

To the ramparts of Pratapagada

■ TENSING RODRIGUES

Vedapamditā, a Sanskrit scholar and a renowned musicologist in the court of Sahaji Raje, the father of Sivaji Raje Bhosale, narrates the genealogy of the Maratha kings in his Samgita Makaramda. The most interesting part of this genealogy is perhaps a story about the founder of the dynasty. He does not name the founder, but the story clearly identifies him as a king ruling in the land of Saurashtra and a devotee of Somanatha. This may seem a little misleading, as both Saurashtra and Somanatha point to the western peninsula of Gujarat, while this story is located very much in the Deccan, the cradle of the Maratha. But for the moment let us not be distracted by this anomaly; we shall soon attend to it. What is important at this point is the fact that an exactly same story is told of a gavali king named Balipa, an inhabitant of Baramati. Vedapamditā traces the ancestry of Sahaji Raje to this ancient king through Maloji Raje, Babaji Raje and Kheloji Raje. [Dhere, 2001: Sikhara Simganapuraca Sambhu Maharaja, 74]

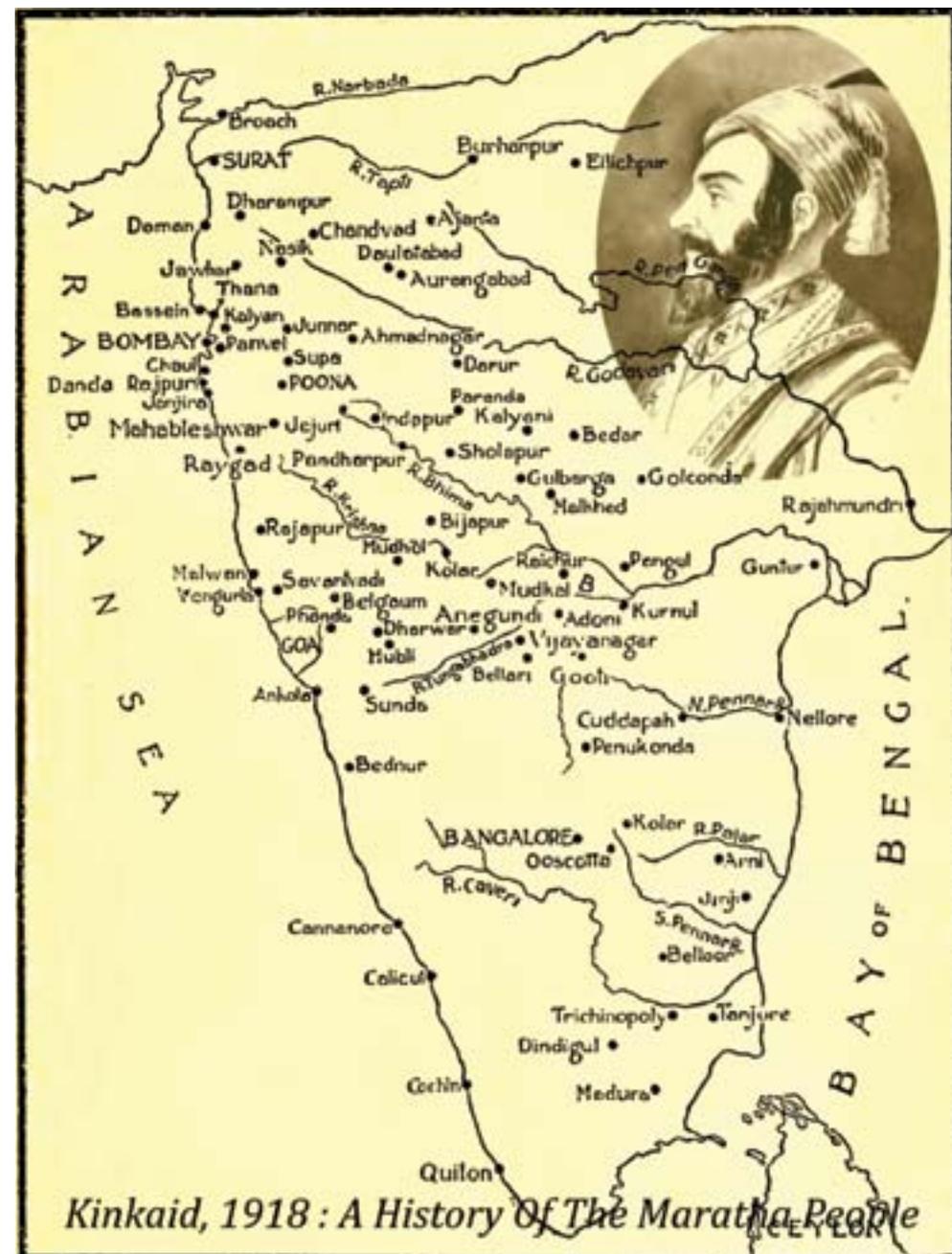
Dhere cites three sources of Balipa story: Cinmayadasa's Marathi addendum to Samskrt Manisamahatmya; Krsnamuni's Phalatanamahatmya; and, Krsnadasa Dama's Adiparva. Dama relates the story as follows: 'In the land of Sorata there lived a shepherd king by name Balipa (gauli balipu ravo). He was the head of twelve shepherd chiefs (mukhya bara gauliyamsi varistha to). He was a great devotee of Siva from the very beginning. Pleased with his devotion Siva came from Kailasa to reside in Sorata. Balipa built a majestic temple to him.' [Dhere, 2001: 66] The reference is to the Sri Sambhumahadeva temple at Sikhara Simganapura in the Mana taluka of Satara district, in the heart of a dhangar-gavali territory stretching from Narmada in the north to the Tungabhadra in the south. An interesting fact is that the temple was rebuilt/renovated by Maloji, the earliest ancestor of Sivaji whose name is found in the historical records. But even more interesting is the fact that, according to the Simganapur copper plate (end of 17th century CE), the temple was earlier rebuilt by Simghanna, most probably Simghannall (1200-1247 CE) of the Seuna Yadava (Devagiri Yadava) dynasty. In fact he is supposed to have named the place Simganapur after himself. The close connection between the Maratha and Seuna Yadava becomes even more obvious from the contents of the copper plate; according to it Balipa's mother was the daughter of Bhillama V (1175-1191 CE) of the Seuna Yadava dynasty. Interestingly Bhillama's

wife was a Jadhav - the Marathi equivalent of Yadav; Jijabai, Sivaji's mother, too was a Jadhav. We have earlier noted that it was during the Seuna Yadava reign that the Old Marathi (which we have equated with Konkani in The Brhatkonkan and Konkani Language, April 30, 2017) emerged as a literary language. [The Yadavaraya, August 27, 2017]

Another genealogy of Sahaji is found in Marathi poet Jayarama Pimdye's Radhamadhava Vilasacampu. In its very first stanza the poet traces the ancestry of Sahaji to Balipa in the following words: 'There was a king considered the chief among the warriors. King Balipa was born in that dynasty; he was the ancestor of Maloji.' [Dhere, 2001: 90] Both Vedapamditā and Jayarama Pimdye were Sahaji's contemporaries and lived in his court; it is therefore reasonable to suppose that they were familiar with the king's ancestry; perhaps this information was part of the folk knowledge at that time; perhaps they had got to know it from Sahaji himself.

Putting together all the above information, the seamless unity of the Maratha and Seuna Yadava is a foregone conclusion. The Hoyasala of Dorasamudra complete the yadava triad - Hoyasala, Seuna and Maratha - that dominated the political, social and cultural panorama of the Deccan for over eight centuries - from the end of the 10th century CE to the end of the 18th century CE. [The Yadavaraya, August 27, 2017] Add to it the Vijayanagara kings, and you see the all-pervasive yadava presence for almost a millennium. [The Dhangar Dynasties Of Deccan, August 13, 2017] And there is nothing surprising about it; it was a natural evolution of a ubiquitous pastoral community. The yadava kings arose from the Deccan soil, starting as pastoral chieftains and slowly morphing into monarchs. [Malenadu And Maval, August 20, 2017] No doubt they fought among themselves; as animal herders they captured herds of cattle, sheep and goats; their heroes became their gods. As kings they captured forts and palaces; their dreams changed the design and the colour of the Deccan tapestry; the yadava warp and weft, however, remained constant; they also intermarried.

Many historians believe that the name Bhosale is in fact a derivation of the word Hoyasala; or the other way round. Behere, for instance, categorically derives Bhosale from Poyasala (the original name of Hoyasala); the 'p' to 'b' transformation seems to be in conformity with the tendency of the southern languages. The fact that the Bhosale had a strong affinity to the Kannada territory reinforces this possibility - for instance, in



the earlier genealogies of Babaji and Maloji their names are given as Babgi and Mal-lugi; and the names of their wives are given as Revau and Umavva, 'au' and 'avva' being clearly Kannada terminations. [Behere, 1946: The Background Of Maratha Renaissance In The 17th Century, 152] Once we realise that the distinction between Marathi and Kannada territories is of a much later date, it is not difficult to accept this hypothesis.

Was Balipa an individual? Or did it refer to a community? In the hoary past to which the tradition belongs, it is difficult to say. The temptation to dig deeper into the possibility arises from the tantalising similarity of the word with place names like Balipa-

vana and Balipattana that occur in Shilahara inscriptions. [Valipattana - The Shilahara Capital, July 23, 2017] We had explored the possibility of the place mentioned in the inscriptions being connected with the velipa community which is spread seamlessly across the trans-Sahyadri Konkan. We had also toyed with the idea that Valipattana could have been the capital of the Shilahara (8th and 10th centuries CE) [Valipattana: The Shilahara Capital, July 23, 2017]. Could that be a pointer to the royal background of Balipa? That could spread the royal yadava canvas over vaster time and space, and offer a new insight into the political, social and cultural evolution of Brhatkonkan.

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