



The author, M. Y. Ghorpade, was born in 1931 and is a direct descendent of the Ghorpade heroes evoked in this volume. M. Y. Ghorpade was born on 7 December 1931. He had his early education at Sandur and graduated from St. Joseph's College, Bangalore, in 1950. He secured his MA at Cambridge University in 1952.

Since 1954 when he joined then Congress organization, Mr Ghorpade has been active in political life and was Finance Minister of the Karnataka State from 1972 to 1977. He was elected as a Member of Parliament from Karnataka's Raichur Lok Sabha constituency in the 1986 by-election and was minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj for about 7 years in Karnataka, when he piloted the 1993 Panchayat Raj Act. His services to decentralisation, rural development, education, employment and women's welfare are noteworthy. As a minister he voluntarily announced his retirement from politics at the completion of his term in 2004. He was Chairman and Managing Director of Sandur Manganese and Iron Ores Ltd. He was awarded a Honorary Doctorate from Mysore University in 2006. He is now 79 years old and lives in Sandur and teaches English in his Sandur Residential School which completed its Golden Jubilee recently in 2009.

M. Y. Ghorpade is an acknowledged authority on wildlife and a photographer of rare talent. His photographs have won several awards in national and international photographic exhibitions. He was awarded the Fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain (FRPS) and the Excellence De la Federation Internationale De L'Art Photographique (EFIAP) in 1976. In 1983, he became the first wildlife photographer to be honoured with the prestigious international award of Master Photographer (MFIAP-Master Federation Internationale De L'Art Photographique). He is the author of *Sunlight & Shadows*, an Indian Wildlife Photographer's Diary (published first time by Victor Gollancz, London, 1983 and published again for Viking by Penguin India Books). His other publications are; *Development Ethos and Experience* (Southern Economist, Bangalore, 1991). *The Grand Resistance: Murarirao Ghorpade & the 18th-century Deccan* published in 1992 (by Ravi Dayal Publisher), *Paramacharya of Kanchi* (1998), *Winged Friends* (2005), *Three Stories* (2007), *Down Memory Lane* (his autobiography), this has been translated into Kannada and Marathi recently along with some other books of his like: *Growth Governance and Human Values* (2006) and *Unforgettable Empire* (2010).

Back Cover:
Author in the 18th Century attire—a painting



M. Y. GHORPADE

A PROFILE IN COURAGE

A Profile in Courage

Murarirao Ghorpade & the 18th-century Deccan



M. Y. GHORPADE

This is the story of Murarirao Ghorpade, a military leader of undisputed genius who ruled from Gooty in the eighteenth century. With the decline of the Mughal Empire, this was a particularly turbulent period in Indian history. Apart from the emergences of indigenous regional powers, the French and the English were playing a decisive role in the politics of east and south India. Against this backdrop, and in this region, Murarirao Ghorpade held his own for close to half a century, gaining the respect of friends and foes alike. He died in 1777, at Kabbaladurga fort, near Mysore.

The central figure in this book is Murarirao Ghorpade, but the author places him against the backdrop of events in the Deccan and the country as a whole. A third of the book deftly deals with events before Murarirao's time and briefly traces the history of the Ghorpades until then. The major part of the work is about Murarirao, but in the last chapter the author encapsulates the story of his descendants. The book is enlivened by more than 53 photographs, most of which are quite exquisite.

In an earlier book, *The Grand Resistance: Murarirao Ghorpade & the 18th-century Deccan* published in 1992 (by Ravi Dayal Publisher), the author's focus was on Murarirao in the context of the diverse but related events in the Deccan and the country as whole. The present volume, recast from the earlier book, brings the life and personality of Murarirao into greater and more vivid focus.

Front Cover photograph: Gooty Citadel

The Bhosles and Ghorpades: Comrades in Arms

MY father Yeshwantrao Hindurao Ghorpade named me Murarirao, when I was born in 1931. All these names were filled with history, as I was to discover as I grew up. I wanted to find out more and more about the history behind these names: Thus was born my book “The Grand Resistance” Murarirao Ghorpade and the 18th-century Deccan, published by Ravi Dayal in 1992, gave me an opportunity to know of what transpired in the Deccan in the 18th century and what was Murarirao’s role in it—which made him so famous.

Ghorpade, our family surname, had its own interesting beginning starting from about 1470 AD, when an impregnable fort in the Western Ghats was ingeniously captured by our ancestors, by taking the help of a monitor Lizard which is called ‘ghorpad’ in Marathi. This Monitor is known to take its hold in a crevice, enabling the human being to tie a rope around its waist and climb up to an otherwise an inaccessible spot. The strategy was successfully used by Karna Sinh and Bhim Sinh to win the fort of Khelna or Vishalgad for Mohammed Gawan after a protracted struggle. In an adventurous action at dead of night in which Karna Sinh was killed, but his brother Bhim Sinh, who completed the mission, received from the Bahamani Sultan the title of Raja Ghorpade Bahadur, with a jagir of eighty-four villages at Mudhol. The black-and-white colours of the Ghorpade flag were also conferred on them at this time.

A well-known naturalist, writing about the ‘ghorpad’, describes it as dark, thick-limbed and long-tailed, a yard or more in length when adult with a broad, heavy body. He gives an eye-witness account of how difficult it was for a gypsy to pull out a ghorpad from the hollow of a tree where it had taken a firm claw-hold, and also refers to the historic event in the annals of the Ghorpade family.

It is believed that some thirty years after Alla-ud-din Khilji captured the famous fort of Chittaur in 1303, Sujan Singh or Sajjan Singh of the Sisodia clan migrated to the Deccan to carve out a military

existence at a time of widespread turmoil throughout the country. Sujan Singh died around 1350, and his fifth descendant, Indrasen, was the father of Karna Sinh and his younger brother Shubha Krishna. How and when they acquired the surname Bhosle is still somewhat of a puzzle. (Sardesai writes: ‘Some scholars detect a linguistic affinity of the word Bhosle with Hoysala, the dynasty of Dwarasamudra or present Halebid, and maintain quite a different origin for the ancestry of the great founders of the Maratha Raj.’) Shubha Krishna’s descendants are still known as Bhosles; he too had an independent career, and is the direct ancestor of the great Shivaji (1627-80).

Like the Bhosles, Karna Sinh’s descendants, the Ghorpades, have their family branches settled in different parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka, such as Mudhol, Datwad, Bedak, Gajendragad and Sandur. They are closely related cousins and have never intermarried on the principle of consanguinity. Together, these two families played a crucial role in the Deccan during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As we have already seen, Karna Sinh and his son distinguished themselves fighting for the Bahamani king. Shubha Krishna, too, served the Bahamani kingdom, before returning to his jagir, Dev giri in Maharashtra, in 1458. In the early decades of the fourteenth century, when the Tughlaq dynasty ruled from Delhi and was seeking to dominate the Deccan, Vijayanagar and the Bahamani kingdom emerged as independent states in 1336 and 1347 respectively and rapidly rose to power in the south and the Deccan.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century the Bahamani kingdom broke up into five separate states: Ahmadnagar (Nizam Shahi), Golconda (Qutub Shahi), Bijapur (Adil Shahi), Bidar and Berar, of which the first three became the most powerful and absorbed the last two. Maloji, Shivaji’s grandfather, was given a fief around Pune and command of the Shivneri and Chakan forts by the Nizam Shahi. Shahji Bhosle, Shivaji’s father, served Ahmadnagar initially and



3. View from the Vishalgad fort

then Bijapur with distinction in resisting Mughal inroads. At this time his activities were concentrated in the region of Bangalore, Kampli and Kanakagiri; he also strengthened his own defenses and semi-independent position by attending to the forts below the Eastern Ghats and the Thanjavur coastal plains.

Shahji’s memorial is in the village of Hodigere in the Channagiri taluk of Shimoga district in Karnataka.

Mahaloji (or Maloji) Ghorpade, the great-grandfather of Murarirao, was a leading general for three generations of Bhosles—Shahji, Shivaji and Sambhaji. In a division of the family jagir and villages in 1637,