

Introduction

Dear Ranjit Desai,

After leaving you, I reached Nanded via Aurangabad on 3/24/66. Circumstances were such that my daughter was sick at home. Now everyone is fine. Hence this letter, written at length.

Our meeting in Pune was quite unexpected. I was unaware that you were writing a biographical novel on Shivaji. So I could not discuss minute details regarding Shivaji as a subject. I felt that I should bring them briefly to your attention, hence this letter.

Unfortunately, there is not a good official biography of Shivaji. Aurangzeb was lucky in that regard, since he got Jadunath Sarkar as his biographer. It has not happened for Shivaji, and will not, anytime in near future. I don't think Dattopant Potdar can write a "standard" biography. European historians, and Bengali historians like Sen or Sarkar don't understand the nuances in Marathi documents, and Maharashtra (Marathi) researchers still cannot think about Shivaji dispassionately. Forget B. M. Purandare or Bal Shastri Haridas, but even Shejvalkar, Sharma, Kulkarni, Dr Bala Krishna or Vaidya find it hard to avoid being adulatory. In contrast, Dattopant Apte was doing some disciplined work. As far as individual incidents go, D. V. Kale has described them the most faithfully, among all the works I have read. But he did not try to analyze them. I highly recommend that you scan his book carefully.

Among the documents dealing with Shivaji's life, the Bakhars (*pseudo-historical written accounts*) from Ramdas's disciples are the least reliable. When Samarth (*Ram Das*) passed away, only two of his disciples – Meruswami and Dinkar – were of age. Every other disciple's knowledge is based on hearsay and distortions. Maratha empire's Bakhars are somewhat more reliable. Among them, the least believable is Malhar Ramrao Chitnis's Bakhar and the most believable is Sabhasad's Bakhar. Even Farsi (*Persian*) documents, except for the official ones, are unreliable as far as Shivaji goes. Portuguese, French and Dutch records are better, and genuine official Marathi correspondence is the most reliable. When you form your opinion regarding any incident (*in Shivaji's life*), keep this hierarchy of reliability in mind. Also keep in mind that even the most reliable Bakhar writer like Sabhasad tends to make huge basic mistakes. During our conversation I felt that you were (*unduly*) influenced by Chitnis's Bakhar. This Bakhar is far lower in the hierarchy of reliability.

I feel that observation and understanding of reality forms the basis of a novel. This observation and understanding takes the form of a coherent experience when the author sculpts his work of art. In a contemporary social novel, its scope is current events. In a historical novel, its scope is the historical reality. True history is available only in a disjointed way. So the novelist's imagination should be limited to filling in the blanks to present a complete account. When the imagination exceeds this boundary, the literature turns into fiction meant for entertainment.

Nath Madhav has done that already. Hari Bhau (*Hari Narayan Apte*) did not tackle all of Shivaji's life, but he has used a few milestones in his novels such as "Ushah Kaal" (*Dawn*), "Suryoday" (*Sunrise*), "Gad Aala Pan Sinha Gela" (*Won the Fort But Lost the Lion*) and so on. Between Nath Madhav and Hari Bhau, Hari Bhau is better. But it is a quantitative difference, not a qualitative one. It's your decision whether you want to join their ranks or stand with Swami (*Desai's previous novel describing Madhav Rao Peshwe.*) A (*biographical*) work of art stands and falls based on the strength of the main character. This strength comes from a thorough understanding of reality. Respect and reverence will not give you that. I wasn't going to preach at you, but you did mention that "I am planning to use history, mythology, legends and all" so I am giving you this unsolicited advice. It is far more important to portray the great and continuous (*pragmatic*) humanity of Shivaji than to turn him into a god's reincarnation or a saint.

I must mention some historic incidents in this regard. The first is that (*official*) documents mention Maloji and Babaji Bhosle as Jagirdars (*landlords*) of (*the villages of*) Pande Pedgao. So at least a part of Maloji's fiefdom was inherited. Shahaji (*Maloji's son, Shivaji's father*) was born in 1602 CE. Maloji died in 1607 when Shahaji was five. So Bakhar writers' stories of Maloji being a (*lowly*) cavalry soldier in the employment of Lakhujji Rao Jadhav (*Shahaji's father-in-law*), or of Ranga Panchami colors (*), or of him slaughtering pigs to throw their body parts in a mosque all go against the available evidence and should not be used.

(*) (*From Wikipedia: during a Holi function (festival of colors), the Jadhav chief Lakhujji remarked, in a lighter vein, that his daughter Jija Bai and Shahaji would make a fine couple. Maloji took Lakhujji's remark seriously, and announced publicly that his son was engaged to Lakhujji's daughter. This irked Lakhujji, who considered Maloji to be a non-noble Shiledar. He dismissed Maloji from his services. Later, Nimbalkar's influence and the rising status of the Bhosle family helped Shahaji marry Jija Bai. Kurundkar is saying that this is a myth.*)

Jija Bai had six children. The first was Sambhaji, the second was Shivaji. Only these two sons survived. Shahaji may not have loved Jija Bai much, but he did make a modest attempt to care for her happiness within their marriage.

Shivaji Maharaj (*"Shivaji the Emperor"*) behaved the same way in his marriages. None of the wives seems to be his favorite. He did not grant much importance to any of his queens beyond marrying them, providing them with elegant dresses and jewelry, and sleeping with them. Soyra Bai was his coronated queen consort, yet Shivaji did not seem to think much of her. He had a total of eight wives. Ramdasi Bakhars mention concubines but that should be ignored. Out of these eight, the last few weddings took place in 1657. Historians think that Putala Bai, who went Sati (*burned herself*) on Shivaji's funeral pyre, got married to him in 1653. At the time of coronation, at least four of these eight had passed away. Among them, Saguna Bai, Sai Bai and Kashi Bai were definitely not alive. It is not clear who the fourth was. Soyra Bai and Putala Bai were definitely alive. Prior to coronation, Munja (*the sacred thread ceremony*) was performed on Shivaji, and then he was re-wed to the four surviving wives as per Vedic rituals. A lot of historians were confused by these remarriages (*to the same wives.*) Some Bakhars have constructed castles in air on the basis of these events. English and Dutch reports are confused on this as well. Jadunath (*Sarkar*) has gotten lost at precisely the same point. (*But in fact*) Putala Bai, who went Sati on Shivaji's funeral pyre, had lived with him, as his legal and proper wife, for 27 years.

It is said that the Bhosle clan was not terribly prestigious at the time (*of Shivaji.*) Take this saying with a grain of salt. Maloji's wife was from the Phaltankar clan (*daughter of a Maratha knight.*) One of Shivaji's wives was a Nimbalkar (*another prestigious clan.*) His mother was from the house of Jadhavs, as was one of his wives. At that time, the Shirke clan (*where Shivaji's wife Saguna Bai was from*) was also renowned. They had their fiefdom. We should research which Maratha clans were in the "96 clans" (*the highest ranked clans*) at the time. (*Kurundkar suspects that at least some of Shivaji's wives came from highly ranked clans.*) So to assume that Maloji was a lowly cavalry soldier in the employment of Lakhuj Rao Jadhav and made the Shahaji-Jija Bai wedding happen through social pressure, is wrong. Evaluate the Bhosle clan's prestige on the merits of the evidence.

History has now firmly established that we should look at three generations as being linked – Shahaji, his father, as the background for Shivaji's deeds, and Sambhaji, his son as the heir. There are many disputed questions about Sambhaji – whether he drank, whether he had mistresses, whether his behavior with Soyra Bai (*his step mother*), Annaji Datto and Moro Pant Pingle (*all of whom tried a coup against him*) is defensible. One thing is undisputed among historians. That is that Shivaji came to the conclusion, some time between 1660 and 1664, that the decisive war that the Maratha kingdom would have to wage would be against the Mughal (*Mongol*) empire, and not against (*the Southern Muslim kingdoms of*) Vijapur and Kutub (*Golkonda.*) Shivaji understood that (*Mughal general*) Shahiste Khan's incursion (*into Maratha territory*) was just the beginning. After his (*thrilling*) escape from Agra, he was aware of the battle that lay in the future. At the end of his life, Mughal armies were gathering on the borders of the Maratha kingdom – in fact since 1669. And since January 1680, dependable news sources were indicating that (*Mughal emperor*) Aurangzeb himself was traveling south to head the campaign, because the preparations were underway in Delhi (*Mughal capital.*) On Shivaji's deathbed, this was the thought that was occupying his mind. Because armies numbering about 150,000 were on his borders. Hostilities began on the border in the same fortnight that Shivaji died. (*His prime minister*) Moro Pant Pingle, (*army chief*) Hambir Rao Mohite and (*minister*) Annaji Datto were all ready to face the attacker. It is important to note that since 1679, Shivaji was continuously buying and storing ammunition. This much-anticipated offensive finally began in 1681. (*When Shivaji was dead and his son Sambhaji had just recently succeeded him as the king.*) An opposing force of 300,000, an inexperienced king, attacks from all sides. The opponent (*Aurangzeb*) an expert in divide-and-conquer and well-versed in the art of war. With all that, what is the result of continuous battles till 1685? Aurangzeb retreats from Maratha territory and turns his attention to the kingdoms of Vijapur and Golkonda. This was a stress test of Sambhaji's skills – in civil administration, in waging war, in battle tactics, in inspiring his army. (*Even*) the Chhatrapati (*Shivaji*) never had an occasion to fight a patient war against overwhelming force while capably administering a kingdom. When you evaluate Sambhaji, decide if you want to believe the adjectives Bakhar writers use to describe him – moody, hot-headed, impatient – or the adjectives that the Dutch and the English use to describe him – visionary, clever, deep, patient and cautious. Let me reiterate, I am highlighting Sambhaji's personality, not whether he was hedonistic or a Lothario. You have to portray the first 22-23 years of his life. My personal opinion is that Sabhaji's moral character was not that bad either. During those days, Maratha knights had minor addictions such as the Hookah (*tobacco*), marijuana, opium or alcohol. Rajaram (*Sambhaji's younger brother who succeeded him*) was always high on opium. Sambhaji used to drink. Even Aurangzeb used to drink till he died, but that did not affect his politics. The same was

true of Sambhaji. Like his grandfather, he enjoyed the songs and the dances. Like Rajaram, Shahu (*Rajaram's son*), Shahaji (*Sambhaji's grandfather*), he had mistresses. It is possible that he abducted a girl or two, but there is no believable evidence of that. The first mention of Sambhaji's bad character is found after 1690. Prior to 1674 Sambhaji had nothing to hide. Till then he lived with his grandmother. All (*historical*) correspondence until that time mentions nothing but praise for Sambhaji. Sambhaji was captured and killed in 1689. The battles he waged until then resulted in the following: Sambhaji annexed $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Portuguese colonies. Doubled the territory held in Karnataka. Doubled his army. Lost five or six forts in Maharashtra, gained three or four. Looted Aurangabad and Barhanpur (*rich Mughal cities.*) Dhanaji (*Sambhaji's general*) kept 75,000 of Aurangzeb's troops busy in Gujarat. Maratha empire is not the one they had in 1645 (*prior to Shivaji's first victory*), nor in 1674 (*when Shivaji was coronated*), nor in 1680 (*when Shivaji died*). Maratha empire is what was forged in the long decisive fight-to-the-death war fought between 1689 and 1707. Shivaji's politics was fully developed by Sambhaji. That is notable.

Shivaji's career has the background of Shahaji's (*his father's.*) Rajwade was the first one to mention this. Shejwalkar opposed this viewpoint all his life, but accepted it in the end. Dr Bala Krishna and Kale also accept this idea. Consider this. First of all, Shahaji was a knight in Nizam's kingdom. (*The Nizam of Ahmadnagar was another Southern Muslim king like Adil Shah of Vijapur and Kutub Shah of Golkonda.*) The Nizam let go of Lakhujai Jadhav to keep Shahaji. Yet, in 1624, Shahaji defected to Adil Shah. He fought hard for Adil Shah's kingdom. But he returned to the Nizam's employment in 1626. Then he became a Mughal knight in 1630. Came back to the Nizam in 1632. Through all these machinations he maintained his fiefdom in Pune. Kept an army. He conditioned the landlords in his fiefdom to be loyal to him, not to Adil Shah, Nizam Shah or the Mughals. Shahaji originated the doctrine that all Hindus and Muslims in the Deccan (*South India*) have common interests, and the (*Hindu*) knights together with Nizam Shah, Adil Shah and Kutub Shah should fight the Mughals and not let them get a foothold in the Deccan. Afterwards, Khavas Khan (*Abyssinian regent of Adil Shah*), Murar Jagdeo (*Adil Shah's Hindu minister*), Akkanna-Maadanna (*brothers, ministers of Kutub Shah*) accepted this doctrine. Shivaji has often adopted and proclaimed this policy. Sambhaji even considered himself the defender of the kingdoms of Adil Shah and Kutub Shah.

Shahaji appointed Dadoji Konddeo as the administrator of his holdings in Pune. He took upon himself the rule of his lands in Karnataka. Thus, in 1636, he divided the administration of his fiefdom – the Karnataka portion for his older son, Sambhaji and Pune for his younger son, Shivaji. It was Shahaji's idea to make Dadoji a district administrator for Adil Shah and thus to make available 15-20 forts and 2000-3000 troops to Shivaji. When he sent Shivaji to Pune, it was Shahaji who ensured that Shivaji traveled with (*a contingent of civil administrators such as*) Peshwa (*prime minister*), Mujumdar (*archivist*), Dabeer (*teacher*), and Sabnis (*secretary.*) The oaths taken at Rohideshwar fort (*by Shivaji's closest friends to be loyal to him*) happened in Dadoji's presence. This event (*the oath ceremony*) should be viewed against this whole background. The first official letter with Shivaji's seal is dated January 28, 1646. Not only is it hard to imagine that a 16 years-old Shivaji had the complete blueprints for his kingdom including its seal, but there is an even greater difficulty. Rajwade has published letter 437 in his volume 15 (*of Maratha history.*) The letter bears Shahaji's seal. No one can prove that the letter is NOT authentic. At this time Shivaji was nine. So you can either say that as a baby Shivaji was crawling,

eating dirt and making plans for the Maratha kingdom; or you can accept Shahaji's contributions.

Shahaji was creating his own kingdom, split between Karnataka and Maharashtra. He was calling himself king. He was holding court. The contemporary Vijapur court recognized this quite clearly, and placed Shahaji under arrest in 1648. They waged two independent campaigns, one against Karnataka and one against Pune (*in Maharashtra*.) We praise Shivaji to high heavens for defeating Vijapur's armies (*in Pune*) but forget that Sambhaji also defeated them (*in Karnataka*.) The preparations done and discipline shown at both places are that of Shahaji. People coached by Shivaji (*in waging war*) are not yet on the horizon. The conduct of war was chiefly directed by Kavji Malhar. Not by someone who had received Shivaji's instruction. After these events, a treaty was signed and Shahaji freed in May 1649. One of the conditions imposed in the treaty was for Shivaji to hand over the Sinhagad fort. It is one thing to defeat Vijapur's armies and quite another to free your father held hostage. Without considering the feelings of Bakhar writers and people who depend on them, Shivaji started talks to ally himself with Mughals at this time. Vacated Sinhagad fort. Over there (*in Karnataka*) Sambhaji vacated the forts of Bengaluru and Kandarpi, and (*together the two sons*) freed their father. The reason there is so much coordination and similarity between Sambhaji's actions in Bengaluru and Shivaji's in Pune is Shahaji in the background, and the knights and administrators coached by him. In Pune, it was routine to appeal to Shahaji against Shivaji's decisions. Whatever Shivaji's commands may be, ultimately it was Jija Bai who used to decide how the fiefdom was to be administered. And her decision was always obeyed. This seems to have happened till 1653 and the last command given by Shahaji is in 1655. Until 1655, Shahaji's decision was final in most important matters. There is evidence for this assertion. And there is also evidence that people from Pune did not appeal to the Adil Shah against decisions given by Shahaji. Shivaji was not free (*to decide unilaterally*.) There were forces in the background that kept him in check and directed him in the matters of military and civil rule. In civil administration, Jija Bai was the major contributor until 1674 (*her death*.) Jija Bai never forgot that Ghorpade betrayed Shahaji and arrested him. She told Shivaji via a letter to take revenge against Ghorpade. Shivaji killed Baji Ghorpade and looted (*his capital*) Mudhol. It is vitally important when understanding Jija Bai to note how much Shahaji's loss of face bothered her.

Chitnis's Bakhar says that Shivaji and Jija Bai used to disagree in the matters of civil administration. Finally, it was decided that Jija Bai should not meddle in running the government. Chitnis's stupidity can be proven with evidence.

Shivaji's greatness should be understood keeping in mind the accomplishments of Shahaji before him and Sambhaji after him, with Shivaji the unparalleled creator (*of a kingdom*) in the middle. Shivaji had himself coronated. But Shahaji was the one who began the tradition of calling himself Rajput (*descendant of a famous warrior caste from Rajasthan*.) Ghorpades used to call themselves Rajputs from the Sisodia clan. From before 1640, Shahaji officially and successfully claimed to be their clansman and entitled to a part of their estate. As a matter of fact there was no reason why Bhosles should be Rajputs. But once Maloji adopted a military role, he started calling himself Shrimant Maloji Raje (*Exalted King Maloji*.) Shahaji established in the eyes of the law his Rajput Kshatriya (*warrior caste*) descent. This background helped Shivaji (*for his coronation as a king, who is usually a Kshatriya*.) It should be noted that after his coronation, a letter from Shivaji to Aurangzeb still mentions, in the preamble, Aurangzeb as the emperor of

India and Shivaji as his humble servant.

Some Bakhars have taken the position that Dadoji Konddeo committed suicide. Many others have repeated this later. After examining all the evidence, D. V. Kale has ruled out suicide. Shejvalkar has once again ruled it out as well. Genuine official documents establish that Dadoji died of natural causes, in his old age, after falling sick. Therefore Shejvalkar has decided that there is no merit to what the Bakhars describe. Bendre is now engaged in proving suicide, but let us wait and see what evidence he comes up for that. As of now, official documents say natural death, Sabhasad says natural death, "91 point" Bakhar says natural death. If there is no support for the suicide theory in official documents, then any support of it by a pile of Bakhars is worthless.

Our Bakhar writers give undue importance to legends. There is a Bakhar called Sanpuri Bakhar. What it says is – there was a lot of insurgency in Maharashtra. So Balaji Wishwanath entrusted Yesubai and Shahu to Aurangzeb's care. (*Aurangzeb's*) daughter Begum said, "This (*Shahu*) is my godson. Mighty father, this is your grandson." Aurangzeb's happiness knew no bounds. He named the baby "Gentleman" (*Shahu*). Gave Balaji Wishwanath an army. Balaji marched with that army into Maharashtra. He took care of all the thugs. Re-established rule of law. Then Aurangzeb had Shahu wed, sent him to Maharashtra with a lot of dowry and ordered Balaji to be his chief minister. And this (*nonsensical*) Bakhar was written before Malhar Ramrao Chitnis's Bakhar.

The creators of Bakhars never realized the full import of the momentous happenings around them. Marathas had brought almost all of India under their dominion. And yet the Bakhar writers' opinion was "Maratha army will either fight till it is beaten soundly or run away – with the tree if you tie them to a tree. India's emperor is in Delhi. His troops number 200,000. His emperor is in Vandar (*probably Bandar Abbas, Iran.*) His troops number 500,000." This was the quality of their understanding. Malhar Ramrao is not free of this tremendous ignorance. Neither is the author of the "91 point" Bakhar. He thought that Aurangzeb killed Dara (*Dara Shukoh, Aurangzeb's step-brother*) and imprisoned Shah Jahan (*his father, the then-emperor*) because Dara raped each of Aurangzeb's sisters. No Bakhar writer could grasp the fight for the throne in the Mughal empire. None of them understood why Mughals let Shahu go. Sabhasad himself is the same. The authors of Farsi Tawarikhs (*historic accounts*) at least knew complete details, Bakhar writers did not even know those. "When Afzal Khan was killed, the Badi Begum (*Grand Dame of Adil Shahi, ruling in the name of her minor son Adil Shah*) cried for three days and forsook food and water." This is what they thought. You will feel nothing but despair if you try to analyze how little Sabhasad understood of Shivaji's politics.

The same applies to Chandra Rao More and Shivaji's conquest of the Javali valley. Javali valley has historic significance. Malik Kafoor tried to take it after winning over and completely annihilating the Yadav kingdom. As a result he lost 3000 soldiers. Mahmood Gavan also tried to enter the valley, and was defeated soundly. He suffered heavy casualties. Therefore, the Muslim rulers took a stance of being satisfied with the nominal acceptance of their suzerainty by the local (*Hindu*) warlord. Muslims could never establish a foothold in the Javali valley beyond that. Shivaji had long cultivated a friendship with the More clan keeping this importance of Javali valley in mind. Daulat Rao More (whose title was Chandra Rao) and Shivaji were good friends. After Daulat Rao's death, Shivaji established Yashwant Rao as the ruler of Javali instead of

Krishna Rao, the adopted son of Daulat Rao's widow. These incidents happened before 1647. Afzal Khan was named the ruler of Wai in 1649 to put a check on Shivaji's growing influence in the valley of Javali. Gradually, Yashwant Rao and Shivaji developed differences.

In January 1656, Shivaji attacked Javali valley from all sides, taking advantage of the Mohammed Adil Shah's sickness and of Afzal Khan being away in Karnataka. (*Yashwant Rao*) More retreated to the Raigad fort. The fort fell after three months of fighting. Shivaji finally won Raigad in May. After Yashwant Rao was placed under house arrest, his plans to escape came to light. Shivaji accused Yashwant Rao, had him beheaded and annexed Javali into his kingdom. This chapter (*in Shivaji's life*) illustrates (*his*) bravery, striking at the opportune moment, and winning a war patiently. It shows perceptiveness in recognizing the absolute necessity of controlling this inaccessible valley to protect the Maratha kingdom, and making the region his main seat of administration. There was no skulduggery, betrayal, murder or infanticide involved in any of this. Bakhar writers have created the fiction of the double-cross under the guise of talks for an arranged marriage. This does not mean that Shivaji was a great saint, or a holier-than-thou gentleman above using a murderous double-cross for the sake of political expediency. It just means that this particular chapter does not show that. Beyond the Bakhars, there is no evidence that Shivaji captured two of More's sons, fed them well and killed them near Nimajga. Farsi Tawarikh writers list a litany of Shivaji's betrayals (some true, some fictional) but even they don't mention any such thing.

It is natural for a novelist to be attracted to the story of Afzal Khan's assassination. He normally does not pay attention to the fact that it belongs to a particular sequence of events. Shivaji started his campaign in 1645 and first won the important fort of Sinhagad. Soon he captured Purandhar (*fort.*) In 1648, Vijapur sent armies to destroy Shivaji. (*Vijapur's*) treaty with Shahaji happened in 1649, and at the same time, Afzal Khan was named the ruler of Wai. And yet Shivaji conquered the Javali valley in 1656. This is the background for Afzal Khan's offensive. Afzal Khan knew that Shivaji was brave, adventurous, not above skulduggery at the right moment, and an old enemy whose brother Afzal Khan had killed and who had taken an oath to take revenge. Afzal himself was brave, adventurous and skilled in Machiavellian tactics. I am flabbergasted by the fact that he agreed to leave his armies behind and meet Shivaji alone in the Javali valley. It was not his nature to be drunk on his power or to let his guard down in his arrogance. Some Farsi documents state that Jija Bai had guaranteed by oath that no double-cross would take place at the meeting. Jija Bai was famous for being always true to her word. It was assumed that her son would obey her. Afzal Khan agreed to the meeting based on these assurances from Jija Bai received via her consul. This explanation is satisfactory, but no reliable collection of documents, Bakhar or Tawarikh mentions it. It is mentioned only in later Farsi documents of secondary importance.

Shivaji came prepared to the meeting with Afzal Khan. Evidence contradicts Marathi Bakhar writers' position that Afzal Khan tried to betray Shivaji's trust and therefore Shivaji disemboweled him. Shivaji's aim was to end Afzal Khan, increase his own notoriety and fame, and to teach Vijapur a lesson they would not forget in a lifetime. Shivaji made his plans with the determination to not let Afzal Khan live any longer, whether or not the Khan double-crossed him. Khan's original plans called for advancing on Pune. But Shivaji holed up in Pratapgadh fort (*in Javali*) and agreed to the talks with the Khan only after that. So Afzal Khan had to enter the Javali

valley. He would have found it easier to fight if Shivaji was in Pune. Afzal Khan had tried his hand at spreading dissent in Shivaji's kingdom. If that tactic had succeeded, Shivaji's defeat would have been easy. Perhaps the Khan's calculation might have been that, as far as the Javali valley went, it was better to negotiate (*than to fight, considering previous experiences of Muslim rulers losing entire armies in the valley.*) At the end of March, Shivaji got the news of the Khan's sights being set on him. The Khan made his vows and marched with his armies straight in Shivaji's territories. In May-June 1659, the Adil Shah sent royal letters to various places. They stated that the Khan was being sent to end Shivaji, so they should help Afzal Khan and offer Shivaji no help whatsoever. Those were the orders. Since the rains (*June*), Shivaji was holed up in the Javali valley. The Khan's offensive was wide-ranging. Several of his knights had occupied various places in Shivaji's kingdom. But Shivaji refused to engage any of these forces in an open field. So negotiations became necessary.

Shivaji's plan was this: assassinate the Khan at the foot of the Pratapgadh fort, have Silibkar and Bandal attack the nearby troops of Afzal Khan, have Netaji (*Palkar*) destroy the enemy on the road from Javali to Wai, have Moro Pant Pingle attack the enemy forces near Parghat, make a sudden attack on the Panhalgad fort and with all possible haste, make a counterattack towards Vijapur. It must have taken at least two months to complete the logistics of this plan. Shivaji was not dumb enough to waste these efforts whether or not Afzal Khan was going to double-cross him. Those eager to discuss melodrama may wonder what actually happened at the meeting or whether the Khan tried to smother Shivaji while embracing him. What weapon did Shivaji use? a sword, tiger claws or a dagger? In my opinion a sword, but no objection to either tiger claws or a dagger.

According to Dutch reports, just when Shivaji was marching towards Vijapur, Shahaji too was advancing towards Vijapur with a massive army. But somewhere the plan went awry. Shivaji's armies came within 16 miles of Vijapur, waited for three days, and returned. (*Shahaji's*) armies from Karnataka arrived a week later and turned back at 20 miles. (It is rumored that) this Dutch account finds support in some Farsi documents. This is the last mention of Shahaji in Shivaji's affairs. The Vijapur court started a new campaign under Rustum Jamani immediately after Afzal Khan's assassination, but it did not have much success. Shivaji is a never-before unparalleled figure in the history of Hindus. Not only did his allies fail to understand him, his enemies did as well. The one who came closest to understanding Shivaji was Aurangzeb. He had warned Adil Shahi during his very first stint at governing (*the Mughal territories in the Deccan.*) During his second stint, Shivaji had already given him a taste of Shivaji's prowess by attacking Junnar and Bhiwandi. Alamgir (*Aurangzeb*) had to return to the North (*to Delhi*) due to Shah Jahan's illness, but before going he made a peace treaty with Shivaji. Aurangzeb was installed on the Mughal throne in June 1659. Shivaji had sent his representative for that occasion. Aurangzeb sent Shivaji a gift of clothes in July. Thus far everything was sweetness and light between them. In June 1659 Shahiste Khan arrived in Deccan as the governor. That was when Shivaji assassinated Afzal Khan and engaged in a war against Vijapur. Seeing this, Shahiste Khan advanced on Pune. Vijapur made a treaty with Siddi Jauhar and sicced him on Shivaji in an attempt to contain him. My complaint is that Marathi Bakhar writers and novelists ignore this unholy political alliance among Afzal Khan, Shahiste Khan and Siddi Jauhar against Shivaji. Seen in this light, the first chapter is what started in 1645 (*oaths on Rohideshwar*) and ended in 1648 (*capture of Sinhadgad fort.*) The second chapter began with the offensive against the valley of Javali in 1656 and ended in 1666

(with escape from Agra.) Major milestones in the first chapter include the capture and subsequent surrender of the Sinhagad fort, taking Purandhar and the victory over Fateh Khan. The first half of the second chapter concludes with the treaty with Vijapur at the end of 1660 and includes the execution of (Yashwant Rao) More, assassination of Afzal Khan, and Baji Prabhu (who gave his life in a rearguard action to let Shivaji escape.) The second half of the second chapter ends with the escape from Agra and includes the defeat of Shahiste Khan, loot of the city of Surat and Mirza Raje Jai Singh (a Hindu knight of Aurangzeb who defeated Shivaji.)

Afzal Khan's assassination was one kind of betrayal. Another kind was the attack on Shahiste Khan. The Rajput tradition does not include assassinating someone after giving them one's word and inviting them for a meeting, or attacking an unaware army, or escaping under the cover of darkness while talks for a treaty are in progress (all of which Shivaji did during Afzal Khan's assassination.) Rajput tradition also does not include killing a person in their sleep, using your weapon on an unarmed person running away, or killing eunuchs, servant girls or women who are barring your way. During this massacre, Shahiste Khan's son, son-in-law, some wives, some daughters-in-law, some daughters – in all, six noble women, six common women, and 40 men including some Khoja guards (eunuchs) were killed. This Shivaji does not fit in the tradition of the Kshatriya religion. He is a better fit in Kautiliya politics (Indian version of Machiavelli.)

People like Bhalji (Pendharkar) in cinema, Hari Bhau and Nath Madhav in novels, and Tipnis and Audhkar in plays, have all tried to fit Shivaji's life inside traditional Kshatriya values. I hope Ranjit Desai is not added to this list.

Shahiste Khan's fingers were cut off in April. Shivaji took advantage of Ramadan. This is the Muslim month of fasting and no fighting. (The internet says that Ramadan started in late May that year. Perhaps a rare mistake by Kurundkar. Also, no fighting in Ramadan seems dubious.) But this led Bakhar writers to assume that Shahiste Khan lost heart. In fact for the next six months, Shahiste Khan tried his utmost to wipe this defeat off the map. He remained in Pune for the first three of those six months. You can wow the world with unexpected raids. Even snake charmers and circus artists wow people. That is not the business Shivaji was in. While the enemy is recovering from the element of surprise, Shivaji engages in steady statecraft, he does not indulge in victory celebrations. After Afzal Khan's assassination, he won Panhala fort and Kudal, and advanced towards Vijapur. After the affair of the raid on Shahiste Khan's palace, he won Rajapur, Kudal, Vengurla and secured the coast of Konkan. An unexpected jolt is best used as the beginning of a steadily successful campaign. Surprising the enemy with an unexpected jolt and scoring some meaningful victories before he recovers is political pragmatism, that is, Shivaji. Aurangzeb appointed Shahiste Khan as the governor of Bengal because he was unable to rein in Shivaji in the next six months. The Alamgir had no quarrel with him being surprised, but what next? That is his practical question (to Shahiste Khan.) Shahiste Khan left in December 1633 (typo - 1663). Shivaji looted Surat in January (1664.) Before Afzal Khan's assassination, Shivaji was unknown in the rest of India. But after this incident (loot of Surat), his fame reached all the way up to Assam. Shivaji declared war against Aurangzeb by looting Surat. While the Shahiste Khan incident was important, it did not resonate across India. There was no India-wide discussion of it.

Bakhar writers, novelists and historians have all bungled regarding Mirza Raje Jai Singh. Everyone has assumed that this experienced warrior had a soft spot for Shivaji somewhere in his psyche. Quite recently, approximately 26 of Mirza Raje's important letters have been discovered. Written

during 1665-66. From these it appears that Mirza Raje had Aurangzeb's complete trust. His word was very influential for Aurangzeb. He had helped the Alamgir since Aurangzeb's battle for succession to the throne. He was a disciplinarian – he had even punished (*Mughal*) princes. But every time, the father (*Aurangzeb*) ruled against his sons and in favor of Jai Singh. Mirza Raje once had a knight caned out in the scorching sun. This knight was Aurangzeb's close relative and had influence in Aurangzeb's harem. And yet Aurangzeb chastised him for letting things go that far. It was Mirza who advised Aurangzeb to invite Shivaji to Agra for a meeting. It was also his advice to place Shivaji under house arrest. And it was also his advice to spare Shivaji's life. Aurangzeb has said multiple times that listening to this last piece of advice was the biggest mistake of his life. Even on his deathbed, he said that while instructing his son. Mirza Raje's position was as follows: Marathas will remain subdued while Shivaji is in Agra, to help ensure protection for his life. If he is killed, they will fight to the death with everything they have. If he is let go and returns to Maharashtra, he will start his rebellion again. That was Mirza's calculation (*for keeping Shivaji under arrest but alive in Agra.*) When Mirza Raje informed Aurangzeb that Shivaji was traveling towards Agra and would soon reach the court, Alamgir replied, "as per your wishes, we will honor him appropriately. You may need him to fight against Adil Shahi. Therefore, we will give him a quick send-off without delay (*so he may return to South.*)" In response, Mirza Raje said, "It is with great efforts that I have been able to send him into your care. Unless I inform you otherwise, do not let him return here. Ensure he stays there, but do not harm his person." And so on. Note this when portraying Jai Singh. (*However*) in private, Jai Singh is an affectionate person.

He does not think it proper to hold a 9 year-old Sambhaji hostage. He adores the child Sambhaji's behavior. As a general and a politician, Jai Singh hits hard, like a hammer. At first Shivaji tried to oppose him. When that proved impossible, he made a treaty. Mirza had even sent assassins (*to kill Shivaji.*) The terms of the treaty are worth paying attention to. The Mughal empire annexed 23 forts and territory worth Rupees 400,000 (*in yearly tax revenue.*) Shivaji was left with 12 forts and territory worth Rupees 100,000. Shivaji had to loyally serve Aurangzeb as his vassal. And to make sure that Shivaji does not violate this treaty, he had to send Sambhaji into Mughal camp starting June 18th. In accordance with the treaty, Mirza Raje first took over the forts and only then sent Shivaji to Agra.

Mirza Raje was Aurangzeb's knight. He served him with absolute loyalty, using all his might and intellect. He had finished Shivaji from stem to stern. The challenge in depicting this character is (*the contrast between*) this strength, this single-minded, almost cruel, realpolitik on the one hand and the affection he had for Sambhaji in his private life. And this man was an extremely religious and fully devout Hindu. There is a legend that he had vowed to donate a 91 maund gold chain (*2900 kg / 6500 lb of gold, which is not believable*) to (*the temple of*) Kashi Vishweshwar if he proved victorious over Shivaji.

It should be understood what is meant by house arrest when Shivaji was under one in Agra. (Shivaji and Aurangzeb met in "Gusal Khana." That is not some kind of a bath house, but rather a "conference room" or a chamber, in today's parlance.) Most Farsi documents record that he was allowed to roam around in the capital, he stayed in the royal gardens. How he managed to escape is an unsolved puzzle. Legend has it that he escaped inside a box. I personally do not believe that. However, a novelist is free to embrace this imagined explanation as reality since it

does not contradict any evidence. Shivaji escaped Agra on August 17 (1666.) He crossed Narvir pass, 116 miles south of Agra, publicly with 300 people, after producing a permit from the emperor. This is a proven fact. The simple explanation is that he crossed Narvir pass saying "I am Shivaji", with the emperor's permission to return south, in style, with official royal documents. Camouflage and travel to Kashi, Mathura, Vrindavan, Prayag is what Bakhars describe as the way he did it. Historians estimate that Shivaji reached Raigad fort by September 12. Sambhaji was not with him, in fact Shivaji performed Sambhaji's post-funeral rites. Aurangzeb got this news by the end of October. Till that time the search was on (*for Sambhaji*) in the Mughal territory. It stopped after this news. Then Sambhaji returned (approximately by November 20.)

In the subsequent chapters (*in Shivaji's life story*), the most favorite one is that of Tanaji. Tanaji was a brave and loyal knight of Shivaji. He was killed while taking Sinhadgad fort. That is the only truth in this chapter. This affair became famous due to Tulsidas's Powada (*poem of bravery*.) There is no evidence that Tanaji was Shivaji's childhood friend. It is not like he was important in Shivaji's military. He commanded an infantry (*brigade*.) It is a made-up story that the Kondana fort was renamed Sinhadgad fort ("*Lion Fort*") because of Tanaji. Documents show the name Sinhadgad even before this incident.

Between February 1670 and June 5, various forts such as Sinhadgad, Purandhar, Mauli, Karnala, Lohgad, Hindola, Rohida etc were (*re*)captured. In most places, Marathas climbed (*the cliff faces*) using iguanas and chains. And fought with valor. In 1676 Annaji Datto captured Panhala using chains. And he won it with just 60 soldiers. The massacre began as soon as they entered. It was the Maratha army's modus operandi to use iguanas and chains to sneak into the fort, massacre the soldiers still unaware (*of their presence*), and open the main door to capture the fort. Sometimes historic reality takes the magic out of certain myths, this (*Tanaji's*) is one of them.

Shivaji made maximum effort to prove himself a Kshatriya prior to his coronation in 1674. He underwent the sacred thread ceremony. He did ritual expiations. He remarried his own wives. The question is, why he made all this effort to be anointed as the king. Bendre opines that the reason was Shivaji got anointed was to have the authority to punish Brahmin criminals and to judge religious disputes. In my opinion it was a time when religion held sway and dominated. According to Hindu religious texts, anointment at coronation has sanctity and prestige. The mindset of the time was that a king had to be Muslim. The ruler of Delhi was assumed to be the emperor of all of India by birthright. Even when the Bahamni (*Southern Muslim*) clan was in its full glory, the masses and even the Bahamni ministers considered the ruler of Delhi as their emperor, and the Persian Caliph as his superior. Allauddin felt it necessary to get his suzerainty over India ratified from Iran (*the Persian Caliph*.) At Aurangzeb's time, the Caliph was Turkish. The Alamgir tried his utmost to get legitimacy to his rule from the Caliph. When he finally got it, he held celebrations in the court. The kings and knights of Adil Shahi and Kutub Shahi still considered the emperor in Delhi their emperor. In Shivaji's time there were many Rajput "kings". But while they ascended the throne and held festivities celebrating it, there was no anointment. Vijay Nagar's (*Hindu*) empire was established and became prosperous. But it never had an anointment ceremony according to the Vedic rituals. After around 1000 CE this Vedic ceremony had become extinct. Gaga Bhatta scanned the religious texts, resurrected it, and crowned Shivaji as the king using the anointment ceremony. This was a revolutionary incident. On one hand

Shivaji was linking himself to the tradition of Rama, Nala, Yudhishtir, Vikramaditya (see Sabhasad.) On the other hand he was swinging the religious loyalties, holiness and sanctity of Hindus all over India behind his rule. Our religious texts say that Satya Yuga has four Varnas, inter-caste mixing begins in Dwapar Yuga, Treta Yuga has three Varnas and miscegenation increases, and by Kali Yuga only Brahmins and Shudras remain as Varnas. Our Puranas say that Kshatriyas ended when the Nanda clan (*of Krishna*) ended. After that the (*Hindu*) kings were Shudras. Shivaji was trying to turn the wheel back, to put Muslims in their place, to link himself to the sacred texts and glorious past of Hindus and to start a new era. Shivaji's coronation should be viewed, not as a temporary convenience, but as a grand gesture. Bendre has compiled the actual ceremony ("Shivaji's anointment ceremony conducted by Gaga Bhatta", Ed. V. C. Bendre, Rs 3.00, Pub. PPH Book Stall, Mumbai-4.) I feel that you should highlight in your novel the monumental and noble nature of this episode.

When did Shivaji first decide to have himself anointed using Vedic mantras? I feel it must be from the very beginning. Because his minister's seal states the following: "In charge of Shivaji's city, "harsha nidhan" (*responsible for happiness*), Sama Raj the intelligent minister." This stamp dates back to 1653. In this, the adjective "harsha nidhan" has its origins in Sanskrit poetic literature. An anointed king means freedom from fear for everyone, a guarantee of justice, rule of law and assurance of happiness. Liberation of the people from the dog-eat-dog (*in Marathi, fish-eat-fish*) fate. These descriptions date back to Kautilya. They are in poems as well. Of course this is just my own conjecture.

During his last days, Shivaji's household seems to be sharply divided. All ministers and Soyra Bai in one camp. They insisted on Rajaram being the heir apparent, as he was the son of the queen consort. The army chief, army and Sambhaji were in the other camp. This conflict arose after Jija Bai's death. Sambhaji's mother had been ill since his birth. At the time of Afzal Khan's assassination, the mother of Shivaji's only child was on her deathbed. Jija Bai raised this motherless child. His father had no time to pay attention to the issues in his household. Even if we assume that, therefore, the father and the son had no rapport, it is a later myth that (*there was any contemplation of*) dividing the kingdom in two, with Sambhaji getting Karnataka and Rajaram getting Maharashtra. During Shivaji's last days the Mughal forces were gathering on his borders.

There is no amity between the pillars of the government, namely, his ministers; and his heir Sambhaji. At home, Soyra Bai is stewing. And Shivaji is ill. This is a scary scenario. Madhav Rao (*Peshwe*) was at death's door in the sight of the imminent success of his lifelong efforts. Instead of this scenario, being in a scenario where what one amassed in a lifetime is being challenged, you are sick and your ministers and heir are at each others' throats is a far more tragic one. At least Madhav Rao could die happy knowing he was fulfilling his historic destiny even as he was dying. Shivaji did not even have that. Especially, during the last stage of his illness (the last fortnight), he had lost control over his own fort (*seat of government*.) Otherwise Sambhaji would surely have been summoned to meet him.

Keep in mind that at the time of Shivaji's death, it is provable that Sambhaji was not under house arrest, but was the governor of Panhala, Prabhavali and Dabhol regions.

There is no solid proof of the conjecture that Soyra Bai had Shivaji poisoned. A Bakhar says that

Sambhaji accused Soyra Bai of doing so, and had her killed by entombing her alive within a wall. This can be proven wrong with evidence. Soyra Bai died 19 months after Sambhaji ascended the throne. She committed suicide, and Sambhaji gave her a royal funeral. There is evidence of this in the English reports. (*The conjecture that Soyra Bai poisoned Shivaji*) cites as evidence the fact that Shivaji ordered antidotes for poison from the English, in 1677. Therefore, the deduction goes, Shivaji Maharaj must have suspected being poisoned, and of course someone (*in the royal household*) must have been responsible. And then the guess is that Soyra Bai would be the poisoner. The opposing evidence is that after 1676, every month or two, there would be rumors of Shivaji having died by poison. In my opinion if something like this had happened in 1677, if Shivaji had any such suspicion, it would have been dealt with decisively. At the very least, Soyra Bai would have been permanently removed to Purandhar or Sinhagad for the sake of a "change of climate". In reality, Raja Ram (*Soyra Bai's son*) had his Munja performed on March 7th, 1680. He was married on March 15th. And Sambhaji would not have been invited to either ceremony because those would be Soyra Bai's wishes. This means that Shivaji wished to keep Soyra Bai near him and avoid antagonizing her over small matters. Shivaji got ill near the end of March, and died on April 3rd. The nature of this illness is not dysentery but blood flukes (*schistosomiasis*), that is blood in vomit and in excreta.

I find it believable that "at the end, they did 'hari kirtan' (*sermon in hymn praising Lord Vishnu*), 'rudraksha dharan' (*wearing ealaecarpus beads to honor Lord Shiva*)" as described in the "91 point" Bakhar. Let me suggest another thing no one has mentioned as yet. And that is, they would have had some Brahmins chant "maha mrityunjay japa" (*a "death conquering" mantra from Rig Veda, supposed to delay death*). Even in those times, it was customary to place a dying man on a white blanket, give him water from the Ganges, put a holy basil leaf in his mouth, and place him in the lotus asana position right after death by folding his legs. Bhosle clan did not have the custom of Sati. Putala Bai was an exception. She did not go Sati at the time of the cremation itself, because it appears that the cremation was done somewhat in secret and hastily. It is likely that they cremated Shivaji using "bhadagni" (*a quick cremation without religious trappings such as chanting mantras*). Later, Sambhaji performed all the needed rites properly for 12 days till sutak (*the ritual impurity period*) was over. He cremated a strawman representing Shivaji's body, with proper mantras being chanted.

When writing novels on Shivaji, writers always neglect the relationships between Shivaji and the British and between Shivaji and the Portuguese. So they also neglect the fact that Shivaji tried to raise a navy since 1656-57. To understand Shivaji's mindset, his genius and the breadth of his enterprise, it is crucial to note that he was trying to build a navy and planning his coronation even before he had any victory that brought him India-wide fame. We find that since 1659, the Portuguese issued commands (*to their navy*) to beware of Shivaji's navy. The empires of Vijay Nagar, Adil Shahi, Nizam Shahi, and Mughals could see the Portuguese bullying (*on the sea*) plainly. But none of them paid any attention to a naval power. Had these Muslim kingdoms paid more attention to the question of the navy, history would have been quite different. The last Hindu king to pay attention to his navy was Rajraj (*king of kings*) Chol Raj, in the 11th century. After him, a 15th century landholder near Sangmeshwar, named Jakhurai. But the only king to realize the importance of the concept of naval superiority, after Chol Raj, was Shivaji, 600 years later. Viewed with this perspective, the raising of the (*naval*) Sindhu Durg fort in 1664, and attack on Basnur in 1665, are important events. The first European power to be established long-term

in India was the Portuguese. Being Roman Catholics, they were infamous for religious persecution. 50 years before Shivaji, the Portuguese had started the Inquisition. That atrocity was going on even in Shivaji's time. In 1667 Shivaji taught a lesson to the Portuguese. Later, Sambhaji pushed on with this anti-Portuguese politics. The cause of the fight against Portuguese was political, but it was clearly also religious. At the time of Shivaji the British were not very powerful. Yet, Shivaji put them under pressure by building a stronghold at Khanderi. When outlining Shivaji's mentality, you can understand the reach of his genius only by looking at his behavior towards the Portuguese, the British, the Dutch and the French. That will help you describe his mindset.

It is unlikely that Shivaji had any childhood friends. His character matches that of Savyasachi from "Shesh Prashna" (*a novel*). There are those who love Savyasachi, who have complete faith in him, who even argue with him. Savyasachi is aware of the need to protect everyone. He forgives those who make mistakes. He does not think that everyone has to help him in his endeavor. "Poets need not sing songs of revolutions, let them follow their muse. Civilians should live their civilian life as well as they can. Inventors should invent. Life needs every one of them. But my job is to secure freedom for my country." This is what Savyasachi believes. If it does not affect the welfare of the country, he can easily forgive even the biggest crime. And when needed, he thinks it is natural to have to massacre innocents. This Savyasachi has no close friend. He is respected, but alone. I would suggest that you read Savyasachi carefully when sketching Shivaji's character out.

Shivaji always tried to befriend Hindu knights and landholders. There are many examples, such as Daulat Rao More, Yashwant Rao More, Lakhman Sawant, Surve of Shringarpur. But the contemporary squires never threw their lot in with Shivaji. Shivaji, and later Baji Rao, had to create new knights. All his life, Hindu knights gave lifelong faithful service to Adil Shahi and Mughals (*Muslim kingdoms*). A Hindu empire was taking shape in front of their eyes. But they felt no empathy for it. On the contrary they felt jealousy and envy. This is an illustration of how (*little*) his idealism inspired his contemporaries. But the young generation seems to have been inspired. The indirect evidence of this is that Afzal Khan in 1669 (*typo – should be 1659*), Jai Singh in 1665, failed in their politics of divide-and-conquer. And the direct proof is that Aurangzeb was unable to conquer Maharashtra in 27 years with his army of 300,000.

Even if you assume that those in Shivaji's employ were loyal, how many of them did truly understand him? Even his cabinet ministers don't seem to have grasped the idealism and the realpolitik. Else, Annaji Datto (*Shivaji's Chief Secretary*) would not have forced him into a contract. The contract is as follows. "It is as important to maintain good governance as it is to expand the kingdom. So when awarding new grants or gifts of land, the division should be one part to the bureaucrats and three parts to the fighters." Shivaji's chief general gets mad and joins Adil Shahi. His son gets mad and joins the Mughals. He has to fight (*his step-brother*) Vyankoji, and (*his army chief*) Pratap Rao Gujar makes a treaty instead of defeating the enemy completely. Even Krishnaji Anant Sabhasad (*who wrote the eponymous Bakhar*) does not know the different threads of Shivaji's politics, but they are visible in the original documents.

Time and again, Shivaji made treaties with Adil Shahi and Kutub Shahi. After 1660, when the occasion arose, Shivaji broke the treaty with the Portuguese. Broke the treaties made with Moghuls. But never broke the treaties made with Adil Shahi and Kutub Shahi on his own. His desire was to form a front against the Moghuls. That was for Shivaji's defense. But the plan was (also) to defeat Siddi Jauhar (*Abyssinian in charge of the Janjeera fort*) and the Portuguese, to protect the Dutch and the English, and to defend Adil Shahi and Kutub Shahi. Adil Shahi opted for suicide instead of adopting this plan. Kutub Shahi did not fight against Shivaji, but did not pursue this plan enthusiastically either. Shivaji was even ready to make a treaty and form an alliance with Aurangzeb to conquer Adil Shahi and divide it (*with Moghuls*). Sunni Moghuls and Shia Adil Shahi were ready to kill each other, but also knew that a treaty with Shivaji meant the end of Muslim power in the country. Hindu nobles don't seem to have understood this.

Chhatra Saal Bundela was the one person inspired by Shivaji. At this time, Sikhs in Punjab were battling for their life against Aurangzeb. Near the end of the nineteenth century, Sikhs took the position that they were not Hindus, thanks to the rise of Arya Samaj and the harsh criticism from the Arya Samaj followers. But in the sixteenth-seventeenth century, the Sikhs were fighting to protect the Hindu religion. Unfortunately there don't seem to be any contacts between Shivaji and the Sikhs. Sambhaji established these contacts. The tenth Sikh Guru, Govind Singh, was fighting against Aurangzeb anyway, he came to the Deccan to form an alliance with the Marathas. But he was killed in 1708. That there should be no relationship between Sikhs and Marathas is truly unfortunate.

A novel about Shivaji implies we need to understand certain historical facts firmly. One of them is the relations between Shivaji and Tukaram. Tukaram lived from 1608 to 1651. His place was Dehu, a village in the Pune district. That Shivaji attended Tukaram's Kirtan (*musical sermon*), that he was listening to Tukaram in the Lohgad temple (*when*) Mohammad Bangash tried to capture him, etc etc anecdotes are all bogus. That Tukaram advised Shivaji to be Ram Das's follower, is also a falsehood. Ram Das started his sect in 1649. During Tukaram's lifetime, Ram Das was an unknown beyond the immediate vicinity of Chafal (*where Ram Das lived*). Tukaram's court case regarding the gift of the Panduranga temple was conducted in Shivaji's presence. Shivaji ruled against Tukaram in that case. Maratha empire's "yomiye" (*need translation*) at Dehu have existed since the time of Shahu (*in 18th century*). There is no place for Tukaram in Shivaji's biography. References to this connection supposedly present in (*Tukaram's*) Gatha are allegorical. For example, tradition maintains that the Abhang "vanu kiti re sadaya vithuraya deenvatsala" ("*how much would I praise you, O merciful Lord Vithu, affectionate of the humble people*") is from the time of the Kirtan in the Lohgad temple. But that is wrong. That Abhang is from Pralhad's legend. During Tukaram's lifetime, Shivaji was not renowned, neither had he performed great deeds of valor. Even Ram Das was not famous yet.

Ram Das is different from this. It is certain that Shivaji and Ram Das met in person in 1672. It is also certain that in 1676, Shivaji vacated Sajjan Gad (*the fort at Sajjan*) for Ram Das's use. It is also certain that in 1668, he warned against harassing the people trekking to Chafal. The oldest biographies of Ram Das are by Meru Swami, Dinkar Swami. Shivaji is not mentioned in them. Shivaji's oldest biography is by Sabhasad. Ram Das is not mentioned in it either. Those who knew of Ram Das closely during his life, those who were adults at the time of Ram Das's death, and those who knew Shivaji well, do not mention Ram Das. The story of Ram Das being present at

Jija Bai's deathbed comes from a Bakhar, and that too a Bakhar written afterwards (*after Shivaji and Ram Das's time*). Shivaji did not take Mantropadesh (*main spiritual guidance*) from Ram Das. He took it from Gopal Bhat in 1653. Shivaji says to all (*holy*) persons that he became a ruler of a kingdom because of Their Holiness. To Samarth Ram Das, to Kacheshwar Bhat, even to Baba Yakut (*a Muslim saint*). Shivaji started his enterprise in 1645. A letter definitely bearing his seal dates from 1646. Ram Das established his sect in 1649. This sequence in time should be understood. It means that the inspiration to create a kingdom did not come from Samarth (*Ram Das*). I have read the Das Bodh (*Ram Das's magnum opus*). Even taught it for M.A. (*Master of Arts classes*). There isn't a lot of politics in it. It's all about devotion. Just the word politics appears in it. There are some Samas (*chapters*) titled politics. But even they don't have any politics. Ram Das's sect started in Adil Shahi, and the first trustees of the Chafal temple were Shivaji's enemies. This implies that in 1649, Ram Das was not thinking of Shivaji, and that is quite natural. Because until this time not many people had heard of Shivaji's great exploits. But, like Ek Nath, Ram Das too was dreaming of a Hindu renaissance. His pride in the Hindu religion caused him to hate Muslims. Aurangzeb was alive 27 years after both Shivaji and Ram Das had died, but, following Ek Nath, Ram Das had been dreaming of (*having seen*) the sinner Aurangzeb's destruction. If we were to deduce based on the available evidence, it seems that Shivaji attracted Ram Das's close attention circa 1659. This conclusion is supported by Ram Das's statement that "I lived in your country, and yet I did not enquire of you." Shivaji had respect and empathy for Sadhus and saints. He considered it his duty to ensure their happiness and to protect religion. Naturally, Ram Das would have been joyous at the formation of a Hindu kingdom. It won't be surprising if he felt that Shivaji's triumphs were his triumphs, and Shivaji's dangers were his dangers. It may be that some of Shivaji's spies would disguise as Ram Das (*from Ram Das's sect*) or some Ram Das would report to Shivaji any information they may have gleaned. But that would be the history after 1660. Ram Das was not connected with the actual politics. Shivaji and Ram Das became really close after 1674. This sequence should be kept in mind.

There is a legend that Goddess Bhavani had bestowed a sword to Shivaji. The mild form of this legend is that there was a sword, it was named Bhavani, and someone gifted it to Shivaji. A little stronger form of the legend is that Goddess Bhavani entered in Shivaji's sword. The strongest form is that Bhavani bestowed her demon-killer weapon – her sword – as a blessing upon Shivaji. These are the three forms of this legend. Getting a divine sword correlates with Ek Nath's writings. The word "Anand-van-bhuvan" (*"Home to the Garden of Bliss"*), attributed to Ram Das, was also coined by Ek Nath. It is commonly believed that Shivaji spent time in his childhood listening to stories from Puranas (*Indian mythological holy texts*). If you imagine that the text was Ek Nath's "Bhavarth Ramayan" (*Ramayan with inner meaning exposed*) then that would certainly be the source of all inspirations for Shivaji. There is zero evidence for the above conjecture. But this imagined source is important. We commonly say that Jija Bai told the stories of Rama and Krishna to Shivaji. If instead we said that both listened to Bhavarth Ramayan from the myth narrators, then that book explains a whole lot of Shivaji's mindscape.

Shivaji was very strict regarding women's honor. He himself was not hedonistic, and he did not like hedonism either. He had warned (*his officers*) to ensure that temples, women, cows, Brahmins be free from harassment. Even Khafi Khan (*historian working for Shivaji's enemies the Mughals*) has described Shivaji's custom of treating the enemies' women with respect.

Therefore, the story of the daughter-in-law of Kalyan's governor meshes with Shivaji's innate nature. It is not a historical incident. Shivaji's life is full of dramatic real incidents. It has absolutely amazing but true incidents like taking Purandhar (fort) from Sambhaji Mohite; conquering, in three months, the valley of Javli which had a reputation of being hard to conquer; (killing) Afzal Khan; fleeing from Panhala (*when surrounded by Adil Shahi forces*); (*the raid on*) Shahiste Khan; looting Surat; the escape from Agra. There is no dearth of theater in it. So what is the need for the made-up ones like the governor's daughter-in-law, Hirkani's tower (*where Hirkani, a young mother, supposedly climbed an inaccessible wall tower to reunite with her baby after curfew*), or putting the deeds of the kingdom in (*Ram Das's*) begging basket? And if you include those, then why not channeling Bhavani, or procuring tigress milk for Samarth (*Ram Das*)? A Ram Dasi Bakhar says that to test Shivaji's loyalty, Swami (*Ram Das*) once asked him to send his queen, seductively made up, to Ram Das. And the king (*Shivaji*) was so loyal that he immediately did so. Samarth sent the queen back with his blessings, and praised the king's loyalty. Why not include this story? Those who narrate such tales are moronic, and those who immortalize them in books are a hundred times more so. Did they not understand that such anecdotes besmirch both of these great men?

The question is, whether to narrate the children's story version of Shivaji depicted in myths and legends, the incarnation of Lord Shiva, blessed by the goddess Bhavani, who obeys his mother, is spiritually inclined, loyal to his religion, loyal to his teachers, believes in fate, takes political decisions based on Bhavani's will, and displays valor with his childhood friends by his side; or whether to understand the whole reality. It is commonly said that Shivaji spent his whole life fighting and riding on horseback. Shejvalkar has shown, with evidence, measuring Shivaji's life, just how much time he spent inside forts. There is no doubt that Shivaji was an expert rider, and daring. But his usual mode of transportation was the comfortable palanquin. He did not always ride a horse. He spent 7/8ths of his life in forts. His method is to plan meticulously, execute the plans, and where necessary, take risks even if dangerous to himself. He does not make useless exertions or take unnecessary risks.

It is important to understand the chronology of Shivaji's life. While Dadoji was alive, Shivaji's conquests are really the plans and conquests made by Dadoji and his associates in Shivaji's name. Analogously, documents describe the valor of Marathi armies in 1669-70 under Sambhaji's leadership. He was 12-13 at the time. These victories and war plans are really the ones made by Pratap Rao Gujar. Sabhaji's civil administration between 1671 and 1674 gets universal acclaim. This praise in reality belongs to Jija Bai. (*Similarly*) the battle in 1648 should be attributed to Kavji and Sam Raj. Shivaji's first victory worth taking notice is Javli. He was 26 at the time. It would be unnatural to believe that a 15-years old Shivaji had knowledge of geography, administration of an army, drawing up battle plans, or befriending Daulat Rao More as his man in Javli; and it is inconsistent with the slow pace that he followed for the next eight years from 1648 to 1656. Even Shivaji, an extraordinary man, had to wait till he was 44 to be coronated. Because the people he was fighting against were no ordinary people either. A huge army, experienced generals, led by Alamgir who was the very essence of an expert at planning, knowledgeable, skilled at deceiving his opponents, and a practical diplomat. These were not common folks. None of his foes – Afzal Khan, Shahiste Khan, Mirza Raje Jay Singh, or Alamgir were ordinary. You can describe Shivaji's greatness only by portraying the accomplished and immensely great personalities of those that he triumphed over. Ram is considered great only because he defeated

Ravan who had imprisoned all the gods, Kumbha Karna who was a great warrior, and Indrajit. A real hunt does not involve killing bedbugs, mosquitoes or lice. You have to kill lions and tigers. In this respect, it is harder to portray Shivaji than it is to portray Madhav Rao (*Peshwe*). Because you have to erect a lot of huge statues in this scene. A failure to properly define Shivaji's opponents would undermine the foundation of Shivaji's portrait.

Shivaji's greatness and its limitations should be well understood. Shivaji does not have the background of the European Renaissance that any 17th century European ruler has. His religious background is that of the liberal, progressive, proud to be Hindu Varkari sect. So Shivaji is different from Cromwell who came before him and Napoleon who came after. His frame of mind is not that of a materialist. Or a democrat. He was not a socialist. He had never thought that he should spread literacy and education among the general populace, or start printing presses (a while ago some historians had vigorously advocated the idea that Shivaji had tried to start a printing press), free women from their servitude, eliminate caste differences, help the untouchables, ban child marriages, or promote remarriages of widows. If some had advocated such sinful proposals, Shivaji would have broken his arms and legs. He always bought his cannons and ammunition from the English or the Dutch. He did not think about manufacturing his own armaments. Where did these Europeans come from? And why? He would not know much about that. Before he was born, Galileo had scanned the skies with a telescope. Columbus had discovered America, and Magellan had circumnavigated the globe for the first time. The Chhatra Pati had no clue about any of this. Like all great men in this world, Shivaji was a child of his times. The test of his greatness is how well he understood the inner current of the river of his time and how far he traveled ahead in it.

Five years ago, an article was published in the "Hindu" periodical. A South Indian writer, not well-known, so I don't remember his name or the year of publication. But I remember well the contents of that article. There is no better writing than that article to understand Shivaji's greatness. The article was titled "How Small Shivaji Was". The author says, "Shivaji is a god for the Maharashtrians. They would feel no hesitation in proclaiming him greater than the supreme being. Maharashtrians think it is an understatement to say that he was the best ruler in the last 5000 years of human history. I do not wish to participate in this paean of praise. Therefore, I want to see how small this man, rather than how great he was. From that perspective, one thing becomes clear. And that is, Shivaji created a kingdom. In the known history of the whole of India, there must be at least 500 ruling clans. All of them originated from someone. Shivaji is but one out of those. But those who created kingdoms, got the chance due to political anarchy. Vassals of a weak king would declare independence, and the central government would be powerless to do anything about it. Or a general would dethrone a useless king and start ruling. That would be path to the throne for the creators. These people automatically inherited the king's army and his civil bureaucracy. But imagine someone who had to create everything out of nothing. Who had no existing army numbering in thousands, inherited from the previous rule. Who was attacked immediately by a strong enemy right after he attempted to build a kingdom. The bordering powers were not in decline but in full ascendancy. Vijapur and Golkonda were in the period of their maximum prosperity. Shivaji was creating his kingdom by nibbling at the edges of the Vijapur kingdom. 10-15 years before that the Vijapur rulers had swallowed half of Nizam Shahi, and at Shivaji's time they were conquering all of Karnataka. The Mughal kingdom was at the zenith of its power. Shivaji was someone who lacked the power to defeat an enemy in open

combat on a battlefield, who lost in four months in 1665 what he had accumulated in the last 20 years, and yet who, fighting with the powerful neighbors continuously, created his kingdom by relentless efforts over 29 years. It would be easy to point out how small he was once we find a comparable Indian ruler who established a kingdom from scratch.

Hindu powers have some typical characteristics. It's not that they don't emerge victorious after fighting their enemies. They do. But their victory does not ensure the end of their enemies. The enemy's strength does not diminish. Neither does his kingdom. The victorious king does not increase his kingdom. Even after victory, his power is broken, it does not revive. So the pattern for Hindu kings is, complete destruction after a defeat, and a weaker kingdom after losing some strength during victory. A new history of Hindus, in which a victory increases the kingdom and its power, and a defeat preserves strength and determination even after a loss of territory, starts with Shivaji. The second thing is that Hindu kings were unaware of the goings-on in their neighborhood. The enemy would prepare, and choose his time for an offensive. They would be clueless, the enemy would advance 100-200 miles into their territory, and then they would wake up. The battle would take place in their territory. In victory or in defeat, it would be their land that would be scorched. This history of Hindus changes after Shivaji. A new history begins, which includes alertness before fighting starts, and if the enemy is unaware then his territory is looted and burned to the ground. The third notable thing is, a history of Hindu kings trusting the enemies, making treaties and getting double-crossed by the enemies, is replaced by Shivaji deceiving the enemies, surprising everyone. I am searching for someone else from the Hindu history to compare Shivaji to, on these points. Once I find one or two such people, it would be easy to show how small he was.

Shivaji was religious, but not a fundamentalist. Strict, but not cruel. Adventurous, but not careless. Pragmatic, but not without a higher purpose. His personality is that of a dreamer who dreamt of high aims, but a clear-eyed realist who transformed his dreams into reality. He did not live simply. He lived an elegant, rich lifestyle, but he was not wasteful in his spending on this lifestyle. He was tolerant of other religions. On this point, it is possible to compare him to Ashoka, Vikramaditya, Harsha or Akbar. But all of those had enormous harems. Akbar had Meena Bazar. Ashoka had Tishya Rakshita. Shivaji had not given free rein to his lust. He did not have that evergreen appreciation for beauty that Hindu and Muslim kings, even into their seventies, retained; and that drove them to hoard young beauties, beautiful women, for their enjoyment. Shivaji also did not have the money to generously sponsor arts like painting, sculpture, music, or poetry; or to erect huge monuments. He did not have time for it. And his mind was not so inclined. He did not have the elegant taste to build a Taj Mahal by using indentured workers lashed with whips, and spending 200 million Rupees. Or the religious devotion to build temples, piers on rivers, charitable inns all over India while considering it a minor matter that the British were conquering India systematically. Like you and me, he was a "sinner" and a "utilitarian". Khafi Khan says that he went to Hell. I, too, think he must have gone to Hell. He would have been unhappy in the company of the brave martyrs who sacrificed themselves on the battlefield rather than preserving their kingdoms, or the virtuous who emphasized religious rituals like Yadnya rather than increasing their armies; and all these people were in Heaven. Akbar adopted a liberal stance towards Hindus. He has been praised to high heavens for that. But it is common sense that a stable government cannot be established unless the majority of the citizens are made happy. Akbar treated those with generosity whose bravery

was expanding his kingdom, who were strengthening him, who were in a majority, and whose taxes were increasing his wealth. And Hindus did not have a history of attacks. They had not destroyed mosques. They had not massacred Muslims. Or defiled Muslim women. Or subjected Muslims to forcible conversions. Akbar treated with generosity those who had no history of offenses, and who did not threaten any offenses. Muslims were not a majority in Shivaji's citizens. They were not a mainstay of his taxes. Muslim swords were not building his kingdom. They had a history of attacks, and were threatening offensives against his kingdom. Neighboring Alamgir was reimposing the Jizya (*exploitative taxes on dhimmis, non-Muslim subjects in a Muslim kingdom*), and yet Shivaji treated Muslims with generosity. Not out of fear of the surrounding Muslim kingdoms, but out of his innate generosity!

Given this background, I am willing to take Shivaji's measure and find him small. But whom is he smaller than? Where is the standard against which to measure him?"

The outline given above is the approximate gist of that article. It's possible that there are more or less examples in it than the original. Points were made by the author, the style is mine.

The article leaves out two points. Once mentioned, those will conclude the obvious portion of the enumeration of Shivaji's greatness. The first thing is, Shivaji was undoubtedly a skillful general and an expert in the art of war. But he was also an expert in civil administration. He felt that the king is responsible for the welfare of his people on this earth. He fought many battles, but he never burdened the populace with new taxes. Even the expenditure for his coronation was paid by imposing a surcharge on the wealthy landowners. He did not increase the tax burden on the common people. In one of his letters, he challenges, "I have betrayed by enemies. Give me an example where I betrayed my friend." This challenge goes unanswered. He made an effort to do all-around development, by permitting new townships to be established, fixing the taxes on crops, stocking up granaries in the forts, loaning money to farmers for seeds, plows, and bullocks; *Rajya Vyavahar Kosh (a Marathi glossary for the business of the government)* to improve the language, *Karan Koustubh (an astrology reference)* to improve the calendar; converting people back to Hinduism after a penance, to reform the religion; and building new forts. He was not just a military general.

The second, and in my opinion, the most important thing is that the people fought for 27 years to preserve the kingdom that Shivaji had created. Everyone was fighting, the best they could, at first under Sambhaji's leadership after Shivaji's death, then for 19 years after Sambhaji was killed. *Jadunath (Sarkar)* estimates that the Mughals suffered roughly 500,000 casualties in this struggle. Marathas must have lost at least 100- to 200,000, but in 1707 they still had an army of roughly 150,000. With no established leader, and no hope of regular pay. Aurangzeb did not suffer a defeat in these 27 years. Because Marathas lacked the strength to impose a decisive one. (*Jadunath says, the Alamgir had triumphs after triumphs. He was the victor in each battle, often in all ongoing battles. After all these victories, after hundreds of thousands killed, after spending millions, he achieved nothing but a fatal weakening of his India-wide empire, and his own death. He could not defeat the Marathas.*) And yet, Marathas kept fighting. When the Peshwai rule ended, people sighed with relief. Finally, the (*British*) rule of law and order had arrived. The reaction of the common people was that the anarchy had ended and peace had been established. Hindus had a general celebration when the English won East Bengal after the Battle of Buxor. If people had fought after 1565, (*the kingdom of*) Vijay Nagar would not have

disappeared. If people had fought after 1198 (*maybe a typo – 1398 when Tamerlane conquered Northern India*) then India would never have been under Muslim rule. Rana Pratap fought persistently with the Mughals, but only the army was fighting. The population was apathetic. A 100,000 people died to save the Som Nath (*temple*), but the surrounding region remained at peace. It's not that Prithvi Raj Chauhan, Rana Pratap, Ram Raja were not religious. They were devoutly religious. It's not that the Muslims of their times did not commit atrocities. They were even more barbaric. Were the common people not proud of their religion, nor love it? It was not that. People were religious, but they did not fight to save those kingdoms. In Indian history, the first mention of people fighting to preserve a kingdom is Kalinga (*which fought against Emperor Ashoka*). Then for Youdheya at the end of the fourth century. These two incidents are certain. Perhaps tribesmen fought against Alexander the Great. When people take up arms, the army becomes powerless. After 1200 years, the populace fought for Shivaji's kingdom. The answer to why they thought it was their kingdom, is not religious pride. The first answer is giving them confidence that they could fight, creating new ways to raid the enemy, and instead of falling prey to the false notions of bravery, establishing a new paradigm of survival, flight (*from a stronger enemy*), attrition (*of the enemy*), and his destruction. And the second answer is the attention to the earthly needs of one's populace. Religious pride comes in third in that list.

Had Shivaji read Kautilya (*his treatise on politics and economics*)? If you ask history, the answer is a simple No. But if you imagine that he had read Kautilya, then Shivaji's purpose is to be the ideal king as described by Kautilya. Kautilya says, it is the king's responsibility to ensure the happiness of the population in this world and the next. His duties don't end at keeping the peace and defending the people from foreign invasions. Sometimes, droughts happen. Or crops don't come up. So a king should keep his granaries full. When crops are good, a king should buy them up. These are the times when merchants collude to keep prices low, causing losses to the common people. When the farmers run out of grain, then high prices ruin the population. A king should start selling his grain to preserve the people. On the one hand it protects the populace. On the other, it replaces the grain in the government's granaries. Food grains are not precious gems. They go moldy. So, always selling old grains and buying new ones keep prices in check and help the people. Weights and standards should always be inspected. Because the merchants cheat people in that as well. Interest rates should be regulated. Moneylenders should have a license and be taxed. Giving medicines to people and animals is not only a virtuous deed, but also useful to induce loyalty in a king and for people's welfare. It is a king's job to save the people in a drought by providing them food, then providing them with seeds, plows and bullocks, and then to recoup these expenses from them on installments. His job is not just to catch a thief, but to recompense the losses as well. Every business should be taxed. Everything should be taxed only once. Its proportion should be constant ($\frac{1}{4}$ per Kautilya) and it should be reduced if the income falls. It is a king's duty to build roads, to repair water tanks, to dig wells, to make canals, to encourage new industries and businesses. Harsh punishments do not reduce crime. What reduces crime is the certainty that crimes will come to light and criminals will not go unpunished. Thus, a king's duty is to care for all aspects of people's lives. If a king fails to do that, the people have a right to refuse to pay taxes, to depose the king, or to assassinate him. Nay, it's their duty.

Kautilya says, if one man conspires against you, kill him in secrecy. If ten people plot against you, hang them in public. If a hundred plot against you, hang the leaders to terrorize the rest. Pardon

the followers to earn their gratitude, and analyze the mistakes in your governance to find out what went wrong and how to correct it. People don't start a rebellion lightly. If a king is unpopular among his subjects, the army will not save him. A general or a knight will assassinate him.

A king's duty lies in overall welfare of his subjects. For that he may fight, die, surrender, compete, rise at the opportune time, spread divisions, betray, cheat, give promises, break promises, use assassins, use poisons. It is the king's duty to do all these for the good of the people. Whoever does this duty is absolved of his sins due to the thanks that his people give him, and goes to Heaven by getting 1/6 of his subjects' good karma. A king has no personal love. No hate, no pride or humility, no desire or enmity. A king is like a goat or a sheep – he is expected to dance for others' amusement, provide milk and wool when alive, and with his death, provide meat, hide, horns, bones, and hooves. The shepherd for whom he does this is the populace. A king who does not do his duty has his good karma distributed among his people, gets 1/6 of their sins, and goes to Hell. A king's scepter carries all this weight, so a greedy, lustful person cannot lift it. It needs an alert, patient king.

A king is not personally expected to do virtuous deeds or to be faithfully religious. A king's job is to protect his subjects' way of life, wealth and lives. A king has four eyes (*the four directions*). Hence Indra (*the king of gods*) is called the thousand-eyed one. A thousand spies are his thousand eyes. Spies should disguise as devotees, ascetics, monks. Valets, maidservants, barbers, masseurs, prostitutes, gamblers make good spies. A king should know of everything that is happening in his enemies' territories, so he can remain alert. A king's main task is to know the enemies' secrets. It is a soldier's dharma to fight with bravery, to die, but to never retreat. It is a king's dharma to fight, to increase his lands, to surrender and preserve his lands, and to protect his subjects at all costs.

A king should make it widely known that he can command ghosts and spirits, that he the beloved of gods and goddesses, that they talk to him. The spies should repeat this information as if they have seen it with their own eyes. He should attribute the intelligence from spies to spirits and gods whispering in his ear.

You should peruse the original Kautilya at least once. It is important to bring to life an outline of (*Shivaji's*) nature through your art. All of his idealism and pragmatism, faith and caution, military leadership and overall accomplishment, cunning and generosity, nobility and drama, humanity, uniqueness and limitations. Whether you use this incident or that, is unimportant. The literary truth lies in the right understanding of the historical reality, a novel is allowed to bring it to light using the necessary imagination.

I had realized that that reading such a long missive would be boring. But in the field of Marathi historical novels, you were the first to experiment successfully to introduce realism. This is the first opportunity for Shivaji to be portrayed in a realistic way in Marathi fiction. Hence I had to write at length. Of course there is the sense of affinity for Shivaji as a person. You said, "I am going to use everything including history, anecdotes, legends." I am afraid of losing this exceptional personality among the clutter of imaginary incidents. You have the knowledge of Shivaji's complete character. How it formed, would be the section that ends in 1656. Allocate a full 250 pages to it. 1630 to 1645 – 15 years, 150 pages. 1645 to 1656 – 11 years, 100 pages. The

overall development of this character from 1656 to 1666, 250 pages. 1666 to 1678, 150 pages to depict the adversities and sorrows that deepen and enlarge it. 1678 to 1680, a full 200 pages, for the misfortunes brought on by the fates upon this character. 25 pages for the background before 1630. If you follow this recipe systematically to develop this character, and portray other character with equal brilliance, I am confident it will succeed.

Yours truly,

Narahar Kurundkar.

Translated by Narendra C Tulpule

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