A Study in Leadership- Maharaja Shivaji’s letter to Officials and Counsellers of Emperor Alamgir

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Abstract

Chhatrapati Shivaji throughout the world is known for his military as well as civil administration. It is equally important to note that his leadership style. Apart from his military fights and battles against Mughals, Shivaji has also contributed significantly to the civil services of his Kingdom, which is mainly focused by Sir Jadunath Sarkar and Surendranath Sen. The present paper is an attempt to emphasize how Shivaji was an able warrior and statesman in terms of leader’s responsibility. This paper also highlights on style of letters writing, watan, geography of India and how Shivaji reacted to the situation. An attempt has also been made to focus on Shivaji’s care towards the subjects and his land. The objective of this paper is to make society aware about Shivaji’s leadership as a exalted quality statesman.

Key words- Leadership, Responsibility of Leader, Subjects, Watan

Introduction

The letter taken into consideration today is not merely about the governance or not government article written in a specific terminology. On the contrary this was the verbalized desire of one of the outstanding personality in 17th century. This is the statement of wishing thoughts and feelings in strong words. Any one easily find that this letter is personally drafted by Shivaji only written by Nilprabhu, because thoughts and feelings are manifested very strongly. The entire letter is identity of honest personality of Shivaji and it is to be reflected in this letter.

General Brigj, a famous translator of Pherasta, has its name on the collection of letters called “Khutut”. Brigj himself was a Persian language expert. It is found that he had taken with him many original Persian documents to England in 1835. Historian Rajwade was aware that in those documents, there must be Persian documents related to Shivaji’s era. He has mentioned in
the introduction of Marathyanchya Itihasachi Sadhane Vol-I that the documents taken away by Brigj, Grant Duff, MaCanzi with them to London must be looked for there.

Gen. Brigj took with him this original letter to London and at last its copy was put in the collection “Khutut-i Shivaji” in the Royal Asiatic Society. In the first decade of 20th century, famous historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar asked for its copy and brought it from London and he printed for the first time its English translation of this in the edition of “Modern Review of January, 1907. At that time, there was no modern facility of drawing a photocopy. Sir Jadunath Sarkar might have received the photocopied copy from the above mentioned photocopy. Riyatkar Sardesai printed the Marathi translation of some part of this letter and not the full from the English translation made by Jadunath in the second edition of Marathi Riyasat (Pages 94) and the funny thing is that Riyatkar’s this very messy and incomplete Marathi translation from English translation of Jadunath is openly given in all the Shivaji’s Biographies as authenticated translation of original Persian letter.

The feats of Shivaji Maharaja during 1663-64 were so hopeful and on the rising trend one after another that even Emperor Alamgir became restless. When the news of killing of Afzalkhan was about to be old, the news of daring attack on Shaistakhan struck. While listening the said news, he came to know the news of looting of Surat by Shivaji and taking lakhs rupees of wealth safely to Rajgad. It was not Alamgir’s nature to be all these and sit idle. Nusarati describes-Aurangzib was convinced that Shivaji is none other than a calamity from the sky. He made up his mind to crack down Shivaji completely and on 30th September, 1964, he appointed his influential/powerful Rajput Knight JaiSingh on Shivaji’s campaign (The 19th moon of Rabilaval of Hijari Year 1075).

Nilprabhu

Shivaji’s letter means addressed by Shivaji and written by the clerk. Shivaji’s at least two clerks are famous for writing these types of letters. Munsi Nilprabhu who used to write Persian letter of Shivaji and Balaji Awaji who used to write Marathi matter in Modi script. The Persian letter which researcher is going to consider today is addressed by Maharaja and written by Nilprabhu.

Naks and Shikasta
It looks that General Brigj had copied these original Persian documents that were taken to England during the early quarter of the 19th century. The collection of letters called “Khutut-i Shivaji” is available today in the form of duplicate. These copies are made in Shikasta Script and are copied from the original letters. It can be assumed that as Brigj himself being a Persian expert, the copies which have been made from others by him should resemble with the original and true letters.

In nutshell, it should be minded that the Persian letter of Shivaji which is going to be taken into account is copied from original Shikasta script. Perhaps, the original Persian letter might be in Naks script and it must be copied in Shikasta script. There is a possibility of some differences while copying the letter. But, that difference might have occurred in matter and not in writing technique. As far as the form of matter in the letter available today, its splendidness, language buildings are concerned, there might not have a difference between the original Persian letter and it’s duplicate from meaning point of view.

Originality

Shivaji Maharaja wrote this Persian letter around 1964-65. Shivaji had sent the copies of this letter to many Sardars and Army Chiefs and its proof can be seen in the answer sent to Shivaji by Army Chief JaiSingh and Dilirkhan. We are convinced by reading the mention of some phrases and ideas in this Shivaji’s letter. The admiration of the abysmal sky kissing hills made in the letter by Shivaji of his own region was so open that, some part of this particular matter alluded by JaiSingh and Dilerkhan both but sarcastically.

To find out the originality of Documents is the main and painful duty of any historian. Sometimes many people make this documents duplicate in nature for any type of personal profit (not only for monetary benefits). The originality of documents and true information containing this document, these are two different things. Basically there are two types of Duplicate documents. First one is counterfeit or fake in nature and other is copy or facsimile of original document. It is possible to find out reason behind preparing counterfeit documents. The main aim or objects behind preparing duplicate documents are-

a. To stake a claim on property.
b. To sale out as a rare thing.

c. To justify or oppose judgment or opinion.

d. Racial pride.

e. To win fame or to make a name for oneself.

The above mentioned principles are not applicable to this letter and the information we found in letter is consistent to the situation of 2nd decade of 2nd half of 17th century. There is no any personal profit behind preparing or drafting this letter for any one either to Shivaji or his secretary Nilprabhu or to researchers, because this letter is not related to concepts like Watan or Land property, etc. and before this Sir Jadhunath Sarkar, Riyasatkar Sardesai, Setumadhavrao Pagadi, Babasaheb Purandare, D.G. Godse and many have written so many on this letter. So there is no any object of winning any fame in the mind of researchers.

The letter from Maharaja Shivaji, to the Officers and Councellers of the Emperor Alamgir, it runs-

“Be it not concealed from the hearts of far sighted and thoughtful men, that, for the last three years, the able counsellors and famous generals (of the emperor) have come to these parts. (Maharashtra) To the orders issued by the Emperor for seizing my country and forts, they reply, “These will be soon conquered”. They do not know that even the steed of unimaginable exertion is too weak to gallop over this hard country, and that its conquest is difficult. It is a matter of great wonder that they do not at all expect the fruit of shame from such writings filled with fictitious statements, but (on the contrary) cost off truthfulness, which is the cause of Salvation and why so? My home unlike the forts of Kalyani and Bidar is not situated on a spacious plain, which may unable trenches to be run (against the walls) or assault to be made. It has lofty hill ranges, 200 leagues in length and 40 leagues in breadth, everywhere there are nalas (drain) hard to cross, sixty forts of extreme strength have been built, and some (of them are) on the sea-coast. Hence Afzalkhan, an officer of Adilshah (Ali II, King of Bijapur) came to Javli with a large army, but perished helplessly. Why do not you truly report to the Emperor what has happened (here), so that the same Fate may not overtake you”?

After the death of above mentioned Khan, the Amir-ul-Umara, who was appointed against these Sky-kissing hills and abysmal passes, labored bard for three
years, and (constantly) wrote to the Emperors that I was going to be defeated and my land to be conquered in the shortest space of time. But at last as all false men deserve, he encountered such a terrible disaster and went away in (such) disgrace, that it is clearer than the sun (Verses).

It is not everywhere that the charger can gallop.

There are places where one has to fling way his shield.

It is my duty to guard my land.

Although, to save their reputation, they had written to the Emperor the opposite of the true state of things, yet, thank-God, the bud of desire of no invader of the beloved county of this retired man has (yet) blossomed forth (verse).

The wise should beware of this river of blood,

From which no man (ever) carried away his boat (in safety)”.

**Commentary**

Shivaji accepted the vow of steadfast loyalty on independence and due to strong awareness about *watan*, with the perseverance of defying the cut-throat burden of *Yavan* (Muhammadan) reign continuously for the last 350 years and try to live as a Lord with all others with respect in own *watan* though there was a death noose of Adilshahi on one side and huge Mughalshahi on other around the neck, to keep in mind the indomitable rivalry of living independently and to fulfill this rivalry, to be alert day-night, to be ready to do adventurous feat and sacrifice and to make other ready to do so. Shivaji’s all the life-work/mission is determined by these two loyalties. Behind his every thought and deed and pronunciation, there is the inspiration of these two powers. These are the two powers that are firmly standing behind this Persian letter.

Shivaji’s loyalty towards his life itself is the power behind this letter. This power has been seen passionately in the feelings of this letter. This power is clearly reflected in reflections that fulfills abstract senses. The lines of a Persian poem drafted in the letter are very pertinent. We have seen the decorum and discernment of Shivaji to complete the emotional explanation of *watan* in poetic manner. Anything that cannot be explained in paragraphs or essay but can be
insisted in a poetically, was a tact used by Shivaji. He also suggested that any aggressive trying to invade his watan will have to put down his sword.

Shivaji have love abysmal sky kissing hills. His belief is these abysmal sky kissing hills means his watan. “Koy Hai Buland Koi Hai Sapehar Kareen”. Shivaji explain this very proudly as sky-kissing hills and abysmal passes. These hills are the gift from nature to Maharashtra and he has strong belief on these sky kissing hills.

While explaining the end result of veteran generals and masters Shivaji said, “Hence Afzalkhan, an official of Adilshah (Ali II, King of Bijapur) came to Javli with a large army, but perished helplessly. Why do not you truly report to the Emperor what has happened (here), so that the same fate may not overtake you”? After the death of above mentioned Khan, the Amir-ul Umara, who was appointed against these sky-kissing hills and abysmal passes, labored bard for three years, and (constantly) wrote to the Emperor that I was going to be defeated and my land to be conquered in the shortest space of time. But at last as all false men deserve, he encountered such a terrible disaster and went away in (such) disgrace, that it is clearer than the sun (Verses)

Abysmal Sky Kissing Hills

This watan is true, but how is it actually? How is its constitution? How the Hindustani geography is different from southern geography of watan – all these things has been interpreted in short but fitting words later. Shivaji writes - They (Aurangzib’s southern Knights) inform the Aurangzib that they are going to conquer Shivaji’s watan and forts shortly. But it did not happen and still they write Aurangzib the false report. (Have they described about what is the geography of my watan ever?)

Samand means high born horse of a grand species. This horse having almond colour and black tail was understood to be a special riding horse. Pictures about this horse can be seen in Mughal paintings. Those who will have seen the frail, making active movement of splendor pointed ears, moving its curved neck gracefully right and left and glancing an innovative and finding sharp look. Shivaji writes that Bekayas of search and logic means active horse in imagination is also not able to run in this rugged region.
As per the description of Shivaji, the region of Northern India’s giant ground as compared by very small area, which could be easily captured in one single expedition. But, this all was misunderstood by the Deccan’s geography. This *watan* of abysmal sky kissing hills and deep valleys made very strong by Shivaji fortifying sixty forts and establishing his power on coastal line and he instructed this Mughal officials’ very out rightly.

**Watan**

The soul of this letter is ‘*watan*’. The word *watan* has come directly for five times in the total matter of this letter. The conception of ‘*watan*’ has been implied or described in five different types. Each pronunciation and thought in this matter is directly-indirectly concerned with the conception of *watan*. The shaft of the matter is thrown in such a pomp/splendor that the conception of *watan* gets fulfilled at last in a capable, united and reflection by taking form with each word and sentence.

The first mentions of word ‘*watan*’ in this letter in a diplomatic way. Shivaji has specifically brought to the notice of Knights and Generals of Aurangzib that Shivaji has his own *watan* by giving the example of order literally sent by Aurangzib Alamgir to his knights and generals about seizing Shivaji’s *watan* and forts and that Aurangzib has accepted the fact that Shivaji has its own *watan*. The intention behind this letter is to note the fact that record about *watan* is mine and a receipt about this has been given by Badshah himself by his southern knights and generals and also counsellors and knights and noblemen.

“I Kasra Muhafizate Watan Khudh Lajima”. It is my duty to guard my land. This is the most important sentence in this letter, which was unequivocal, specific, propriety, rational and rational. These all qualities can be seen in those four epigamic words, but more than that these four words are the most supreme in this letter by pronunciation and meaning also. As much as passionate feeling that much rational by thought with limited words and with big intention. The matter in the letter of ideal assumption, image plan, notice of phrases and modest explanation of statements all these words affairs were superiorly commented for the birth of these or can be said that these four words were the insistence of this letter. While laying down his role about *watan*,

Shivaji have not only shown a lot of patience and resolution but also in his thoughts and utterances.

Appendix - A
لا يمكنني قراءة النص العربي في الصورة المقدمة.
دربار ازدحام‌کننده که می‌خواستید به سرعت بپردازید. 

دفتر اختلاف که افسانه‌ها به سمتی‌ها و بی‌خانمان‌ها می‌رفتند. 

صیغه‌هایی که آماده‌بودند اجرای نیازهای ما را پیش ببرد.

نیازمند او نگه‌داری شود تا نظر هفته‌ها بی‌خانمان و مردم ایران سخت بدنی و مالی را برگیرد. 

مشاوره‌های می‌تواند به وسیله‌ی اینترنت و تلفن صورت بگیرد. 

در حال حاضر، باید به آمادگی در برگزاری کنسرت‌های آنلاین و ویدئویی در پیام‌رسان‌ها و تلفن‌های تلفن‌کاران ایران بپردازیم.

در مرکز سفارت خود را با همکاران خود در ایران به تهیه و توزیع تصویر رسانی کنید.
Note- The photo copy of Maharaja Shivaji’s letter to Officers and Counsellors of the Emperor Alamgir is taken from the book entitled ‘Shaktisaushtav’ written by D.G. Godse.
Appendix- B

All the copies of JaiSingh’s letters were drafted and read by his secretary Udayraj Munshi. This man enjoyed JaiSingh’s unbounded confidence and exercised unrivalled influence, over him. Udayraj read the letter. After listening the matter of Shivaji’s letter, JaiSingh wrote in answer to Shivaji. It reads-

“The imperial army, countless like the stars, has been appointed in your hills and stony country. God willing it will be trodden flat with the dust by the hoofs of the wind-paced chargers of the imperial army. If you desire your own life and safety, place in your ear the ring of servitude of the slaves of the imperial court, - which ring is a source of glorification and honour even to your masters, - and withdraw your heart from your hills and forts. Otherwise the fate you will meet with will be only the consequence of your own deeds”\(^1\).

\(^1\) Haft Anjuman
Appendix- C

Diler Khan had sent a letter to Raja Shivaji after treaty of Purandar. It reads-

“May good providence be your helper! My wish to see you is so strong that it baffles measuring now, to my object. Your letter, sent with some palace guards, has been received and its contents learnt by me. It treats of peace, and I have comprehended it. Be it not concealed from your heart that the words most appropriate for saying on this occasion are “First fight and then peace”. If a man craves peace without fighting it sounds as an unbecoming proposal to the imperial generals, who have come at the bidding of their master from the garden of Hindustan in order to travel and hunt in your country. They have come solely for this that you would show yourself in battle. They are guest arrived in this hilly tract with an intense desire for it, but you have not appeared before them! In spite of your many “Strong forts, Sky-Kissing hills, abysmal ravines, and brave soldiers lying in ambush”, you have not once shown any sign of yourself anywhere. And (now) you propose peace! Although you should have thought of it long ago and made the overture before this yet even now it is welcome (June 1665)².

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² Sarkar: House pp 123-24
References