



8. An Ideal Ruler

Before the foundation of *Swaraj*, Maharashtra was under the domination of the Adilshahi, Siddi, Portuguese and Mughal powers. Shivaji Maharaj struggled against these powers. He faced all kinds of adverse circumstances. He founded an independent and sovereign *Swaraj*. He set up a system for the administration of this *Swaraj*. He turned *Swaraj* into a *Surajya*, a kingdom that sought the welfare of all. Maharaj created a new order with his capability. In the course of the conflict for the founding of the *Swaraj*, he himself had to face many grave dangers. Events like the meeting with the Afzalkhan, the siege of Panhala, the attack on Shaistakhan, the escape from Agra, all involved a great amount of risk. Shivaji Maharaj emerged successful in all these events. No harm came to him.



Think about it.

Shivaji Maharaj could establish *Swaraj* due to his loyal and dedicated associates.

Collect proverbs from different languages that state the importance of friendship. For example, A friend in need is a friend indeed.

Organisational Skill : Maharaj inspired the people around him to work for the *Swaraj*. His organisational skill was unparalleled. With this skill, he drew around himself brave people who were also extremely loyal. These close associates of Maharaj performed their duty, even by risking their own lives. There are many instances of this in the founding of the *Swaraj* – Jiva Mahala,

who killed Bada Sayyad at a critical moment during the meeting with Afzalkhan; Shiva Kashid who crossed the siege of Panhalagad in the disguise of Shivaji Maharaj; Bajiprabhu Deshpande, who blocked the advances of the enemy on the way to Vishalgad; Murarbaji Deshpande, who defended the fort of Purander, Tanaji Malusare, who sacrificed his life while conquering Sinhagad; Hiroji Farjand and Madari Meheter, who risked their lives during the escape of Maharaj from Agra, etc. Maharaj took great care of his associates. For example, Kanhoji Jedhe was associated with Maharaj in the work of the *Swaraj* from the very beginning. When the ageing Kanhoji fell ill, Maharaj told him not to neglect his medicines or treatment on any account.

Caring for the ryot : While establishing the *Swaraj*, Maharaj had to constantly struggle against his enemies. His subjects suffered due to enemy invasions. At such times, Maharaj used to take utmost care to protect the *ryot*. At the time of Shaistakhan's campaign, Maharaj warned the Deshmukh of the Rohida valley not to fail in his duty towards the *ryot*. He told Deshmukh to visit every village and shift people to a safe place down the ghats. He strictly told him not to delay even for a moment. He further warned the Deshmukh that if he did not thus take care of the *ryot*, the Mughal army would take the people prisoner and then it would be seen as the Deshmukh's doing. Maharaj also saw to it that the soldiers did not in any way cause any harm to the *ryot*.

Policy regarding the army : Maharaj maintained a strict discipline in the army.

He was particular about paying the salaries of the army in time. He made arrangements to pay the salaries of soldiers in cash. In various kingdoms in Medieval India and elsewhere, there was a system of making payments to soldiers in the form of *jagirs*. Maharaj set this practice aside. There was a strict order to the army that any valuables collected during the campaigns in enemy territories were to be deposited with the Government. Soldiers were honoured for their bravery in a campaign. He looked after the maintenance of the families of soldiers who died in battle. He took care of the wounded soldiers, he treated well the enemy soldiers who had surrendered themselves or who had been captured.



Do you know ?

If war broke out during the period of sowing-growing-reaping of crops, there would be no limit to the loss of farmers. Not only would the movements of army interfere with the work of sowing, but the soldiers would cut off and take away standing crops or would destroy them. They would rob the houses of farmers. Shivaji Maharaj had ordered the officers to prohibit his soldiers from such actions. The letter written by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in 1674 CE to his military officers is very important in this regard. It shows how minutely Shivaji Maharaj thought about the discipline in the army.

“If you harass and trouble the subjects belonging to different castes by robbing them of their grains, fodder, grass, vegetables, etc., those subjects would leave their houses and migrate elsewhere. Many of them would starve

to death. It would be as if you are more atrocious than the Mughals. There would be great uproar.”

A policy of tolerance : Maharaj had to struggle against his enemies - the Adilshah, the Mughals and the Siddis. They were Islamic powers. While Maharaj struggled against them, he considered the Muslims in the *Swaraj* as his own subjects. At the time of the meeting with Afzalkhan, Siddi Ibrahim was a trusted servant in his army. Siddi Hilal was a *Sardar* in the army of Maharaj. Daulatkhani was an important officer in the navy of the *Swaraj*.

Maharaj followed a tolerant religious policy. In the enemy territories that he conquered, he continued the facilities that had been given to the Muslim places of worship. His contemporary historian Khafikhan writes about the tolerant religious policy of Maharaj; ‘Shivaji had framed strict rules for his soldiers that during the campaigns, they should not harm a mosque. If they came in possession of a copy of the Holy Quran, they should hand over the same, with reverence, to a Muslim.’

The inspiration for freedom : The efforts that Maharaj made to establish the *Swaraj* have a special value. It is the value of freedom. He aimed at establishing and maintaining an independent and sovereign existence that did not accept the dominance of any other power. While struggling against the foreign powers, Maharaj inspired others too, for freedom. When Chhatrasal, who was in the service of the Mughals, came to see Maharaj, Maharaj inspired him to create an independent kingdom in Bundelkhand.

Greatness of Maharaj’s work : Maharaj established *Swaraj* while fighting

against many enemies. This action itself proves that he was a pioneer of a new era. But besides this action, many other noble qualities are found in his personality.

Maharaj was very intelligent. He had mastered many arts. He was conversant with many languages and scripts. The teachings of his parents towards the establishment of *Swaraj* and ethics were deeply instilled in his mind. There was a blend of character and strength, nobility and valour in his personality. He had innumerable qualities like leadership, management, foresight, political diplomacy, effective policy about regional and military administration, commitment to truth and justice, attitude of equality, visualisation of future activities, the skill of seeing his planned ventures through, rising over the calamities without giving up, alertness, vigilance and so on.

He used to punish those severely who would misbehave with women. He used to take care of all sections of the society like farmers, craftsmen, soldiers, traders, merchants, etc. He used to harbour the same respect for people of other religions that he had for people of his own religion, without any discrimination. He even established family bonds with them. He brought back into *swadharma*, their original religion, persons who had converted to another religion though there was an opposition to such a reconversion at that time. At that time, there was opposition on religious grounds to crossing the seas. Yet he built sea forts like Singhudurg and created a navy. This means that he had made preparation for countering foreign invasions that came from the sea. He became the ruler of *Swaraj* officially through his coronation, he later, had a second Coronation from

a different religious perspective. All these actions show his revolutionary aspects in the field of religion.

When there were threats to *Swaraj*, he would face them with or without his associates. Due to this, even his associates were ready to sacrifice their lives for *Swaraj*. Of course, his greatness was not confined to the quality of facing calamities bravely and fearlessly. He wanted to have an ethical, qualitative base to the *Swaraj*. That is why he would give orders, even regarding minor issues along with the important ones. The order that prohibited soldiers from taking vegetables from the fields of the peasants by force, is exemplary from this point of view. The restrictions on the cutting of trees enforced by him are also noteworthy.



Think about it.

Why is it necessary to grow trees?

He had ordered that the garbage on the fort should be burnt in an allotted space without dumping it elsewhere, and vegetables should be grown on its ash. It becomes clear from this fact that he would pay close attention to the minutest details while establishing *Swaraj*. He was not just a warrior, but also a sculptor who created a new, independent, ethical and cultured society. His greatness is comprehensive.



Can you tell?

- How is the waste in your area managed?
- State the name of the machinery that looks after waste management.



In our national movement, Maharaj was a great source of inspiration. In his struggle for equality, Mahatma Jotirao Phule described in his *powadas* the greatness of Shivaji Maharaj. Lokmanya Tilak brought about national awakening through the medium of Shivajayanti celebrations. Lala Lajpatrai has written a book about the greatness of Maharaj. The great Tamil poet Subramanyam Bharati has written a

poem about an imaginary incident in which Shivaji Maharaj talks to his associates. Vishwakavi Rabindranath Tagore has written a long poem on Maharaj. Tagore sees his efforts to found *Swaraj* as efforts for realizing a noble cause. Sir Jadunaath Sarkar has praised his achievements in his book 'Shivaji and His Times'. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has said that Maharaj did not belong to Maharashtra alone, he belonged to the whole Indian nation. ... he was a symbol of many virtues, more especially of love of country.



Do you know ?

Mahatma Jotirao Phule composed a *Powada* in 1869 CE on Shivaji Maharaj. A part of it is given here.

॥ शिवाचा गजर जयनामाचा झेंडा रोविला ॥
॥ क्षेत्राचा मेळा मावळ्याचा शिकार खेळला ॥
माते पायीं ठेवी डोई गर्व नाही काडीचा ।
आशिर्वाद घेई आईचा ॥
आलाबला घेई आवडता होतो जिजीचा ।
पवाडा गातो शिवाजीचा ॥
कुळवाडी - भूषण पवाडा गातो भोसल्याचा ।
छत्रपती शिवाजीचा ॥३॥

All Indian languages have works that talk about him as an ideal ruler and a source of inspiration.

Future generations too, will continue to look upon this work of Shivaji Maharaj of founding the *Swaraj* and turning it into *Surajya* as a source of inspiration, as an ideal. Shivaji Maharaj was a great national hero.



Exercise

1. Find it from the chapter.

- (1) Grave dangers in the life of Shivaji Maharaj.
- (2) They risked their life at the time of Maharaj's escape from Agra.
- (3) What warning did Shivaji Maharaj issue to the Deshmukh of Rohida Valley?
- (4) What inspiration can future generations draw from the life of Shivaji Maharaj?

2. Write about it in your own words.

- (1) What warning did Shivaji Maharaj issue to his soldiers to avoid any loss to the *ryot*?
- (2) How do we know that the religious policy of Shivaji Maharaj was that of tolerance?

- (3) Explain Shivaji Maharaj's policy regarding the army.

3. Give one word for.

- (1) An important officer in the navy of *Swaraj* -
- (2) A Tamil poet who composed a poem on Shivaji Maharaj -
- (3) He created an independent kingdom in Bundelkhand -
- (4) He composed a *Powada* on the greatness of Shivaji Maharaj -

Activities

- (1) Tell how you help your friend in his need.
- (2) List the places named after famous personalities.

