But the Maratha failure to capture the Bijapur Junks, and more importantly the treasure they had on board, must have further strengthened Shivaji’s resolve to have a competent naval establishment at the earliest. The Whole episode also provided a clue as to how a navy could be put to best use in case of an attack from land.

The English Company at Rajapur, however, was subjected to another Maratha exploit in March 1661. The reasons for the Maratha onslaught, this time, were not too difficult to comprehend. The Company was the defaulter. It was during the Bijapuri siege of Panhala (which was under Shivaji) that the British sided with the sovereign of Bijapur. In fact, a small British contingent actually participated in the action with the British flag flying high. At the same time, they provided ammunitions which were so crucial and much needed to conquer the fort. Soon afterwards, some of the British Company officials were captured by Shivaji and released only when the former had paid heavy ransom. Whatever the reasons be, this engagement, like the earlier one of the previous year, was also devoid of any naval action by either side.

One of the significant outcomes of the sack of Rajapur was the subsequent closure of the Rajapur factory by the British. The second time which saw the East India Company and the Marathas - face to face, was during Shivaji’s raid of Surat in 1664. Once again the British Company suffered economically, though the Maratha action was totally aimed against the Mughals. Apart from these stray incidents there was no other compelling reason for any interaction between the two on a higher (political) level. Shivaji, in any case, was more occupied with the expansion and consolidation of his Swarajya.

However, the Company’s decision to transfer their principal settlement on the west coast to Bombay, once they had acquired the rights and control over Bombay from the British government in 1668, changed their relations and equations with respect to the Marathas. The Company’s territory now shared a common boundary with the Maratha Swarajya. As a result, the interactions between the two not only began on a regular basis but became intimate too. The Portuguese were the other neighbours to the English at Bombay, who, it seems, where not quite supportive to the British Company’s cause at
Bombay. The British were in the process of setting up a new establishment altogether, hence they required a continuous supply of the essentials. Such items could have made their way to Bombay either through the water-ways controlled by the Portuguese (through Salsette and Thane), or through Shivaji’s domain by land. Any denial from the Portuguese side (since they had a common and, at the same time, conflicting economic interest with the British Company) would have naturally required the British to have a congenial orientation towards the Marathas. In other words, the circumstances pressed the British to adopt a moderate approach towards Shivaji. But the relation between the two fluctuated arising out of the exigencies - mostly economic, strategic or otherwise.

The Company’s interests in India, by far, were essentially economic in nature. They needed to promote and protect their economic interests by being in line, and, at the same time, maintaining a realistic balance (of power) with the Indian political powers in their vicinity. In any case, they had to ensure that there was no hindrance in the procurement of the local commodities and that their trade and other commercial activities were running smoothly. Indeed, it was a difficult task in relation to the political situation on the west coast of India, late in the 1660s. During those times, Shivaji had gained considerable ground. He was virtually unstoppable as mission after missions, to bring him under control (by the Mughals or Bijapur), failed miserably. His heroic escape from Agra had undone all the advantages that the veteran Jai Singh had scored over him on behalf of the Mughals. The net result was that the Deccan was almost in turmoil with a depressing impact on trade and commerce. The trade routes via land which passed through the domain of the conflicting powers remained unsafe. The situation of the coastal traffic through the sea was also somewhat similar. We have already noted the rise and growth of Maratha navy in the preceding pages. The Maratha navy also served as a means to project the sovereignty of Maratha Swarajya all over the Konkan coastal waters. The upswing in the political fortunes of Shivaji on land had also provided a positive impetus to his naval activities. There were stray incidences of naval engagements between the Portuguese and the Marathas, but they had - by and large, maintained a friendly policy, with the Portuguese adopting a more conciliatory attitude towards Shivaji’s ‘audacious’ enterprises so long as their own interests were not held back. The
Siddi of Janjira was contesting for sovereignty on the coastal waters of Konkan with the Marathas which further made the Konkan waters quite turbulent.

The most remarkable aspect of the Maratha-Siddi conflict was that both the sides solicited the friendship and support of the British towards the fulfilment of their respective causes. The reason was simple – the British Company had superior resources, particularly a strong navy and corresponding naval technology, at their disposal. There was a constant demand for the British ammunition and guns by the various political powers including the Marathas. Not only ammunitions, but demands for iron anchors and some other equipments were made, time and again, by the Bijapur rulers and even the Mughals. Hence, apart from purely trading matters, naval matters too, occupied a sizeable segment of the relations between the Company and the native rulers who commanded the coast line on the west coast of India. In the next few pages we will evaluate the factors which shaped and influenced the naval interactions between the British Company and Shivaji. The tactical, strategic and other compulsions would be a subject of close scrutiny.

From the study of Factory Records and some other documents, it can be inferred that the Siddi element was ‘the key consideration’ in most of the naval interactions between the Shivaji and the Company. A brief survey of Maratha naval activities with respect to the Siddi of Janjira has already been attempted in the preceding pages. It has been noted that the Siddi was on the look out for reliable allies in order to counter the pressure of the Marathas. Siddi had virtually little to hold on the Konkan coast. The island fort of Janjira was not spacious enough to have either accommodated the Siddi fleet or sustained the Siddi naval activities in the light of the Maratha naval threat. The Siddi needed to protect his fleet from the fury of the monsoon of the Arabian Sea, hence needed a harbour safe from the Maratha threat. Bombay harbour of the Company used to be his first and the only preference. At the same time, the Siddi desperately wanted to use the Bombay harbour as a launch-pad for his naval raids against Shivaji’s possessions on the coast nearby. He knew it well that the British at Bombay were favourably disposed towards him in his struggle against Shivaji as he had managed to get the supplies from them in a secret manner whenever cornered by the Marathas. This had made him
audacious and arrogant as time passed by. As a result, at times he did not even consider it prudent to obtain the permission of the Company to use the Bombay harbour for the wintering of his vessels or even conducting naval raids on the adjacent Maratha territories from Bombay.

Fortunately, for the Marathas, the event of Bombay becoming the principal settlement of the Company brought some changes as their relations with the British could now be purposefully defined. A significant outcome, at the same time, was the firm stand taken by the Bombay authorities not to allow the Siddi to exploit the facilities of the Bombay harbour against the interests of Shivaji. This does not mean, however, that the British had stopped sympathising with the Siddi.

Once the Siddi was admitted to the Mughal service (in 1671), it was more difficult for the Company officials at Bombay to keep the Siddi demands under check. There appears to be some difference of opinion between the Company's Bombay and Surat officials as to how to deal with the Siddi. While the Surat officials operated around the Mughal territory, their interest was naturally to keep the Mughal governor of Surat contented. Hence, they did not want Bombay to refuse courtesy to the Siddi who was, after all, a Mughal official. On the other hand, Bombay did not have any virtual contact with the Mughal territory as it was surrounded by the Portuguese and Maratha territories. Any hostility from either of these powers was sufficient to starve the island of the essential provisions. Moreover, most of the coast down south, from Bombay to Goa, was also commanded by the Marathas, hence Bombay could ill afford to keep the Marathas in bad taste by openly siding with their enemies. Shivaji, after all, had become a big power to be simply ignored.

While formulating a naval policy with respect to Shivaji, who was making the best use of the geographical surroundings to his advantage, the British came across certain practical difficulties. First amongst them was the Maratha tactics to avoid direct confrontation with the English vessels in the open sea. The English vessels were comparatively large and hence, had to be dependent on the wind to effectively manoeuvre in the coastal waters. On the other hand, the Maratha vessels were relatively small and
could be rowed up to a certain point where they could catch wind through the sail. Their manoeuvring was, therefore, easy which made them more effective in the naval combats against the Europeans. The Maratha vessels lacked effective artillery. At the same time, they could stand no chance against the fire power of the European vessels. To overcome this handicap, the Marathas preferred boarding action rather than a head on engagement. They boarded the European vessel after it was dismasted and surrounded by the Maratha war boats containing professional warriors who would quickly get into the enemy vessel and engage them in a duel.

The British/Europeans, on the other hand could not follow the native crafts in their hot chase because they did not have the correct details of the submerged rocks or reefs in the coastal surroundings. They seemed to have understood this problem hence we find the Company administrators directing the factory officials etc. to map the routes of the coastal water and also to take ‘soundings’ of the different locations on way. One of the prominent causes of the failure of the British to prevent Shivaji from occupying and fortifying the island of Khanderi appears to be their ignorance about the submerged coastal rocks as the ‘soundings’ of the bay of Khanderi had not been done.

The Europeans indeed commanded strong artillery, but this advantage was, more than often, neutralised by the tactical superiority of the Maratha navy. The Marathas knew that the guns/canons were not placed everywhere on board the ship, and that it took some time to take aim on the enemy vessel. At times, the direction of the entire vessel had to be changed in order to take aim. This was a time consuming as well as tedious process as it also depended on the availability of wind and a favourable wind direction. By the time the big European ships would manoeuvre, the Maratha vessels would have either changed their positions (as they were small and were not much dependent on wind) or made good their escape. As such the Company’s primary interest was in trade, hence it did not consider prudent to engage in ramming action against the enemy vessels as it would have resulted in a bigger economic loss.

Another shortcoming of the Company was the hugeness of the vessels. The big size of the vessel had two obvious disadvantages. One, it could not venture into the
shallow waters of the bays and creeks because of its burden, and two, its speed and
manoeuvrability was quite slow to have made any impact on the flat bottomed, light and
fast boats of the Marathas or other native rulers. The British were also aware of this
particular shortcoming and sincerely wanted to get over that. In some of the
correspondences of the Company we find that the officials express their helplessness to
do any thing concrete against the Maratha small and fast vessels in comparison to the
bigger ships of the Company. At the same time they asked for the permission to get a few
of ‘such vessels’ built so that they could take punitive actions against ‘those
pirates/Malabaris’ the next time.

Whether the Europeans were genuinely keen to give a real or tough naval battle to
Shivaji’s navy is another significant aspect - which needs to be examined carefully. As
pointed out earlier in this chapter, the Europeans (the British, Dutch and the French, in
particular) were too new in this part of the world and were more guided by the incentives
of trade monopoly and profits. This was coming in a natural way, i.e., without being
militarily hostile to the native powers. The era of colonial expansion, in a real sense, was
far away. Moreover, these foreign powers did not perceive any realistic or grave threat to
their activities from the Maratha side, their navy in particular. There are references which
despise the entire Maratha naval establishment and describe their naval vessels as pitiful
things.\textsuperscript{188} In their correspondences they seem to be more worried about the disruption in
the procurement of goods and their despatch to the respective destinations rather than the
menace of the Maratha naval establishment as such. Hence, to ensure that there was no
hindrance to their commercial activities, they preferred to maintain amicable relations
with the native rulers as far as possible. As regards Shivaji, his military exploits were too
audacious to have escaped anyone’s attention. The Europeans, therefore, also admit in
many of their correspondences that Shivaji had grown in strength had become master of a
considerable stretch of land. It was, therefore, obvious that they could not afford to
antagonise Shivaji by going for a direct and declared war on him. They were rather
deliberate in their effort to avoid a direct clash with Shivaji on land and water alike.

2 Panikkar, K. M., *Asia and...,* p. 30. Panikkar has also discussed at length, the implications of the arrival of Vasco da Gama on the trading network on the western coast of India.


6 Whiteway, R. S., *op. cit.*, pp. 117-18; see also, Stephens Morse H., *op. cit.*, pp. 36-39; and Aiyyar K. V. K., *op. cit.*, pp. 170-172 (Chap XII); See also, Nambiar, O. K., Portuguese Pirates and Indian Seamen, (chapter 'Indo-Egyptian Axis'), pp. 130-145; In 1508, however, a combination of the Egyptian fleet commanded by Amir Hussain and Gujarati fleet under Admiral Malik Ayaz, had been successful in defeating a Portuguese fleet off the coast of Chaul. See, *History and Culture of Indian People*, Vol. VI, p. 166.

7 For a general discussion on Albuquerque’s exploits and success, see, Stephens Morse H., *op. cit.;* see also Pearson M. N., *The Portuguese in India*, (Chapter I).


9 Aiyyar K. V. K., *op. cit.,* (Chap XII); See also, *History and Culture of Indian People*, Vol. VII., p. 398.


11 Ibid., p. 394.

12 Qaisar, A. J., *Indian Response to European Technology*, p. 44

13 Ibid., pp. 394-98.

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There is a reference of the disastrous fate of a contingent of Bijapuri forces (supported by the Mughals) which had captured the ‘island of the dead’ (probably a small island in the vicinity of Goa) in 1570. The occupying forces were totally destroyed by the artillery bombardment from the Portuguese fleet which had surrounded the island, thereby making any escape (of the Bijapuri troops) impossible. See, Pissurlencar P, *Portuguese-Marathe Sambandha*, p. 108.


Swally, a few miles north to port of Surat, was the port which was used by the British East India Company for commercial purposes in their early years in India. The port was also better than those located in the mouth of river Tapti as it was navigable during low tides too. It seems that Captain Best, in October, 1613, had he managed to obtain a treaty with the Governor of Surat allowing trading privileges, subject to ratification by the Emperor. The Portuguese, however, were opposed to it and attacked the English vessels on the 29th of October. The British, however, defeated and destroyed the Portuguese fleet in the action, which lasted for a couple of days.


Bombay has been described as ‘nothing but a group of small islands, with numerous backwaters, producing rank vegetation, at one time dry, and at another overflowed by the sea. So unwholesome, in consequence was the situation reckoned, that that the older travelers agreed in
allotting not more than three years for the average duration of life there...’ Hamilton Walter, *A Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of Hindostan*, p. 153.

21 Kail. O. C., *The Dutch in India*, p. 11.

22 Ibid., p. 12.


25 For more details, please see, Om Prakash, *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India*, Chapter II.

26 See, Kail, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.

27 Ibid., p. 77; see also English Records on Shivaji, (ERS henceforth), Vol. I, no. 345, etc.


29 For more on the conflict between the Dutch and the French, see, Dodwell, H. H., *op. cit.*


31 *Ain-i-Akbari* (ed.) Blochmann, Vol. II, pp. 202-03; The crew consisted of the following categories of men: (a) Nakhuda or the Commander of the ship (b) Muallim or the pilot (c) Tandil or sailors (d) Sarang or supervisor [for landing/docking etc.] (e) Bhandari or the store-keeper (f) Sukkangir or the one who steered the ship (g) Karrani or the accountant (h) Nakhoda khasb or the one who helped in lading/unlading (j) Panjari or the one who would be on the pole of the mast to tell directions/location of enemy vessels etc. (k) Gumti or those who used to bail out [throw] water from the deck (l) Top-andaz or the gunners (m) Kharwah or those who managed the sails and other instruments of navigation. Cf. Mookerjee R. K., *op. cit.*, p. 148-49; see also Pawgee N. B., *op. cit.*
Abul Fazl writes about an ‘Admiralty Department’ headed by the Mir Bahri or the Lord of Admiralty. His duties were enumerated as follows - to build boats of all kinds for river transport; to fit out strong boats for transporting elephants; to recruit expert seamen; to supervise the rivers; to impose, collect or remit river duties and tolls. A fleet (Nowwara) consisting of 768 armed vessels and boats, was stationed at Dacca to protect the coast of Bengal against the Maghs and the Arakanese pirates. [Quoted by Mookerjee R. K., op. cit., chapters II & III of part 2].

Majumdar, R. C, Advanced History of India, p. 465. It cites the episode of the attack of Qasim Ali Khan, the Governor of Bengal, on the Portuguese at Hugli; Qaisar, A. J., [p. 44] Impact of European Technology on Indian Culture, gives reference of contemporary painting depicting the Mughal assault on Hugli.


The working of the Cartaz system has been discussed at length by M. N. Pearson in his book The Portuguese in India, pp. 38-39; Om Prakash, op. cit., describes the Cartaz system as an instrument of monopoly, p. 44.

There is a possibility that this money was utilized for the purpose of raising a strong army, so that the entire area could be taken under control.

Apte, D. V., ‘When Did Shivaji Start His Career of Independence’, in The Indian Historical Records Commission (Proceedings of Meeting), XVIIth Session, Baroda, 1940, pp. 44-46. Apte has tried to establish that the year 1656 marks the beginning of the independent career of Shivaji. His conclusion is based on the assumption that scores of letter written by Shahji to the officers of the Jagir of Poona could be found pertaining to the period 1636 to 1655 but not a single letter written after 6th Dec, 1655 could be found.


43 Duff, Grant, *op. cit.*, Vol. I. P, 118. (Duff has based his statement on the basis of the original letter from Aurangzeb.)


45 Portuguese letter dated 28 November, 1657, quoted by Pissurlencar, P., *op. cit.*, p. 41; A contemporary English letter also suggests that Kalyan-Bhiwandi were under the control of Shivaji – see ERS, Vol. I, no. 160.

46 Ibid. The same Portuguese letter (of the year 1656) refers to Shivaji as the son of Shahji.

47 *Sabhasad Bakhar*, pp. 84-86.

48 The Europeans at that time could be found on both sides of the Indian peninsula occupying the most convenient locations as far as the trade/commercial centers on the coast were concerned.

49 *Rajniti*, p. 48.

50 Quoted by Pissurlencar, P., *op. cit.*, p. 42.


54 *Rajniti*, p. 31.


56 *Rajniti*, p. 32.

57 Kulkarni, V. B., *op. cit.*, p. 163; Italics mine.

58 ERS, Vol. I, no. 52; See also, letter no. 106 for overseas trade carried on during the time of Shivaji.
Salt was commodity being produced chiefly at Pen, Panvel etc. during Shivaji’s time; see Kulkarni, A. R. *Maharastra in the Age of Shivaji*, p. 233. For a reference of Shivaji’s ‘salt fleet’, see also, ERS, Vol. I, no. 189.


*Rajniti*, p. 49.

Ibid.


See for example, EF (1642-45), p. 92, 216 etc; (1646-50), p. 259; (1651-54), p. 224, etc.


*Rajniti*, p. 49.

*Sabhasad Bakhar*, pp. 89-90.


According to Sabhasad Bakhar, there were almost twenty seven such (foreign) powers against which Shivaji fought naval wars.

Quoted by Pissurlencar, P., op. cit., p. 42.

The Portuguese records refer to such Maratha boats as Sanguiceis.

It is stated that two of Portuguese artisans namely Roe Leitao Viegas and his brother Fernao Leitao Viegas supervised some 340 workmen, Portuguese and others, and helped Shivaji to construct the fighting vessels. Cited by Pissurlencar, P., op. cit., pp. 41-42.


Ibid., p. 235 etc

Sabhasad Bakhar, pp. 93-94. It is interesting to note that during the time Kanhoji Angre as many as 51 different types of Maratha-boats were being used. A detailed is provided by Dhabu, D. G., Kulabkar Angre Sarkhel, pp. 378-79.

Ibid., p. 94.

There are numerous references of the English administrators allowing the Siddi fleet to winter in the Bombay/Mazagaon dockyard; see, for example, ERS, Vol. I, nos. 167, 168, etc.

Many of the Portuguese documents of that period point towards the fact that the Portuguese were favourably disposed towards the Siddi and helped the latter in various ways against Shivaji. One such Portuguese letter, in fact, tells that the Portuguese had induced the Siddi to accept the Portuguese overlord-ship in the year in 1667. Quoted by Pissurlencar, P., op. cit., p. 47.

Quoted by Desai, W. S., op. cit., p. 13; see also, Orme, II, p. 35

Muntakhab-ul-Lubab of Khafi Khan, (tr. Elliot & Dowson, Vol. VII, p. 258). Khafi Khan writes, “Shivaji had secured several islands in the sea by means of a fleet which he had formed...He had also built many forts in those parts...”

Quoted by Pissurlencar, P., op. cit., p. 44
Koli is a term used to denote the Fishermen tribe of the coast of Maharashtra.

Quoted by Pissurlencar P., op. cit., p. 43.

Ibid.

ERS, Vol. I., no. 333.

See, ERS, Vol. I, nos. 328, 333, 340, etc. The Mughal chronicler Khafi Khan (Elliot & Dowson, Vol. VII, p. 345) also refers to various activities at Surat which was under the English.

Quoted by Desai, W. S., op. cit., p. 09.

Rajniti, p. 51.


Quoted by Pissurlencar, P. op. cit., p 48.


For a general understanding of ship-building activities in India, see, Chaudhary, K. N., Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean, (Chap - 7); Qaiser, A. J., op. cit., (IESHR), Das Gupta Ashin, op. cit.


Aitchison, C. U., A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads, pp. 296-97; See also Forrest, G. W., Maratha Series, Vol. II, pp. 100-01.

Sabhasad Bakhar, p. 94.

Ibid.

ERS, Vol. I, no. 238; The cause of this letter was Shivaji’s apparent show of strength as a large number of Maratha vessels were noticed hovering around the mouth of Bombay harbour. This
was enough to alarm the English settlement of Bombay. Though no engagement seems to have
taken place as the Maratha vessels

104 Sabhasad Bakhar, p. 87.

105 For more information on the Bhandari community, see, The Gazetteer of the Bombay City and Island, Vol. I, pp. 231-236.

106 The Bhandaris, by their hereditary profession, were toddy tappers. They could climb up on the trunk of the palm tree with ease, hence their services would have been meaningful and significant in manning the mast of the sea-going vessels and inform about the location of an enemy ship in the vicinity to the captain of the vessel. The English Records pertaining to Bombay Factory took note of the Bhandaris as ‘being a very useful set of people...being of a military caste and having on several occasions behaved with courage...’ See Forrest, G. W., Home Series, Vol. II, p. 65.

107 Sabhasad Bakhar, p. 84.

108 For example, Darya Sarang was the chief Admiral and Daulat Khan was also a prominent naval commander during the reign of Shivaji; See, SPS, no. 1724, 2054, 2055, 2121, 2137, 2192 etc; See also, ERS, Vol. II, no. 397.


113 Tactics is the actual use of available resources at the ground level. In a naval encounter, these people, with their immense understanding of the topography of the coast could have played a vital role, viz. they could have misled and attracted the enemy vessels to a difficult/dangerous waters; or would have made good their own escape, when hard pressed, to the numerous inlets, creeks or bays with shallow waters.
115 Ibid., p. 48.
116 Ibid., p. 51.
117 Rajniti, p. 49; See also, Sabhasad Bakhar, p. 87.
119 Whiteway, R. S., op. cit., p. 172.
121 Cited by Pissurlencar, P., op. cit., p. 41.
123 ERS, Vol. I., no. 333.
124 Rajniti, p. 50.
125 See, Duff, Grant, History of the Marathas, Vol. I, p. 137. Duff writes, “He (Shivaji) built Sindeedroog or Malwan... He rebuilt and strengthened Kolabah; repaired Severndroog and Viziadroog and prepared vessel at all these places...
126 Sabhasad Bakhar, pp. 89-90.
127 Abbe Carre, in Sen S. N., Foreign Biographies... pp. 154-55.
128 Rajniti, p. 51.
129 Whiteway, R. S., op. cit., p. 172.
130 Rajniti, p. 49
131 Ibid., p. 50.
132 Ibid., p. 51.

149
Da Cunha, Notes on the History and Antiquities of Chaul and Bassein, p. 67; See also, Fawcett, Charles, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 58.

Bombay has been described as 'nothing but a group of small islands, with numerous backwaters, producing rank vegetation, at one time dry, and at another overflowed by the sea. So unwholesome, in consequence was the situation reckoned, that that the older travelers agreed in allotting not more than three years for the average duration of life there...' Hamilton Walter, A Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of Hindostan, p. 153.


Ibid. p. 8; see also, Duff, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 194.

Ibid., p. 54.

Gun-powder was being manufactured by making use of the saltpeter obtained from the Karwar region. The British factors frequently complained of the bad smell of the saltpeter. For more details, see, Fawcett, Charles, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 30.

Siddi's coastal possessions were not safe for sheltering of their ships during the rainy season because of the absence of fortification as well as because of its vicinity to the Maratha territory.

See, Om Prakash, The Dutch Factories in India, (1618-21). This book consists of translations of many of the Dutch documents. Regarding the quality and sea-worthiness of the Indian vessels, the Dutch documents put on record that, 'many of these ships were good enough to make a few return trips to Europe too'.

Khafi Khan, (in Elliot and Dowson, History of India... Vol. VII), pp. 350-55. According to his narrative, the Mughal ship had 80 guns and 110 muskets on board.

Ashin Das Gupta, op. cit., p. 63.


The Siddi chief had definitely changed loyalties from the Bijapur Sultans towards the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb by the year 1670. It is said that the Siddi admiral Fateh Khan was hard
pressed by Shivaji’s military expedition against him in 1669 and was about to surrender the Janjira fort to him as no help was coming from his Bijapur overlord. However, Siddi Fateh was prevented from doing so. In a palace revolt he was also killed by his deputies. The rebels then made a request to Aurangzeb that they would be willing to administer Janjira for him in return for the imperial help against Shivaji. Aurangzeb is said to have immediately sent a fleet to relieve the Siddi. EF (1668-1669), p. 242-243; See also ERS, Vol. I, no. 336, etc.


146 Naval operations, at that time, apart from the active involvement in commercial activities, consisted of patrolling the coastline, regulation of coastal traffic, providing protection to the native commercial vessels and the vessels of other nations which purchased his passes, keeping the piratical activities (which were rampant at that time) under check, fighting against the enemies on the sea, projection of the Maratha sovereignty on the sea, etc.


150 Kalita, B. C., *Military Activities in Medieval Assam*, pp. 60-63, 66, 75, 81-83, 120, 156, etc.


Strategy could be defined as an overall, general plan of action to be applied against the enemy, whereas Tactics consists of 'on-ground application' of the strategy, taking into consideration the actual situation.


Sarkar, J., Shivaji and His Times, p. 226; Sarkar has based his statement on the Surat Factory Records.

Sabhasad Bakhar, p. 65.

Ibid., p. 66; This event must have taken place by 1660, though Sabhasad has not assigned any particular date for this.

Ibid., p. 67; Sabhasad writes that the forts of Lingana and Birwadi were constructed on an adjoining hill.

Pissurlencar, P., op. cit., p. 42.

ERS Vol. I, no. 106, etc.

Sarkar, J., Shivaji and ..., p. 260. The British factors, by that time, had a legitimate reason to be perturbed as Shivaji had mercilessly plundered Surat early in that year) the ever-growing presence of the Maratha fleet off the Konkan coast.

ERS, Vol. I, no. 96; See also Sarkar, J., op. cit., p. 227.


Quoted by Chauhan, R. R. S., 'The Siddis in The Indian Ocean Regions', in Mathew, K. S., (ed.) Indian Ocean And Cultural Interaction, p. 40; See also Pissurlencar, P. op. cit., p. 47.

EF (1668-1669), p. 242. The date mentioned in this letter is 16 Oct, 1669.

Ibid; see also ERS, Vol. I, no. 171.


SPS, no. 848.
It seems that the English Company was interested in shifting from Surat to Danda-Rajapur.

Sarkar, J., *Shivaji and ...,* pp. 170-74, 236, 262, etc; The Siddi secured royal admiralty and a Mansab of 900, in addition to a Jagir the yearly income form which was worth Rs. 3 lakh. The Siddi was also obliged to protect trade and Haj pilgrims frequenting from the Surat port. See also Orme, *op. cit.,* p. 57.


ERS Vol. II, no. 472.

Ibid.

See, Kail, O. C. *op. cit.,* pp. 44-45 for more on the Anglo Dutch conflicts in India.

This included the territory from upper Chaul down to Basrur (comprising of Dabhol, Rajapur, Vengurla, Sadashivgad; Dabhol being the most important among these), excluding the Portuguese controlled lower Chaul, Goa, Honavar, Gangolli and Basrur.

Letter to the King of Portugal from Vice-Rei Conde de San Vincente, dated 20 September, 1667, quoted by Pissurlencar, P., *op. cit.,* p. 43.


Ibid., p. 503.

It is believed that the governor of Bijapur had collected all his treasure in the wake of the Maratha raid and had slipped into the sea in one of the Junks of the Bijapur state.


There were various ways of striking off the mast of the enemy vessels. It could be done by gun shots, fire balls, arrows, hurling stones or even by managing to climb the mast of the enemy ship while the enemy was surrounded and engaged from all the sides by way of concentrating more numbers – both in terms of boats and men, at that point.

See, for example, SPS, no. 1229. This document suggests that the English wanted to take an estimate of the depth of the coastal waters in between Pen and Bombay, for navigational purposes. Another document (SPS no. 1528) gives us the idea that for trading purpose, the region surrounding Nagothana was to be charted and mapped by the British. This included ascertaining the depth of the river, its width, area of the small boats which could easily enter the creeks, levels of tide etc. Similar information was to be obtained regarding Pen and Batty.

The screw was yet not invented. The screw would have helped manoeuvring the canons viz. adjusting heights, turning the direction of the turret at ease etc. See, Parker Geoffrey, *The Military Revolution. Military Innovation and the Rise of the West. 1500-1800*, pp. 107-108.

ERS, Vol. I, no. 96; SPS, no. 1671, etc. reports that apart from having (insignificant) small boats and vessels, the crew/pilots/Nakhodas, etc. were also quite unprofessional and not experienced regarding seafaring or associated professional naval tasks.