

# Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

An Analysis

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- Manish Zanpure

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## Introduction . . .

The Character of Shivaji is one of the most enigmatic characters in the history of India. There are people who deify him and put him on the pedestal of god. Few of them are on the way of declaring him as an incarnation of Lord Shiva. Many myths are now associated with him. Many others view that he was a mere local Maratha chieftain who was rebelling against the Mughal Empire and completely overlook the role he played in Hindu revival in India. Many others, who cannot comprehend the pragmatic approach of Shivaji, which was most practical given his humble beginnings, brand him as a mere plunderer and looter and equate him with ordinary dacoits. Between these two poles of emotions, Shivaji, the man, is on the verge of extinction. This is an attempt to resurrect him.

In the process of understanding Shivaji, few events need to be understood. In the long list of those events, first one is about his grandfather, Maloji Bhonsale and his great grandfather Babaji Bhonsale. Documents suggest that Maloji was a Jagirdar of Pande-Pedgaon. He inherited substantial part of his jahagir. Shahaji was born in 1602, Maloji died in 1607 in the battle of Indapur. Shahaji was 5 years old when this tragedy struck. Maloji, at the time, was a Bargir serving Lakhujı Jadhav of Sindkhed Raja, a place in central Maharashtra.

Jijabai gave birth to six children. First four did not survive. Fifth and sixth were Sambhaji and Shivaji respectively. Shivaji's own marital life was not very different from his father. He never gave importance to any of his queens and rarely entertained their interference in politics. He performed all the duties as a husband and kept his wives in as much comfort as possible, but no importance.

To study Shivaji, we need to view him as a part of a chain of three men constituting his father Shahaji, he himself, and his son, Sambhaji. Without understanding the other two, one cannot hope to comprehend Shivaji.

## Sambhaji, his son...

Whether Sambhaji consumed alcohol? Was he charged for rape of a woman? Was he involved in orgies with women? Can his behavior with Soyarabai, Moropanta, Annaji Datto, be justified? All these questions are difficult to answer and are muddled in mutually contradictory dubious claims. The personal qualities are anyways not of any use while determining the greatness of an individual in politics.

Shivaji arrived at the conclusion that Maratha state will have to fight a decisive war with Mughals, somewhere in 1660-1664. He knew that the Shaistekhan campaign was just a beginning. Mughals had started deploying their armies on the frontiers of Maratha Kingdom in Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Madhya-Pradesh since 1679. The news that Aurangzeb himself is coming to invade Deccan reached Maharashtra in January 1680, just 2-3 months before death of Shivaji. By that time, Mughals had already deployed 150,000 to 200,000 men. The clashes began in the very week Shivaji died. Moropant Pingle (the Peshwa), Hambirrao Mohite (chief of armed forces), Annaji Datto (head of finance department) were preparing to face this impending invasion. Since 1678, Shivaji was continuously purchasing weapons, firearms, and was upgrading his armies, his forts and his navy in anticipation of this final showdown.

This much-anticipated invasion started in 1681 with 250,000 men, new king, and opponent Aurangzeb himself with all the might of Mughal Empire behind him. In spite of this, the continuous warfare from 1681 to 1685 resulted in retreat of Mughals from Maratha territory and redeployment of troops against Adilshah and Kutubshah. All capabilities of Sambhaji in his territorial administration, his strategic understanding, his ability to boost the morale of troops, his ability to make right moves were at stake and were thoroughly tested and sharpened. Shivaji never had to face such an enemy in his entire lifetime like Sambhaji. This feat demands immense patience and will power. Therefore, given the fight that Sambhaji put forth, should we give weight age to adjectives like frivolous, incapable, impatient, and all other jargons used by Marathi chroniclers OR the adjectives used by Dutch and English as patient, and stubborn warrior is an individual choice.

The personal character of Sambhaji was not that bad either, as against that portrayed by some Bakhars. Many a Maratha Sardars were mildly addicted to alcohol, hemp, opium etc. Rajaram, second son of Shivaji, was highly addicted to opium.

Aurangzeb himself was addicted to alcohol until his death. However, that never interfered with politics. Aurangzeb captured and

brutally murdered Sambhaji in 1689. By that time, the result of warfare was as follows- Sambhaji had conquered three fourth of Portuguese Empire in Goa and assimilated it into Maratha state. The region in Karnataka under Maratha rule doubled. The Maratha army doubled itself in numbers and became better equipped. Five-six forts in Maharashtra were lost. Gained three-four new ones; Aurangabad, Burhanpur, Goa, plundered. Dhanaji Jadhav illusively kept the Mughal army, 75,000 strong, away from Maharashtra in Gujarat. Thus, we can see Shivaji's understanding of politics inherited in Sambhaji.

## Shahaji, his father . . .

Shahaji was a Sardar in Nizamshah's court at Ahmednagar. Nizamshah willingly sacrificed Lakhuji Jadhav for Shahaji. Yet, Shahaji went to Adilshah in 1624. Despite of valiantly fighting for Adilshah for two years, he returned to Nizamshah in 1626. He again changed his loyalties and became Mughal Sardar in 1630. Yet again, after valiantly fighting for Mughals, he returned to Nizamshah in 1632. In all these transitions, he maintained his Jagir in Pune at his discretion. He maintained an army that was loyal to him and him alone, irrespective of the power he was serving. He initiated the policy of uniting Deccan against North Indian Mughals. Many notable people like Khavaskhan, Kutubshah, Madanna and Akanna of Golconda, Murar Jagdev supported this united Deccan policy that Shahaji initiated. Shivaji repeatedly pronounced this policy. Sambhaji considered himself as a patron of Adilshah and Kutubshah.

Shahaji appointed Dadoji Kondadev, as his chief administrator of Pune Jagir. He himself was administrating his Jagir in Bangalore, Karnataka. It was his vision that he distributed his property between two sons in 1636. The Karnataka Jagir was for elder son Sambhaji and Pune Jagir for younger son Shivaji. He made Adilshah to appoint Dadoji Kondadev as Subhedar of Pune and gave him control of some army (about 5000 strong) 15-20 forts, and entire administrative personnel in the form of a Peshwa, an accountant and others. Shivaji took his oath on Rohreshwar of establishing a Hindavi Swarajya in presence of Dadoji. The first letter bearing the official seal of Shivaji is dated 28th January 1646. It is difficult to comprehend that young Shivaji who was a teenager of 15 years, had all this blueprint of establishing a Hindu Swaraj along with seals and official letterheads in his mind. One has to accept the vision and power of Shahaji that was guiding him, correcting him and shaping him.

Shahaji was carving a kingdom of his own in Karnataka. He was doing exactly the same thing through Shivaji in Maharashtra as well. At both places, the administrators, Shahaji in Bangalore and Shivaji in Pune were calling themselves as Raja, were holding courts, and issuing letters bearing official seals in Sanskrit. Adilshah was weary of this and in 1648; two independent projects were undertaken by Adilshah to eliminate these two growing kingdoms in its territory. Shivaji defeated Adilshah's general Fateh Khan in Pune, Maharashtra. At the same time, his elder brother Sambhaji defeated Adilshah's other general Farhad Khan in Bangalore. The modus operandi of Maratha troops on both the frontiers is similar, again reinstating the guiding vision of Shahaji. The subsequent treaty that was signed between two Bhonsale brothers and Adilshah to rescue Shahaji, who was held captive by Adilshah, marks the first Mughal-Maratha contact. In

1648-49, Adilshah captured Shahaji in order to blackmail his two sons to cede the territory conquered by them and accept Adilshah's supremacy. Shivaji wrote a series of letters to Dara Shikoh (Subhedar of Deccan), pledging to be subservient to Mughals. Mughals recognized Shivaji as a Mughal Sardar and pressurized Adilshah to release Shahaji. In return, Shivaji ceded Simhagad, and Sambhaji ceded Bangalore city and Kandarpi fort in Karnataka.

We can see the coherency in actions of Shivaji and Sambhaji. The men assisting both the brothers were loyal to Shahaji and were trained under him. Even though Shivaji was administrative head of Pune Jagir, many people appealed to Shahaji against Shivaji's decisions up to 1655. Up to this point, Shahaji's word was considered final in all of the important matters. Until this point, Shivaji was not at all free to take all the decisions on his will. There was a higher power that was controlling his activities. Gradually after 1655, this interference went on diminishing, and Shivaji started emerging more and more independent.

Thus, if we see these three men in a link, Shahaji, Shivaji and his son Sambhaji, all the actions of Shivaji start making sense. In this way, we are better able to grasp the greatness of the man, Shivaji.

Shivaji had himself coronated as a Kshatriya King in 1674. Shahaji initiated this policy. The Ghorpade clan of Marathas considered themselves as descendents of Sisodiya Rajputs. Shahaji attested his claim on the share in Ghorpade's property from Adilshah long before 1640. In reality, there is no connection whatsoever between Sisodiya Rajputs and Bhonsale clan. Nevertheless, Maloji started calling himself as Srimant Maloji Raje after becoming a bargir. Shahaji legalized this claim of being a Rajput from Adilshah. This was of great help to Shivaji at the time of his coronation in 1674. It is interesting to see that even after coronating himself as a Hindu Emperor, Shivaji continued writing letters to Aurangzeb, referring him as Emperor of India, and stating that he was a mere servant of Great Aurangzeb. We can see the basic pragmatic mindset of Shivaji which was fueled by great dream of establishing Hindu Self ruling state.

## Jaavli - A turning point...

Jaavli's conquest is of prime importance, to grasp the vision of Shivaji. This region was so difficult to conquer that Malik Kafur, who defeated the Seuna Yadav Dynasty of Devgiri in the 13th century, lost 3000 men in the attempt. Mahmud Gavan too was defeated while conquering this region. It was one of the most isolated regions in entire India, and remained aloof from Muslim dominance throughout history. Shivaji maintained an amicable relationship with Chandrarao More of Jaavli. Chandra Rao was a title given to the Ruler of Jaavli. The real name was Daulat Rao More. After death of Daulat Rao, Shivaji made Yashwantrao as ruler of Jaavli. These events are of 1647, when Shivaji was 17. Here again we see the vision of his father working. Later, in 1649, Afzal Khan was appointed Subhedar of Vai region, to mitigate the growing influence of Shivaji in Jaavli. Mohammad Adilshah was ill; Afzal Khan was busy in Karnataka expedition. Taking advantage of this situation, Shivaji attacked Jaavli in 1656 and conquered it in one stroke. Yashwantrao fled to Raigadh, which Shivaji subsequently captured after three months. Yashwantrao was captured and sentenced to death for his activities against Maratha State and Shivaji proclaimed assimilation of Jaavli in his Kingdom. Strategically, this valley is of immense importance as it oversees the routes into Konkan and Goa.

## Afzal Khan . . .

This is one of the most dramatic moments in Shivaji's life that gave him pan-Indian fame. Shivaji began his work in 1645. He defeated Adilshah in 1648 and after the treaty, Afzal Khan was appointed as Subhedar of Vai in 1649. Shivaji conquered Jaavli in 1656 nevertheless. Given this background, Afzal was marching to destroy Shivaji. There is an added perspective to this relation as well. Shivaji's elder brother, Sambhaji, was killed in battle due to treachery of Afzal Khan in early 1650's. Shivaji had pledged to kill Afzal Khan as a vengeance. Therefore, there was a personal touch to this struggle as well.

Afzal Khan was aware of Shivaji's valor and courage; his record of deceit, his pledge to kill him for settling the score. Afzal himself was valiant and master of all deceitful tactics. He had a record of being ever alert. Yet, it is an enigmatic choice to make on his part to leave his army behind and meet Shivaji alone. Certain Persian documents suggest an explanation stating that it was Jijabai, Shivaji's mother, who guaranteed safety of Afzal Khan. It was a notion that his mother heavily influenced Shivaji. No one knows exactly what happened in that meeting. Shivaji had planned this strike for almost 4-5 months. Afzal was just an opening move in his campaign. It was a plan of Shivaji to kill Afzal and establish terror in the mind of Adilshah. Many Marathi records state that it was Afzal who struck first. However, this is not definitive, looking at the depth of planning by Shivaji that preceded it. It was in plans of Shivaji to finish Afzal Khan. Therefore, who struck first is a matter of speculation, given Afzal's infamous and felonious record of deceit. Shivaji had planned his entire expedition taking death of Afzal for granted.

Afzal wanted to avoid Jaavli, but Shivaji's moves forced him to enter the difficult terrain. In May-June 1659, Adilshah issued orders to all the local zamindars to help Afzal. However, most of the deshmukhs in the region backed Shivaji. The main collaborator of this alliance was Kanhoji Jedhe, a special man of Shahaji. Thus, here again we see the influence of Shahaji working in favor of Shivaji. The local Zamindars preferred to fight for Shivaji and refused to cooperate with Adilshah is itself testimony to this fact. Shivaji's stature had not grown so much yet to influence the decision of masses. The basic outline of Shivaji's strategy was -

- To Kill Afzal Khan at Pratapgarh in the meeting OR in the battle that would follow.
- Destruction of his army stationed at the base of Pratapgarh by Armies of Silibkar and Bandal.

- Destruction of Afzal's troops on Jaavli-Vai road by Netaji Palkar.
- Destruction of Afzal's armies in the Ghats by Moropanta Pingle.
- Subsequent hot pursuit of fleeing Adilshahi forces.
- To capture Panhalgadh and Kolhapur and Konkan, and invade the territory in Karnataka up to Bijapur as soon as possible.

This entire strategy was planned for 3-4 months. This was a huge campaign. Shivaji was not a fool to waste all this planning. Shivaji had planned the killing of Afzal. Who struck first in that meeting is speculative. Nevertheless, looking at this holistic planning, I think it did not matter to Shivaji whether Afzal struck first OR not. Afzal was infamous for many such deceitful killings in his life. Therefore, given his past record, it is not garrulous to assume that Afzal struck first. However, nothing definitive is known about it. The weapon used by Shivaji, according to Marathi resources, was Tiger-Claw and a curved Dagger, Bichwa. It is possible that even a Sword was used.

Dutch reports state that while Shivaji was advancing towards Bijapur after Afzal's defeat, even his father Shahaji was approaching Bijapur with huge army simultaneously. Thus, we can see the plan on a grand scale. However, somewhere, something went wrong. Shivaji's forces came as close as 16 miles from Bijapur and waited for three days. Shahaji's forces from Karnataka reached 5 days late and returned from 20 miles. (It is said that) Certain Persian documents buttress this Dutch claim. Thus, one of the delicately planned campaigns was not completed to its fullest. This is last reference of Shahaji in Shivaji's political life. Hereafter, Shivaji grew without support OR shadow of his father. Adilshah sent Rustum-e-jaman to destroy Shivaji. However, for the first time, Shivaji entered into a classical head-on cavalry charge, and completely out maneuvered and defeated Adilshahi forces 10,000 strong. Shivaji had 5000 horses at his command.

## The escape from Panhala . . .

Shivaji is one of the most enigmatic person and King in Hindu history. His friends could not understand him. His enemies could not understand him too. The only person in those times, who could understand Shivaji, was Aurangzeb. It was the vision of Aurangzeb when he predicted the danger that Shivaji can be as early as 1646, when he was governor of Deccan in his first term. During his second term as governor of Deccan, Shivaji plundered Mughal territory of Junnar and Bhivandi in early 1650's. These forays of Shivaji coincided with Shahjahan's ill-health. Hence, Aurangzeb had to return to North to participate in the battle of succession with his brother Dara. Nevertheless, he warned Adilshah and Kutubshah about this upcoming danger of Shivaji. Shivaji again entered a treaty with Mughals in June 1659, to deal with impending Afzal Invasion. At the same time, Shaista Khan, maternal uncle of Aurangzeb, was appointed as governor of Deccan. By that time, in late 1659, Siddhi Jauhar, Adilshah's last attempt to control Shivaji, had cornered Shivaji in Panhalgadh. Taking advantage of this, Shaista Khan invaded the Maratha state, occupied Pune, and besieged the ground fort of Chakan.

However, Shivaji escaped from Panhalgadh to Vishalgadh in July 1660, due to valiant effort of his 600 men, most of which died in order to keep Shivaji safe. The hero of the battle was Bajiprabhu Deshpande, who is immortalized for his sacrifice in the pass of Pavan Khind. Figuratively, the battle of Pavan Khind can be compared with the Battle of Thermopylae fought in 480 BC. 300 Greeks and 900 others under the Spartan King Leonidas defended the pass for 3 days against large Persian army under Xerxes. Coincidentally, even Bajiprabhu had 300 men to defend the pass against 10,000 Adilshahi forces. The battle of Pavan Khind is excellent example of superior use of terrain to the benefit of a small but disciplined army. They held on until the signal of Shivaji's safety arrived. All of them were slain thereafter.

## Shaistekhan . . .

This is yet another example of Shivaji's cunningness. Shivaji had defeated a few of Shaistekhan's generals, namely, Kartalab Khan, and Namdar Khan. However, the pinnacle was the surprise attack on Shaistekhan in Mughal stronghold, in his bedroom! Shivaji chose the month of Ramadan to attack Shaistekhan. Shaistekhan was staying at Lal Mahal, which was childhood home of Shivaji. Therefore, he knew everything there was to know about the place. Less than 100 men, led by Shivaji, attacked this palace, which was surrounded by Mughal army as strong as 150,000 in pitch darkness of 7th night of Ramadan. It was a total frenzy. In the darkness, Shivaji and his men were killing anybody who came in their way. About 50 Mughal soldiers, 6 elite women, 6 common women, many eunuchs, Shaistekhan's son, his son in law, some of his wives, and daughter in laws were killed in this attack. Shaistekhan was attacked in his bedroom and lost his three fingers. He escaped, however. Shaistekhan was attacked in April 1663. He stayed in Pune for 6 months and tried to whitewash his failure. But, to no avail. In December, Aurangzeb transferred Shaistekhan to Dhaka as governor of Bengal.

## Shaistekhan and Surat . . .

It is possible to stun the world around you by doing something extraordinary. All the magicians do that. However, that was not the business of Shivaji. The period, for which the world has been stunned, Shivaji retained his poise and did something extraordinary which used to, gave him a lasting success. After the defeat of Afzal Khan, he went on to conquer Konkan, South Maharashtra and forayed up to the region as deep as Bijapur. After attacking Shaistekhan, he retook the lost Konkan. It was his political understanding that he used to attain lasting success by a swift campaign followed by a stunner. Shaistekhan tried to contain Shivaji for 6 months, but to no avail. Aurangzeb had no issues with surprises, but what next? This was his realistic question. Shaistekhan left for Bengal in December 1663, and in January 1664, Shivaji plundered Surat. If Afzal episode gave Shivaji a pan-Indian popularity, this task of looting Surat made him an international celebrity where he was discussed in all the Muslim and a substantial part of the Christian world. With this act he formally declared war on Aurangzeb.

## Mirza Raja Jaisingh . . .

Most of the contemporary chroniclers have taken for granted the soft corner for Shivaji in Mirza Jaisingh's heart. There are about 26 letters available, which suggest that Jaisingh was one of the most trusted generals of Aurangzeb. After defeating Shivaji, it was Jaisingh's suggestion that Shivaji be called to Delhi. Aurangzeb accepted it. It was Jaisingh's suggestion that Shivaji be kept in house arrest. Aurangzeb accepted it. It was Jaisingh's suggestion again that he must not be harmed, for any injury to his health may culminate into a rebellion amongst recently subdued Marathas. It was Jaisingh's reasoning that Shivaji be kept as captive in Delhi to blackmail Marathas, but must not be harmed. Aurangzeb accepted this suggestion too. Later, he has publicly admitted the folly of his of accepting this particular suggestion of Jaisingh. Aurangzeb was in favor of killing off Shivaji. Jaisingh shows a complex mixture of emotions when it comes to Shivaji and Sambhaji. He was seeing a Hindu state coming into existence in spite of all odds. Nevertheless, he was a faithful servant of Aurangzeb.

It was not very sensitive of Jaisingh to keep nine-year-old Sambhaji as captive in his camp until all the terms of the Maratha - Mughal treaty were implemented. As a politician, Jaisingh was brutal and ruthless. However, he had an emotional side as well. It is documented that both Shivaji and Mirza Jaisingh had deployed mercenary assassins to finish each other. However, both failed.

The clauses of the treaty were also quite harsh on the part of Marathas. Shivaji had to cede 23 forts and region giving revenue of 400,000 rupees to Mughals. Shivaji was left with 12 forts and region of 100,000 rupees. Shivaji had to accept supremacy of Aurangzeb and forced to serve Aurangzeb as an ordinary Jagirdar. Shivaji and Marathas were practically finished, thanks to the shrewd politics of Jaisingh and Aurangzeb.

## The Revival . . .

Shivaji laid low for 3 years after his escape from Agra. Meanwhile, he implemented various land reforms in his lands. Shivaji and his minister Annaji Datto were the main pioneers of the land reforms introduced. He started the practice of giving regular wages to soldiers. From 1669 onwards, he unleashed himself on Mughal and Adilshahi territory in Maharashtra. His revival was further instigated by growing fanaticism of Aurangzeb shown by his destruction of Hindu temples like Kashi Vishweshwar and Mathura and countless others along with imposition of Jiziya Tax on Non-Muslims. He not only regained the lost territory but also conquered new one. The expansion of Maratha state was alike in land and sea. Entire western Maharashtra, parts of Southern Gujarat and Northern Karnataka were brought under Maratha dominion. Land reforms were introduced which increased his popularity amongst the masses immensely. At the time of his coronation in 1674, his influence was substantial enough for others in India to recognize him as a formidable power. Especially, his rebellion against Aurangzeb made him a hero amongst the new generation of Hindus.

## Coronation . . .

In 1674, Shivaji successfully proved his Kshatriya descent using the documents that his father had already attested through Adilshahi government. He performed all sorts of rituals, thread ceremony, marrying his own wives again. That was the time when religion was very much influential.

According to Hindu theology, Coronation OR Rajya-Abhishek is a holy ceremony of immense socio-political importance. King being incarnation of Vishnu, his land was his wife, and all his subjects were his children. An authorized OR Coronated King was an incarnation of Vishnu himself.

By that time, the mentality of a common Hindu in India was that ruler is always a Muslim. In addition, ruler of Delhi was considered as Emperor of India. The Bahamani Kingdom, at its zenith, considered themselves as Vazirs of Delhi Sultanate, who in turn considered himself as subordinate of Caliph. Since the rulers were Muslims, Indian Muslim Emperors usually portrayed India as a part of Islamic Caliphate. Allah-ud-din Khilji had his rule attested from the ruler of Iran. Aurangzeb had his rule on India attested from the Caliph of Ottoman Empire in Turkey. Even Adilshahi, Kutubshahi considered ruler of Delhi as Emperor of India. There were many Rajput Hindu Kings before Shivaji. However, no one had himself Coronated according to Vedic tradition. Even the mighty Hindu Vijaynagar Empire did not have a King that was Coronated according to Vedic Tradition. This very ancient ritual of Rajya-Abhishek had disappeared from India after 1000 AD. People knew of this ritual only from stories in the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Gagabhat resurrected this ritual again after studying Vedic literature and Coronated Shivaji. This was a revolutionary event, considering the rigid religious society existing at the time. On one had, Shivaji was relating himself with Rama, Yudhishtira and Vikramaditya. On other hand, he was appealing to emotions of all Hindus in India, stating that they have a Formal Hindu Empire in India, which was fighting for the cause of Hindus. According to Hindu Puranas, the lineage of Kshatriya Kings was lost in Kaliyuga. By performing this ritual, Shivaji was symbolically stating that Kaliyuga was over and Satya Yuga had begun. He was making a statement that a new age had begun.

## The Conquest of South . . .

He undertook the conquest of south in 1677 and carved a Maratha empire in Southern Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. This was the pinnacle of his tactical, strategic, diplomatic and military achievements. In doing so, he entered into a strategic alliance with Kutubshah. He also persuaded Adilshah the importance of a United Deccan Front against impending Mughal invasion, a vision that was long propounded by his father, Shahaji.

## Death . . .

Shivaji's last days were marred with few internal conflicts between his council of ministers and his son. The Chief of Army HambirRao Mohite backed Sambhaji, while the other ministers backed his wife Soyarabai's claim that Rajaram be named as successor of Shivaji. Moreover, at this very time, Shivaji was a patient suffering from Bloody flukes, and Mughal armies were gathering on the Frontiers. His cremation was not carried out on all its decorum, because, the Maratha-Mughal clashes began in that very week. Later, Sambhaji performed all the rituals with funeral games lasting for 12 days. He died on 3rd April 1680.

## Shivaji and Navy . . .

Shivaji started building his own naval forces since 1656, well before he killed Afzal Khan. This explains the canvass of his vision. Maratha-Portuguese relations were always strained. The decision of Shivaji to build a navy was essentially to contain European forces. Portuguese authorities issued orders to be wary of the Maratha Navy from 1659. After the great Ramraja Chola of 11th century, no Indian dynasty gave importance to the Navy. Vijaynagar, Adilshah, Kutubshah, Nizamshah, Mughals were seeing the increasing Portuguese influence. However, no one treated Navy as essential component of their armed forces. The Construction of Naval forts like Sindhu-durga in 1664, Vijay-durag, and Khanderi-Underi, his naval conquest of Basnoor and Gokarna in 1665 are of immense importance while trying to grasp the personality of this man. Portuguese had issued Inquisition in Goa and were forcibly converting Hindus to Christianity, well before Shivaji's birth. He defeated Portuguese for the first time in 1667, and Sambhaji and later the Peshwas continuously perpetuated his anti-Portugal policy. The reasons of this policy were not only political, but theological too. English were not a considerable force at the time.

## Attempt of an analysis . . .

It is observed that among his contemporaries, hardly anyone could grasp his vision. Shivaji always tried to befriend the Hindu Sardars. However, he could not garner support from the people of his contemporary generation. All his Contemporary Hindu big shots were serving Islamic empires and fighting against his Kingdom. They were seeing a Hindu Kingdom coming into existence. However, they had nothing to offer except jealousy. The New generation, however, was heavily influenced by his work and his ideology. The proof for this statement is that Aurangzeb could not defeat the Marathas in spite of 27-year long warfare.

Repeatedly he entered into treaty with Mughals, Adilshah, Kutubshah, and Portuguese. However, he was never the first to breach the treaty with Adilshah OR Kutubshah. His policy towards Mughals and Portuguese was always that of adversary. He did not harm English and French and was neutral towards them. His policy towards Adilshah and Kutubshah was that of potential strategic partners. Adilshah never accepted alliance of Marathas completely and chose suicidal path. Kutubshah did and put up a united front against the Mughal onslaught. Chhatrasaal Bundela was one of the many young men who were inspired from Shivaji. He went on to liberate his own homeland, Bundel Khand from Mughals. Sikhs were influenced by Maratha upheaval. Guru Gobindsinghji came to Deccan for establishing contact with Marathas but Aurangzeb gruesomely killed him in Nanded. It is unfortunate that Maratha-Sikh relation could not develop.

## Personal traits . . .

He was known to be very vigilant about honor of women; even Persian documents praise him for this quality. His personal character was very clean, quite anomalous with respect to his contemporaries. It is a well-documented fact that he was tolerant towards masses of all religions and never indulged himself in any of the heinous deeds that the marauding Muslim and Christian forces had inflicted upon India. It is proven by Shejvalkar, that although Shivaji was courageous, he did not use horse as his frequent mode of transportation. Usually, he used a Palaquin. Seven-Eighth of his life, he spent on forts. The modus operandi of Shivaji and subsequent Marathas involved thorough initial planning of the campaign, accepting no more risks than are necessary, and as far as possible, rarely indulging in personal adventures.

It is important to understand limitations of Shivaji and to certain extent, subsequent Marathas. In 17th century, European rulers had renaissance as their ideological backbone. Shivaji did not have such ideological pool to derive inspiration. The Bhakti Movement was one of the probable sources that might have influenced Shivaji in his formative years. This differentiates Shivaji from Cromwell and Napoleon. He was not a hedonist, nor a socialist. He never thought of educating the downtrodden castes and reforming the Hindu society, eliminating caste system. He never indulged in literacy campaign OR establish printing press. He always purchased firearms from English OR Dutch. It does not seem that Shivaji cared for the whereabouts of white Europeans. Before his birth, Galileo had invented the telescope, Columbus had discovered America, Magellan had circumnavigated the globe, Issac Newton was his contemporary. Like all great men, Shivaji was a product of his own time. His greatness lies in his understanding of his contemporary time with all its subtle undercurrents.

## How Small Shivaji Was...

The first fact to strike is that he created a kingdom. There must have been over 500 Dynasties in India. Each had a founder. One among them was Shivaji. The rest had an opportunity to do so because of the reigning confusion. Vassals of a weak King would declare independence with the central power helpless to prevent it. A powerful general used to dethrone a weak King and raise his own Kingdom. This had been the usual way of establishing a new dynasty. The new King inherited the existing Army and the bureaucratic structure automatically. In Shivaji's case however, we find out that he had to raise everything from nothing, who did not have the benefit of a ready strong army; who, on trying to establish himself, had to face the might of Great Powers; with neighboring Bijapur and Golconda powers still on the rise and the Moghul Empire at its zenith. Shivaji was carving away a niche out of the Bijapur Empire that had assimilated more than half of Nijamshahi and was on its way to conquer entire Karnataka. Here is somebody who, from the start, never had the might to defeat his rivals in a face-to-face battle, who saw the efforts of 20 years go down the drain in a matter of 4 months; but still fought on to create an Empire with 29 years of constant struggle and enterprise. It would be easy to see how small he was once we find which founder to compare him to in the annals of Indian history, on this issue. A typical Hindu power had certain distinguishing traits. It is not that they did not emerge victorious in a war. Victories - there have been many. However, their victory did not defeat the adversary completely. The latter's territory did not diminish, nor his might attrite. The victory rarely resulted in expansion of Hindu territory. Even though victorious, Hindus used to become weaker and stayed so. In short, it is plain that they faced total destruction in case of defeat and high attrition in case of Pyrrhic victory.

A new chapter in Hindu history begins with Shivaji wherein battles are won to expand the borders while strength and will power is preserved in a defeat. Secondly, the Hindu Rulers used to be astonishingly ignorant of the happenings in neighboring Kingdoms. Their enemy would catch them unaware, often intruding considerably into their territory and only then would they wake up to face the situation. Whatever be the outcome of the battle, it was their land which was defiled. The arrival of Shivaji radically changes this scenario and heralds the beginning of an era of staying alert before a war and unexpected raids on the enemy. Thirdly, the Hindu Kings habitually placed blind faith in their adversaries. This saga terminates with Shivaji performing the treacherous tricks. It was the turn of the opponents to get stunned. In the ranks of Hindu Kings, the search is still going on for somebody to compare with Shivaji on

this point. . His lifestyle was not simple. Having adopted a choice, rich lifestyle, he was not lavish. He was gracious to other religions. On that account, he may be compared with Ashoka, Harsha, Vikramaditya, and Akbar. However, all of these possessed great harems. Akbar had the Meenabazaar, Ashoka had the Tishyarakshita. Shivaji had not given free reign to his lust. Kings, both Hindu and Muslim, had an overflowing, ever youthful desire for women. That was lacking in Shivaji. He had neither the money to spend on sculptures, paintings, music, poetry or monuments nor the inclination. He did not possess the classical appreciation needed to spend over 20 crores to build a Taj Mahal as famine was claiming over hundreds of thousands of lives; nor was he pious enough to erect temple after temple while the British were systematically consuming India.

He was a sinner; he was a practical man like the rest of us. Khafi Khan says he went to Hell. He would not have enjoyed the company of the brave warriors who preferred gallant death to preservation of their land. It would have ill suited him to live with the noble Kings who would rather indulge in rituals such as Yadnya than expand the army. For the Heaven is full of such personalities.

Akbar adopted a generous attitude towards Hindus and has been praised for that. However, it is an elementary rule that a stable government is impossible without having a contented majority. Akbar was courteous to them who, as a community, were raising his kingdom and stabilizing it for him. The Hindus he treated well were a majority in his empire and were enriching his treasury through their taxes. The Hindus had no history of invasions. They had not destroyed Mosques. They were never indulged in genocides against Muslims. They had not defiled Muslim women nor were they proselytes, as compared to Abrahmic fanatics found in Muslims and Christians. These were the people Akbar was generous to. On the contrary; Muslims were a minority community in Shivaji's Empire. They were not the mainstay of his taxes. They were not chalking out a Kingdom for him. Besides, there was a danger of an invasion and Aurangzeb was imposing Jiziya Tax on Hindus. Yet, he treated Muslims well. That was not out of fear but because of his inborn generosity.

Shivaji's expertise as a General is, of course, undisputed. However, besides that, he was also an excellent Governor. He believed that the welfare of the subjects was a responsibility of the ruler. Even though he fought so many battles, he never laid extra taxes on his subjects. Even the expenditure for his Coronation was covered by the taxes on the collectors. In a letter he challenges, "It is true that I've deceived many of my enemies. Can you show an instance where I deceived a friend?" This challenge remains unanswered.

He funded establishment of new villages, set up tax systems on the farms, used the forts to store the farm produce, gave loans to farmers for the purchase of seeds, oxen etc, built new forts, had the language standardized to facilitate the intra-government communication, had the astrology revived and revised, encouraged conversion of people from Islam to Hinduism. He was not a mere warrior. Moreover, he believed that charity begins at home. His brother in law, Bajaji Nimbalkar, was forcibly converted to Islam. He called for a religious council and had him reconverted to Hinduism. He reconverted many people who were forcibly converted to Abrahmic faiths, Islam OR Christianity. Even after conversion, when nobody was ready to make a marital alliance with Bajaji's son, Mahadaji, Shivaji gave his own daughter to Bajaji's Son in marriage, and set an example in society.

Secondly, and most important of all, to protect his Kingdom, his subjects fought for over 27 years. After Shivaji's demise, they fought under Sambhaji. After Aurangzeb killed Sambhaji, they still fought for over 19 years. In this continued struggle, a minimum of 500,000 Moguls died (Jadunath Sarkar's estimate). Over 200,000 Marathas died. Still in 1707, over 100,000 Marathas were fighting. They did not have a distinguished leader to look for inspiration. There was no guarantee of a regular payment. Still, they kept on fighting. In these 27 years, Aurangzeb did not suffer a defeat. That was because Marathas simply lacked the force necessary to defeat so vast an army. Jadunath says, "Alamgir won battle after battle. Nevertheless, after spending crores of rupees, he accomplished nothing, apart from weakening his All India Empire and his own death. He could not defeat Marathas". When the Peshawai ended (A.D.1818), there was an air of satisfaction that a government of law would replace a disorderly government. Sweets were distributed when the British won Bengal in Plassey (A.D.1757). Where ordinary man fights, armies can do nothing. In long history of India, Kalinga fought against Ashoka. After Kalinga, Maharashtra fought with Mughals from grass-root level. The greatness of Shivaji lies here in his ability to influence generations to fight for a cause.

Why was Shivaji successful in making common man identify with his kingdom? The first reason is his invention of new hit and run tactic. He showed people that they can fight Mughals and win. The insistence was always on survival and maximum attrition of enemy in his territory and successful retreat. He gave his men the confidence that if they fight this way, they will not only outlast the Mughals, but also defeat them. He gave way to traditional notions of chivalry and valor on battlefield, for which Rajputs were famous. Instead, he focused on perseverance, attrition, survival at all costs, series of tactical retreats and then finishing off the foe. His land reforms

were revolutionary which further brought his subjects emotionally closer to him. He took care of their material needs, which is of utmost importance. He started the system of wages in his army. And third reason is Hindu Ethos and hatred towards Muslim supremacy prevalent in masses. In this light, the above facts demonstrate the excellence of Shivaji as founder of a dynasty, which ended political supremacy of Islam in India.

## Conclusion . . .

Shivaji fits in all the criteria of Chanakya's ideal King. Considering the prevalent socio-political scenario, it is fallacious to try and fit Shivaji in classical Kshatriya values of chivalry and nobility. Shivaji was religious; but he was not a fanatic. Although ruthless and stubborn, he was not cruel and sadist. He was courageous, yet not impulsive. He was practical; but was not without ambition. He was a dreamer who dreamt lofty aims and had the firm capacity to convert them into reality.

Shri. Narahar Kurundkar

## Epilogue on Coronation Controversy . . .

There have been few controversies existing regarding the Coronation of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

This controversy has been fueled and used to create the famous Brahmin-Maratha dispute in Maharashtra. I strongly oppose such mischief mongers and believe that both these communities are pillars of Maharashtrian society and need to move ahead hand in hand.

While criticizing any historical personality, I think, we must think from the reference frame existing during that time. Trying to apply present values and understanding of ethics to the people of past is a big fallacy and nothing is more misleading and specious than this.

The controversy arose due to following reasons.

Firstly, according to Hindu theology, in kali-yuga, there are only 2 varnas; Brahmins and Shudras. There are no Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. The opposition of Brahmins to recognize Shivaji as a Kshatriya has the roots in this deep rooted belief. Shivaji proved his descent by tracing his lineage to Sisodiya Rajputs of Rajasthan. In fact, this was done by Shahaji itself in 1630's.

The Second issue was- Many Brahmins in past, like Krishnaji Bhaskar emissary of Afzal Khan, were killed by Shivaji himself. It is a well known fact that Brahma-Hatya (Murder of Brahmin) is one of the biggest sins that are described in Hindu theology. No one was supposed to kill a Brahmin. Since Shivaji had killed Brahmins, according to theology, it was a crime with no Prayashchitta (repentance ritual). But, Gaga Bhat being an authority on Vedic literature argued that there were some repentance rituals which were described in scriptures which could wash the sin of a man who had to kill a Brahmin in extreme situations. Also, he reasoned that since Brahmins that were killed by Shivaji were not practicing Brahmins, but were just by birth, it is possible to have a repentance ritual for the killings of Brahmins in such cases.

Thirdly, for being a Kshatriya OR Brahmin OR Vaishya, one has to be a Dwija (twice born). According to Hindu theology, man comes to birth on second instance when he has performed the thread ceremony OR Upanayan Sanskar. After that ceremony, man enters Brahmacharya-Ashram. After this stage, he can marry and enter Grihastha-Ashram. Shivaji was already married to 8 ladies. So he entered Grihastha-Ashram without going through Brahmacharya-Ashram and was an immoral act according to scriptures. This was a technical fault. So thread ceremony was performed on Shivaji and he formally became a Brahmachāri. Then he remarried to his wives again and formally became a Grihastha. Now he was eligible to be Coronated as a King.

After he became a Coronated King, he was conferred the authority OR the Raja-Danda to punish Brahmin culprits to death as well. No sin whatsoever, as a Coronated King is considered an incarnation of Lord Vishnu himself.

Shivaji performed all these ceremonies and rituals of repentance and others elaborately. There were too many rituals to perform. Hence, it was a bit costly affair. He recovered the money by looting Mughal treasury soon after the Coronation. He also levied a surcharge over the Feudal Lords. He did not levy a single penny extra tax on the common man.

Today, we may laugh on this ritualistic society. But at that time, it was the norm of society. Shivaji himself abided to it. Hindu society had become too rigid and ritualistic. And don't forget, this was a revolutionary thing happening. It was something that was unheard of in real life. It was heard only in myths and tales. It takes time for a Rigid Society to accept this change. But the work of Shivaji and authority of Gaga Bhat were in favor of this very aberrant ceremony. Hence it was materialized.

We should not forget the ritualistic society that existed then, and was at its lowest ebb due to Islamic supremacy.

Maratha movement was a part of overall Hindu revival. Everybody in this world is motivated by selfish reasons. But, along with the ambition to establish an Empire, their ambition also was to end the socio-political Islamic Supremacy in India. Although they lasted for 170 years, from 1645-1818, they succeeded in loosening and throwing

the shackles of Islamic supremacy to a very large extent. Sikhs, Ahoms, Jats, later Rajputs, Bundelas and many others were also an important part of this overall Hindu Revival.

People from different states refuse to acknowledge this fact. It is pity that many people from other states feel Mughals were much closer to them than Marathas. This is partly because of certain ill-deeds of Marathas themselves.

The contribution of Marathas towards nationalistic Hindu Revival was rarely understood in medieval days. And it is misunderstood in this era by many people of other states.

I think, we need to polish and present our image in history with vehemence so that we can give our ancestors due credit...

- Ambareesh Phadnavis.

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