

# Reformer and Revolutionary

As I sat in the living room of my house, watching the news with my father, the prime minister of India had just introduced the new Indian navy flag. The flag had been updated to have Shivaji's signature octagonal shape symbolizing Shivaji's contribution towards Indian navy. As the prime minister talked about the revolutionary reforms Shivaji had done, I thought,

"What makes a person a reformer or a revolutionary, is it the biggest changes a person had made which has changed society forever? Or is it the small changes that were stuck in the hearts of the people centuries after the person had passed away?" I later found out that the answer is a mixture of both, in the right amount. In a recipe, if anything is too little or more, the result is not good, and add it in just the right amount, and the result will leave you unforgettable.

Compare two situations, a person who travels around the globe and another who does his 9 to 5 job, who will have more wisdom and knowledge?

Most probably, it's the one who travels, as one gains more knowledge and wisdom with more experience, Shivaji realized that early, and made a navy for many such reasons, for it is commonly believed that Shivaji made his navy only to attack, which was not the case, he built the navy for much more than just attack, remember,

"Shivaji was not only the father of Indian navy; he was the father of Indian merchant navy."

He wanted to build the navy for other reasons like trade, travel and knowledge. That doesn't however mean that he didn't want to attack through the waters, while his contemporary kings believed that defense is the best attack, Shivaji believed that attack is the best defense as it let the person control the time and place of the war. This reform however came with its own problems that really needed solving before building the navy, you see, making a change in society is complex, it requires skills that are not easy to obtain, it comes with dedication and hard work. Now that doesn't mean that you shouldn't make the change, instead, you should be motivated to reform the world for the better.

Such changes are equally admired by society as the small changes, which were also performed by Shivaji. Society before Shivaji was practically in ruins, no one was happy with their lives and

people were only entitled to work for their king, no matter their will. When Shivaji came to live in jagir in pune, people didn't think anything of him yet, because jagirs like these were passed down from different hands, and yet nothing actually changed in the villages, they were still being governed by the same Patils, Deshmukhs and Desais, they had just changed forces. So people didn't really expect much to happen in their day-to-day lives, and only the changes happening to them directly would change their minds about Shivaji. Much to their surprise, that's exactly what happened,

Many such stories can be recited, like the story of the Patil from the village Ranjhe, when Shivaji was staying at the Lal Mahal, a group of villagers approached Shivaji for justice, they reported their local Patil who had raped a farmer's daughter in the dead of the night and the girl had committed suicide. Upon hearing about such dastardly acts being committed in his area of control, he immediately ordered the Patil to be presented in front of him, he gave the Patil a suiting punishment which was to cut off his hands and legs and drive him around the village on a donkey. This news spread like wildfire and soon everyone in the area was talking about Shivaji.

This singular act made everyone trust Shivaji and share their problems to him, and they did.

When the locals of the town the Patil was from invited him to their town, Shivaji heard about another problem being faced by the villagers, a tiger was killing the livestock of the farmers, and they couldn't do anything about it. Shivaji took matters into his own hands and went out into the forest to find the tiger. He put his own life into high risk trying to save his ryot, which he did successfully, and killed the tiger on his own. When he had completed his work in the town, he took off back to pune. When he came back, another person was waiting for him. According to a new rule that Dadoji Konddev had made to reduce the number of wolves in the area, a bounty was set to kill a wolf if you find it, and Bhima had killed three wolves and brought back their tails as evidence. According to the rule, he was expecting a reward, but when Shivaji heard that he had fought all three wolves alone, with only a stick, he got more than just a reward. Shivaji appointed him as the head of artillery for his army, and gifted him a sword. Such acts were the ones that stayed in the hearts of the ryot and were passed down throughout time, this was what made him an exceptional leader, and this was why he was a revolutionary reformer.

-Arnav Jaiswal