

# [Chapter iv shivaji the great guerrilla history essay](https://assignbuster.com/chapter-iv-shivaji-the-great-guerrilla-history-essay/)

32. Shivaji practised more than three hundred years ago the tenets of guerrilla warfare which guerrilla leaders have theorised today. It is unfortunate that no Indian author ever developed the objective and analytical style of writing history. If only Shivaji had a Sun Tzu or a Kautilya in his court or a chronicler like Edgar Snow or Payne to leave behind an account of how he planned his tactics and strategy in the hours of crisis and the words of wisdom he uttered in his directives to his commanders, we would have amassed such a huge mass of literature on guerrilla warfare.

## Early Life

33. Shivaji belonged to the Bhosle clan of Marathas which claimed descent from the Sisodia ranas of Udaipur[9]. His father, Shahji was the first Maratha chief to defy the Mughal authorities, dodging and deluding their renowned generals. Shahji became a living example to his son, Shivaji, teaching him how the weak could wear out the strong.

34. Shivaji was born in the fort of Shivneri near Pune in 1627 AD.[10]It was a tumultuous period of bitter contest between the Mughals and Shahji, who was being

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pursued by his own father in law , Lukhoji Jadhav. During this period , Shahji was in service of the Adilshah.[11]Shivaji stayed in Bijpur for a short period of time. He provoked the court by failing to observe the court etiquette and made a slight salaam instead of bowing to the ground.[12]His father and mother, Jijabai advised him on matters of respect to elders and virtues of obedience and cooperation.

## Preparation to Meet his Destiny

35. Due to years of suffering since her marriage, Jijabai had developed strong character and a spirit of dauntless courage and defiance, which she was determined to inculcate into her son. She had great moral and spiritual influence on him. If his father could defy the might of the mughals for years, why could not Shivaji continue and complete his work? While Jijabai moulded Shivaji to be a stern disciplinarian and far sighted, supervision of formal education was entrusted to Dadoji Kondev.[13]

36. Dadoji Kondev was the manager of Shahji’s Pune jagir. In 1642, he brought Jijabai and Shivaji from Karnataka to Pune and built Lal mahal for them to reside. He was a person of extraordinary integrity and devotion to his masters. But the greatest influence on Shivaji was of the unadorned nature and beauty of the mountains. He surveyed all inaccessible regions, studying routes of communication, bypaths and tracks and valleys. He appreciated that this terrain was best to oust the foreigners. While seeing his own countryside, he came in contact with his countrymen and developed long lasting friendships.[14]

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37. The news of Shivaji’s prep for achieving swaraj reached the Bijapur court. All of sudden , Shahji was declared as a rebel by the Bijapur sultan. In 1645, at the age of sixteen, Shivaji took an oath to free his countrymen and establishing Hindavi Swaraj. By then he had collected a thousand mawlas under him. Outwardly he continued to profess full loyalty to the Bijapur sultan and urged that his own activities were intended to put down lawlessness and disorder in the hilly regions.

## Fort Based Tactics

38. Shivaji developed fort based and fort centric tactics. His aim was to capture as many forts possible, that too without a fight. Most of the hills and mountains were neglected by the Muslim rulers and they failed to exploit the terrain . Shivaji occupied Torna, twenty miles south west of Pune. Torna fell in Shivaji’s hands with persuasion and guile and without a drop of blood in 1646. Till 1648, Shivaji captured numerous forts of strategic importance ie Kondana (later Sinhgarh), Raigad, Vishalgad, Purandar etc. By the end of 1648, Shivaji gained mastery over the parganas of Pune , Mawal and Supa. The numbers of his followers swelled in rank as days passed by.

## Clashes with Bijapur

39. Shivaji’s first open clash with the Bijapur sultan was in 1648, when he occupied Kondana fort. Till then he had avoided open conflict with the sultan, knowing fully well that he did not stand any chance in open combat. The sultan despatched Fateh Khan, a well known general to teach Shivaji a lesson. Shivaji’s

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meagre force of 5000 completely routed Fateh Khan’s forces by raiding parties organised by Shivaji and his mawalas. Fateh Khan returned to Bijapur. Thus a shattering blow was delivered on the sultan.[15]

40. In 1648, Shahji was arrested on false charges of conspiring with the Sultan of Golkonda. He was paraded as a mere criminal in the streets of Bijapur. He was later reinstated in 1653, but was never allowed to leave Karnataka. Shahji’s virtual house arrest in Karnataka put restrictions on Shivaji’s activities. Shahji’s letter to Shivaji advising him to give up Kondana, put Shivaji in a dilemma . Shivaji now, most tactfully displayed servile attitude towards the Mughal Emperor, invoking his patronage.

## Expansion

41. Shivaji was a pragmatist, ethics of war had no place in his philosophy; he was fighting a war of liberation for his country and he was keen on securing his ends without bothering about morality of the means. But there were some basic precepts of human behaviour which did not flaunt even while dealing with the enemy. In his expansion, he soon captured Barmati, Indapur, Tikona, Lohgad, Rajmachi, Supa, Javli and Purandar. Javli was later renamed, Raigad in 1674.

42. Slowly but surely , Shivaji was expanding his kingdom right under the watchful eye of the Bijapur sultan. Patronage of the mughal emperor paid good dividends. Shivaji had to arrest his wife’s brother for not participating in the freedom struggle on his side. Following the tenets of guerrilla warfare, Shivaji did not relax and busied

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himself in continuous activity. The recruitment ground of his mawla troops increased rapidly. Two miles west of Javli, he constructed fort Pratapgad, which control eight passes crossing the ranges into Konkan from Mahabaleshwar and Wai. Shivaji now eyed the fertile fields of Konkan. When in 1656, Mohd Adilshah of Bijapur died, Shivaji’s activities increased considerably.

## Confrontation with the Mughals

43. In November 1656, Aurangzeb obtained permission from Shah Jahan to invade Bijapur. Mir Jumla and Shahistakhan joined him on this adventure. Shivaji assessed that taking on the Mughals alone was impossible, therefore he raided Dabhol in Bijapur territory and captured it. He pleaded with Aurangzeb, that he be allowed to retain his spoils of the Bijapur territory. Aurngazeb , happy that Shivaji was on his side, permitted that. Aurangzeb was decimating Bijapur and was capturing territory after territory. Shivaji knew that with the Bijapur sultan gone, Aurangzeb would turn against him. He therefore launched several raids in the mughal governed areas. Shivaji captured Junnar in Mughal territory and marched against Ahmednagar and gained a lot in terms of horses and money. The news of Shivaji’s raids annoyed Aurangzeb and ordered revenge.

44. Shivaji’s possessions in Pune and Chakan were utterly ruined. Fortunately, Shah Jahan fell ill and Aurangzeb rushed back to Delhi to participate in the war for succession. While he was away, he sent a message to Adil Shah to expel Shivaji. With astuteness, Shivaji too sent ambassadors to Aurangzeb and accepted his

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overlordship and demanded that Kokan be given to him as a jagir. Aurangzeb granted the jagir of Konkan to Shivaji. He consolidated his gains in Konkan by building sea forts and raising a navy under Kanhoji Angre. In the Konkan, he got into conflict with the Siddis,[16]English and the Portuguese over the control of the sea ports. He finally defeated the Siddis and forged a treaty with the English and the Portuguese.

## Challenge to Bijapur

45. By the end of 1657, Shivaji’s small Maratha kingdom was organised on solid foundations. He had 10, 000 mawal infantry and 10, 000 horsed cavalry. He also had a substantial navy. In 1656 , Adilshah died and there was a nineteen year old boy on the throne. To punish Shivaji, it was decided to despatch Afzal Khan, a general of high repute who had valiantly fought the mughals recently. By Sep 1659, he marched against Shivaji with 10, 000 cavalry and foot detachments of mountain guns and rockets carried on camel backs. He tried to win over the Deshmukhs to his side, but to no avail. They remained loyal to Shivaji. He caused plunder enroute to Wai and desecrated many temples. A meeting was arranged between Shivaji and Afzal Khan on 10 Nov 1659. As Shivaji bowed to Afzal Khan, he embraced Shivaji in a death grip. Shivaji having worn body armour, was not affected. Shivaji tore open Khan’s bowels as he thrust his dagger deep inside him.[17]

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## Battle of Pratapgarh

46. Shivaji hastened back to Pratapgad and a cannon was fired to signal the infantry which was positioned at critical passes to cut off the fleeing Khan army . In the battle, Khan’s army lost over 3, 000 men. Immense booty fell in the hands of the Marathas – 4, 000 horses, 1, 200 camels , 65 elephants and lots of cash and jewellery.

47. The battle of Pratapgad is an excellent to demonstrate how a guerrilla commander is initially compelled to fight a defensive battle. The enemy’s superiority in arms and numbers had to blunted before converting the defensive tactics into offensive. Shivaji suspected treachery and was ready to meet the Khan. Shivaji lured Afzal Khan into the interior of the hilly region and annihilated his forces. This well executed operation was the final nail in the Bijapur coffin.[18]

## Second Front by the Mughals

48. Shivaji challenged the mughal authority by raiding Junnar and Ahmednagar and exacting taxes from them. The mughal emperor sent Shahitskhan to teach him a lesson. Shahistakhan was beaten back with his fingers cut.[19]Then Aurangzeb sent Mirza Raje Jaisingh against Shivaji.[20]Jai Singh was a great soldier, he cast his net far and wide and invited the Siddis , Adilshah and the English to join him against Shivaji. Due to the triple alliance, Shivaji had to enter into a treaty with Jai Singh i. e. Treaty of Purandar. According to the treaty, Shivaji was to surrender 23 forts of the 35 held by him and his son Sambhaji was to proceed to Delhi as a courtier in Aurangazeb’s court.[21]Shivaji agreed and himself proceeded to Agra to meet the

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mughal emperor. He was kept under house arrest, from where he escaped. This caused a major embarrassment to Aurangzeb. Shivaji came back to Deccan and reconquered all the lost forts.

## Shivaji – a Top Guerrilla Leader

49. Shivaji believed in the tenets of guerrilla warfare. He was a voracious reader and an ardent follower of Kautilya’s “ Kut Niti”. He learnt the importance of terrain in guerrilla war in his early years and never confronted the enemy in open combat. Few of his Guerrilla tactics can be summarised as below:-

(a) Use terrain to own advantage. Shivaji as a boy travelled all over the Mawal region and found the terrain was suitable for resisting Adilshah and the Mughals. The western ghats from Junnar in the north to Mahabaleshwar in the south have been cut by nature into valleys and each valley is fed by a separate river . These valleys are called mawals. High hills tower over these valleys where forts were constructed.

(b) Be kind to people. Shivaji knew that his greatest strength was the people of his land. He won over the loyalty of his people by being one of them. He also won over his opponents by his forthrightness and good conduct.

(c) Intelligence is the essence of all operations. Shivaji very early realised the importance of intelligence . He had a full fledged department of

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spies who provided vital information of political, military and social nature. He had a well oiled system of horsemen and runners to disseminate information at the earliest.

(d) Treat women folk with respect. Shivaji was especially harsh on his soldiers who didn’t respect women. He treated the women folk of Surat[22]with respect , when he raided the city. He expected the same from his men. Any digression in this aspect was met with harsh punishment.

(e) Religious tolerance. Shivaji was a devout Hindu, but was far from fanaticism. He was highly tolerant and respectful of other religions. He was never actuated by a feeling of hatred towards the Muslims as a people or the religion itself. The people of his kingdom had complete religious freedom His chief naval commanders were Muslims.

(f) Fort based tactics. Shivaji developed and devised a techinique of defence and offence through a hundreds of forts as a necessary adjunct of guerrilla methods adopted by him. There are three lines of distinct forts in Maharashtra which can be recognised even in present day. The main forts are on the top of the Sahayadri range; then there are two main lines of them, one on the eastern and other on the western spurs of the mountain ranges. In addition, some sea forts were constructed by Shivaji on inaccessible rocks near the sea coast as a counter to foreign maritime powers. Sindhudurg, Vijaydurg, Kolaba and Suvarnadurg are some of his major sea forts.

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(g) Strict discipline. Shivaji maintined a high standard of discipline in his army. Whatever booty was obtained by the army during the campaigns had to be deposited in the treasury. Khafi Khan, a critic of Shivaji writes,” He made it a rule, that whenever his followers went plundering, they should do no harm to mosques, Book of God or women of any one. Whenever a copy of Quran fell into his hands, he treated it with respect and gave it to some of his Muslim followers.”[23]

(h) Guile. Shivaji was a master mind in bluffing his enemies. Afzal Khan fell into his trap and paid with his life. At the siege of Panhala, Siddi Jauhar was lulled into inactivity by a promise of surrendering the fort.[24]Bahadur Khan was befooled by him as he was convinced of a submission of a petition seeking negotiations and pardon by the emperor

(j) Speed, Surprise and Audacity. Shivaji was a man of terrific speed and mobility, which helped him to gain surprise. Nobody could know where he would be the next day. He was always on the move, avoiding engagement with the better equipped and numerically superior enemy. He followed the principle of surprise to harass the enemy, when he was not prepared to meet him. Shivaji was bold and fearless and led his men personally on distant and perilous campaigns.

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## Conclusion

50. Shivaji was a benevolent ruler, a liberal and a constructive administrator. If out of nothing he could carve out an independent kingdom against formidable enemies, it was because of his single-minded honesty of purpose, dauntless courage, persistent pursuit of a high objective , military foresight and astute diplomacy . It is unfortunate that, he was always at a state of war and died in the prime of his glory. Ramdas called him ‘ Sarvadnya’ – lord of all sciences.