

**Shri Vithalrao Joshi Charities Trust's
B.K.L. Walawalkar Rural Health Medical College and Hospital's
Shrikshetra Dervan Vartapatra**

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**Shri Shiv Jayanti Celebration, Shrikshetra Dervan – 352nd year of Shiv
Rajyabhishek**



*The mural depicting the naming ceremony of Chhatrapati Shri Shivaji Maharaj at
Shri Shiv-Samarthgad, Shri Kshetra Dervan*

The Shri Shiv Jayanti celebration organized by Shri Sant Sitarambuwa Walawalkar Charitable Trust, Shrikshetra Dervan, was held on Friday, 6 March 2026, at 9:00 AM on the occasion of Phalgun Vadya Tritiya, Shaka 1947; Shiv Rajyabhishek Shaka 352, at Shri Shiv-Samarthgad, Shri Kshetra Dervan. As every year, the celebration was conducted with great enthusiasm.

The event was chaired by Mr. Prashant Pol, an experienced researcher in the field of technology, writer, and thinker, while the chief speaker was history researcher and fort conservation activist Miss. Ashwini Kudekar. Shri Shashikant Bhau Sutar, Prof. Sachin Kanitkar, and Dr. Suvarna Patil, Health Director of the Trust, were also present on the occasion and expressed their views.

After a procession accompanied by the beating of drums and traditional musical instruments, the chairperson, chief speaker, and other dignitaries entered the Shiv Srushti area. Floral tributes were then offered to the images of Shri Sadguru Sahajanand Saraswati and revered devotee Kamalakarpant Walawalkar, as well as to the statues of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in the Shiv-Samarth Temple, and to saints such as Sant Ramdas, Sant Tukaram Maharaj, and Sant Namdev Maharaj.

Following the flag hoisting ceremony in the temple premises by the Executive Trustee of the Trust, Shri Vikasrao Walawalkar, and the recitation of the flag prayer, the formal proceedings of the meeting began in the grand hall of Shiv-Samarthgad.

To begin with, students from the English-medium school energetically presented the Maharashtra State anthem, “Garja Maharashtra Maza.” Vedamurti Mandar Phadke Guruji, Vedamurti Milind Borkar Guruji, Vedamurti Deepak Patwardhan, and the Brahmin scholars recited the Shanti Suktam.



Procession with the sound of drums and traditional instruments marks the arrival of the chairperson, chief speaker, and all dignitaries at Shiv Srushti

While delivering the introductory address, the moderator of the session, Mrs. Sharayu Yashwantrao, said:

“This land of India, ‘Su-jalam Sufalam’ (rich and prosperous), was once filled with philosophers from Aryabhata to Patanjali. It was here that the understanding of mathematics, geometry, and astronomy flourished. It was here that the wisdom of Gargi echoed among the masses. Like the flow of the Sindhu River, the culture of this land flowed pure and untainted. However, swords stained with blood were washed in these pure waters, and the first brutal Islamic invasion struck this land under Muhammad bin Qasim.

After this, rulers such as Muhammad Ghori, the Khaljis, the Tughlaqs, and Timur Lang successively inflicted atrocities upon this land. Temples were destroyed, idols were broken, and Hindus were killed being called ‘kafirs’; the dignity of women was violated; this land fell into a terrifying state.

In such a miserable condition, Maharashtra too was crushed under Islamic rule. And in the court of the Nizamshahi, Lakhujirao Jadhav of the Jadhav lineage was murdered, and the suffering Bharat Bhoomi trembled in pain. She folded her hands before Goddess Jagadamba, and it was as if, in the form of Jijabai, this motherland conceived the dream of ‘destroying demons while seated on a lion like Goddess Jagadamba and re-establishing dharma!!’ (Shri Shivbharat). And for the establishment of dharma, on the auspicious day of Falgun Vadya Tritiya, Shivaji Maharaj was born on this very land.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj resides in the heart of every Marathi person. Why do we feel like celebrating Shiv Jayanti with such enthusiasm?

Shivaji Maharaj made agricultural reforms; he was just and righteous, his warfare skills were remarkable, and he established an excellent system of governance, there is no doubt about any of these qualities. But we do not celebrate Shiv Jayanti only because of these qualities. At that time, much of India was under Mughal rule, where governance was based on Sharia law. Maharaj dismantled this system and re-established Hindu rule in this land. He founded ‘Hindu Swarajya’. That is why, even after hundreds of years, Marathi people celebrate Shiv Jayanti and Hindu Swarajya Day with great enthusiasm.

Shivaji Maharaj’s birth anniversary is not merely a festival but a pride-filled ceremony that reminds Indians of their cultural identity and national aspirations. Shiv Jayanti is a day to remember and draw inspiration from the bravery, valor, leadership, and patriotism of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. His personality reflected qualities such as physical strength, mental stability, effective organization, systematic administration, diplomacy, courage, and visionary thinking. His entire life was illuminated by a strong sense of national duty.

It is essential that every nationalist citizen develops the desire to shape their life inspired by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and try to incorporate at least some of his qualities into their own conduct. With this intention, his ideal is presented before society, and Shiv Jayanti is celebrated with great enthusiasm and pride.



While performing the flag worship, Chief Trustee Shri Vikasrao Walawalkar, along with Vedamurti Deepak Patwardhan



The portrait of Shri Sahajanand Saraswati Maharaj and revered devotee Kamalakarpant Walawalkar was offered floral tribute by the chief guest, Mr. Prashant Pol

Only individuals with immense determination, strong patriotism, and unwavering dedication to national service are capable of shaping history and giving rise to extraordinary achievements.

Overcoming all challenges, the Shiv-Samarthgad built by Sadguru Sahajanand Saraswati Maharaj stands as a powerful testament to this spirit of national reflection. With the vision of awakening pride in the nation, religion, and culture, and ensuring that the national chant “Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj ki Jai!” continues to resonate endlessly, the Shiv Jayanti festival continues to be celebrated with devotion and reverence. The principle that “national interest is supreme” is rekindled here every year with renewed energy.

Extending this tradition, revered Shrikakasaheb added the dimension of the Dervan Youth Games, and with the valuable support of Shri Walawalkarsaheb, this initiative has grown into a grand movement that integrates physical fitness, values, and patriotism. Concentration, self-confidence, decision-making ability, courage, teamwork, and leadership are all qualities strongly visible in the personality of Shivaji Maharaj, and these are the same qualities developed through sports. Discipline, restraint, sacrifice, and the spirit of “national duty” are cultivated through outdoor games. Values instilled in childhood remain lifelong; therefore, organizing the Dervan Youth Games on the occasion of Shiv Jayanti is extremely meaningful. Such initiatives not only create capable athletes but also responsible citizens who prioritize national interest. This is the true tribute to Shivaji Maharaj.

Due to the transparent organization and excellent management of the Dervan Youth Games, around 6,500 participants from across Maharashtra took part in 19 different sports. This year, skating was included for the first time. Athletes, coaches, and sports enthusiasts have filled the SVJCT sports complex with vibrant activity. This inspiring movement, based on the principle of selfless action (Nishkama Karma Yoga), has been continuously active for the past eight days, and its pinnacle is the Shiv Jayanti celebration itself. At such a sacred moment, inspired by the thoughts of Shivaji Maharaj, it is our true duty to keep the flame of national interest alive in our hearts.

After the introductory remarks, the chairperson of the session and the chief speaker were formally introduced, and on behalf of the Trust, Shri Vikasrao Walawalkar welcomed them with a shawl, coconut, and bouquet.



Students of the English-medium school presented the Maharashtra State anthem, “Garja Maharashtra Maza.”



Recitation of the Shanti Suktam by Vedamurti Mandar Phadke Guruj, Vedamurti Deepak Patwardhan Guruj, Vedamurti Milind Borkar Guruj, and the group of Vedic scholars

Having served as a researcher at Tata Memorial Centre for 30 years and now retired, and currently working at Dervan Hospital, Senior Scientist Dr. Rita Mulherkar, working in research projects in the field of technology, was invited this year to participate in the Vijay Path (ceremonial parade route) program in Delhi on the occasion of Republic Day. Such an invitation is considered a great honour bestowed upon an individual's work by both the citizens of the country and the government. She was felicitated by the Trust with a shawl, a coconut, and a bouquet.

Other dignitaries such as Shri Shashikant Bhau Sutar, Prof. Sachin Kanitkar, Dr. Suvarna Patil, Dr. Shripad Banavali, Dr. Sunil Nadkarni, Dr. Anand Joshi, Dr. Sudhir Joshi, Shri Ramesh Bodke, Adv. Pakale, and others were also welcomed with bouquets.

Every year, the Trust felicitates social workers engaged in the healthcare sector. This year, Shri Sitaram Mahadev Thombre (Former Deputy Chairman, Panchayat Samiti, Guhagar Taluka), Shri Nitish Rajesh Shetye (Health Officer, Samata Foundation, Mumbai Branch, Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg), and Smt. Surekha Sawant (ASHA worker, Turambav) were honoured. They were felicitated by the Chairperson with a silver cup and a bouquet.

The following students from the Derwan area, who completed primary education up to Class 7 and are entering secondary school, are given wristwatches every year as encouragement. This year, the awards were presented to: from Zilla Parishad Upper Primary School, Derwan No. 1 - Saloni Rakesh Yadav, Dipali Abhishek Surve, Sara Jagdish Kadam, Purvi Prakash Jadhav, Gauri Mahendra Bane, Sonal Rajendra Joil; and from Zilla Parishad School, Mandki No. 1 - Srushti Suresh Chavan, Prerna Naresh Joshi, Shuksha Tukaram Khedekar, Arya Kisan Khambe, Shriya Santosh Yadav, Shreya Vijay Chavan, Palavi Mahendra Dongare, Aadishthi Chandrakant Khambe, Anushka Amit Ranim, and Pranjali Prashant Pawar. The watches were distributed by the Chairperson.

After this, students Sara Kadam and Palavi Dongare shared their thoughts. Following their speeches, the main program of the session and lectures by the esteemed speakers began.



The session was conducted by the moderator, Mrs. Sharayu Yashwantrao.



Shri Vikasrao Walawalkar felicitating the Chairperson Mr. Prashant Pol.



Shri Vikasrao Walawalkar felicitating the chief speaker, Ms. Ashwini Kudekar



Shri Vikasrao Walawalkar felicitating Dr. Sunil Nadkarni.



*Shri Vikasrao Walawalkar felicitating
Dr. Sudhir Joshi.*



*Shri Vikasrao Walawalkar felicitating
Dr. Shripad Banavali.*

Dr. Suvarna Patil was then invited to address the gathering. She has played a significant role in the remarkable journey of **Bhaktashreshtha Kamalakar pant Laxman Walawalkar Hospital**, from its initial stages to its expansion into a Medical College and a Physiotherapy College. She serves as the hospital's Medical Director and has been associated with the institution continuously since 1996.

During her tenure, she has successfully implemented various healthcare and research projects, making healthcare services in the Derwan region more advanced and effective. She has also presented her research at numerous national and international medical conferences.

While expressing her views, she said:

"Considering Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj as their guiding ideal and faithfully following the principles of Shivaji Maharaj on moral conduct, Shri Sahajanand Saraswati Maharaj, Shri Kaka Maharaj, who gave concrete shape to every one of his aspirations and Shri Vikas Walawalkar Saheb, who meticulously planned and managed the financial aspects, have dedicated themselves to building a self-reliant and morally upright society. To achieve this objective, they have endeavoured to preserve and practice the values and principles exemplified by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

It is often said that during the reign of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Raigad was an outstanding example of Maratha urban planning because it was geographically remote yet suitable for habitation. Similarly, Dervan, the location chosen by this institution, is also geographically remote. Many people do not immediately know where Dervan is located. Surrounded by the Sahyadri mountain ranges, it possesses natural and formidable protection.

Just as Ramchandra Amatya documented Shivaji Maharaj's administrative principles in the Adnyapatra, Sahajanand Saraswati Maharaj laid down ethical values in his booklet 'For the Welfare of Humanity.' Understanding the truth of the saying, 'There is none equal to the Sadguru; not in the seven continents, not in the three worlds, nor anywhere in this universe,' these principles have been followed faithfully to this day. Therefore, in Maharaj's social philosophy, education, self-reliance, and healthcare have always been given the highest priority.



*Shri Sitaram Mahadev Thombre being
felicitated by the Chairperson*



*Mrs. Surekha Sawant being felicitated by the
Chairperson*

Planning was one of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's greatest strengths. No fort construction was ever halted due to a lack of planning. Similarly, within this institution, no structure remains incomplete due to poor planning. In fact, the date of the housewarming ceremony is often set on the very day of the groundbreaking, and the building is usually completed before the scheduled date.

Shivaji Maharaj had written, 'Before establishing a fort, ensure the availability of water.' This reflects his extraordinary foresight. Today, we are all witnessing how serious the issue of water scarcity has become. However, Shri Kaka Maharaj has undertaken tremendous efforts to address this challenge through the construction of wells, overhead and underground water storage systems, supplying water throughout the campus using gravity-based systems, and creating farm ponds capable of storing millions of litres of water, Shri Kaka Maharaj has transformed the area into a flourishing oasis that remains green even during the summer months.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj encouraged traditional martial sports that developed physical strength, agility, and military skills. This included sword fighting, dandpatta (gauntlet-sword combat), spear throwing, and wrestling arenas. With a similar objective of promoting physical fitness and discouraging children from becoming absorbed in online games, Shri Kaka Maharaj established the sports complex of Shri Vitthalrao Joshi Charities Trust. By providing excellent facilities for accommodation and nutrition, the complex has been made accessible to all.

Shivaji Maharaj protected the Vedas, Puranas, and temples throughout his kingdom. He extended patronage to Vedic schools so that India's ancient knowledge tradition would remain alive. Continuing this legacy, Maharaj supported the Veda Pathshala, which has preserved Vedic learning to this day and has produced seven highly accomplished Vedic scholars (Ghanapathis), thereby making a valuable contribution to the nation.

In the Mahabharata, the lives of great personalities have been explained as 'Tile tailam gavikṣīram, kāṣṭhe pāvaka manthataḥ; Evaṁ dhīro vijānīyāt, paśyan sasya siddhaye.' (Just as sesame seeds inherently contain oil, a cow contains milk, and wood contains fire in a latent form, these substances do not become manifest on their own. Oil must be extracted from the sesame seeds, milk must be drawn from the cow, and fire must be kindled from the wood through effort. In the same way, a wise person recognizes and develops the hidden potential within individuals so that it may be fully realized and bear fruit.)

Introduction of the Social Workers Honoured for Their Contributions to Healthcare

1. Shri Sitaram Mahadev Thombre - *Former Deputy Chairman, Panchayat Samiti, Guhagar Taluka*

Since the establishment of the hospital in 1996, Shri Sitaram Mahadev Thombre has maintained a close and continuous association with it. He has been sincerely engaged in informing underprivileged patients in Guhagar Taluka about the various medical services and facilities available at the hospital, as well as guiding them regarding the necessary documentation and procedures. Through his strong network with local representatives and community workers in villages across the taluka, he actively spreads awareness about the healthcare camps organized by Walawalkar Hospital. Furthermore, he personally assists elderly patients by transporting them to the hospital in his own vehicle and providing them with the support they need.

2. Shri Nitish Rajesh Shetye - *Health Officer, Samata Foundation, Mumbai – Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg Branch*

Since 2025, through the Samata Foundation, Shri Nitish Rajesh Shetye has been rendering valuable service by organizing cataract screening camps and helping needy patients undergo surgery at the hospital. Through his dedicated efforts, as many as **896 patients** were screened, and successful **free cataract surgeries** were performed for them at the hospital.

3. Mrs. Surekha Sawant - *ASHA Worker, Turambav*

Mrs. Surekha Sawant serves as a vital link in delivering healthcare services to rural communities. She plays an important role in bringing expectant mothers to the hospital for safe deliveries, informing rural residents about available healthcare services and facilities, and assisting at the village level in initiatives such as dental check-up camps for adolescent girls and children attending Anganwadi centres. Through these efforts, she provides invaluable service in promoting healthcare awareness and community well-being.



While expressing her thoughts, Palavi Mahendra Dongre (Z.P. School, Mandki No. 1)



Special honor of Senior Scientist Dr. Rita Mulherkar

Such a great personality is born only once in history, who brings together all elements and, through them, extracts 'oil from sesame, milk from cows, and fire from wood'. In the same way, this institution has made extraordinary efforts to achieve all these goals.

The institution is taking appropriate and progressive steps aligned with Shiv Niti in the 21st century. In order to make everyone self-reliant through education and to open new avenues of knowledge, the establishment of the proposed 'Shri Vitthalrao Joshi University' has been planned.

The proposed university will be based on the mantra given by Maharaj:

*'Swadharme nidhanam shreyah, paradharmo bhayavahah;
Swakarma niratah siddhim yatha vindati tacchhrinu'*

Meaning, a person who sincerely and faithfully performs their assigned duty attains true fulfilment and merit.

To bring this value into practice, various academic programs rooted in ancient Indian culture have been designed. The aim is to develop a future generation that performs its duties with empathy and ethics—qualities that are lacking today. Special emphasis will therefore be placed on these values. Through this, it will be possible to realize the vision of Maharaj: creating a patriotic generation that is all-rounded, capable of facing challenges, and capable of leadership.

To address the serious health issues such as cancer and diabetes caused by chemically sprayed food, and to offer sustainable alternatives, a course titled '**B.Sc. Natural Farming with AI**' has been designed in accordance with NEP 2020. This program integrates Artificial Intelligence and Data Science with organic farming practices. Students will learn how to use natural resources like cow-based inputs, dung manure, compost, and organic fertilizers instead of chemicals, and how to maintain soil fertility while cultivating crops, pulses, fruits, and vegetables.

This will also open up multiple career opportunities for students such as entrepreneurship, data analysis, raw material supply chains, and research. Importantly, the education will not be purely theoretical; students will gain hands-on experience in farms, farm ponds, polyhouses, cow shelters, and drone technology.

In alignment with the vision of the Indian Space Station 2035, the institution has also proposed a pioneering undergraduate course, **B.Sc. Space Science**, possibly one of the first of its kind in India. For this, collaboration is being established with IN-SPACe (ISRO), GMRT (Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope), SIA-India, and Ankur (ISRO franchise).

Students will gain practical skills such as telescope handling, satellite training, geospatial data analysis, astronomical data interpretation, and more. This will open career pathways in ISRO, NRSC, DRDO, private space companies, data technology firms, planetariums, IT industries, remote sensing organizations, Google Earth Engine-based analytics, AI and Big Data companies.

Similarly, the highly ambitious program **B.P.Ed. with Sports Excellence** has been planned. For this purpose, Shri Kaka Maharaj had already established the SVJCT Sports Complex in 2012, where more than 30,000 athletes participate annually in over 18 sports disciplines.

Through this initiative, students of B.P.Ed. will receive excellent training in sports planning, refereeing, officiating, media coverage, event management, sports physiotherapy, yoga, and physical education teaching. This will provide

wide-ranging career opportunities and will once again bring students out of the online and virtual world into real, on-field sporting experience will be able to gain.



*The proposed Shri Vitthalrao Joshi University will be based on the mantra given by Maharaj:
"Swesve karmanyabhiratah samsiddhim
labhate narah;
Svakarma-niratah siddhim yatha vindati tacchrinu."
— Dr. Suvarna Patil*



By removing the boundaries of caste and becoming venerable to the entire society, this fortune has been achieved only by this noble personality in Maharashtra, as well as by saints of the Warkari tradition such as Dnyaneshwar and Tukaram Maharaj." — Shri Shashikant Bhau Sutar

The **B.Sc. Biomedical Instrumentation and AI** course will create job opportunities as engineers in hospitals and clinics for operating and maintaining medical instruments. To ensure that students face challenges fearlessly and develop ethical values, the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita* and Indian knowledge traditions will be integrated. Emphasis will be placed on value-based education.

To address newly emerging issues such as anxiety and depression, a specially designed course, **B.Sc. Psychology and Spiritual Health** have been selected.

In addition, courses such as **B.A. Philosophy** and **IKS (Indian Knowledge Systems) Sanskrit** will be introduced for students who wish to study the Vedas. Such innovative and creative academic programs will now be made possible through the proposed university, and it is believed that the path of *Karmayoga* envisioned by Maharaj for the welfare of humanity will become visible through the inspiration and efforts of Shri Kaka Maharaj.

"Just as fire falling in the sky turns into sparks, if there were no saints, the world would have been destroyed. Saints teach us how human beings should behave with one another, and this very teaching will be passed on to the next generation through this university."

Shri Shashikant Bhau Sutar, who has been active in the social sector for over forty years, is a popular leader deeply devoted to Sadguru Sahajanand Saraswati Maharaj and revered Shri Kaka Maharaj. Born into a farming family and drawn to social work from childhood, he dedicated his life to public welfare.

He has successfully served in various responsible positions such as Corporator of Pune Municipal Corporation, Member of Legislative Assembly, and Agriculture Minister, making remarkable contributions to the development of Pune. He also heads his own educational institutions.

In his speech, he said:

"...Hindu kings were not lacking in bravery or armies. However, they lacked patriotism, foresight, organizational skill, and vigilance. They followed traditional Kshatriya dharma and considered ancient rules of righteous warfare. They would give enemies time to prepare for battle. They did not consider night attacks appropriate and would release surrendered enemies. They would remain passive until attacked and were often deceived by enemies. They possessed bravery and generosity, but lacked diplomacy and careful statecraft. They also had ego and pride, and often harboured jealousy toward other Hindu kings. As a result, if any king faced danger, others would not come to his aid.

This behaviour was like considering oneself fortunate when a neighbour's house catches fire, not realizing that the fire would eventually spread and consume them as well. Although Hindu kings were brave, they could not inspire a spirit of

freedom among their subjects. Their concept of war differed from the religious war (jihad) of Muslim invaders, and therefore they continued to suffer defeat.

At such a time, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, shining like a radiant sun, illuminated Hindu nationalism and gave new hope to a society that had been oppressed for centuries. He awakened Hindu identity and infused new life into the people. The life of this great national leader remains unique in human history.”



At the same time, a story was being narrated in the temple room of Rajgad, and coincidentally, at Pratapgad, Shivaji Maharaj, like a lion, had torn open Afzal Khan's abdomen. The story that Jijabai had envisioned in her heart was being enacted in reality. - Prof. Sachinji Kanitkar



“Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is the ultimate benchmark. He cannot be fully described in words. If we can adopt even a single quality of his and carry it into our homes and try to share it with society, we will truly be blessed! - Ms. Ashwini Kudekar

'नक्हे शब्द साधा। जयांच्या स्मृतीने जळे म्लेंच्छ बाधा। नुरे देश अवघा जयाचे प्रभावी। 'शिवाजी' जपू राष्ट्रमंत्र प्रभावी।'

“It is not a mere ordinary word. By whose remembrance the forces of the foreign rulers are destroyed; the entire land is protected by whose power. Let us preserve 'Shivaji' as the powerful mantra of the nation.”

For the sake of the triad of **God, Nation, and Dharma**, we must come together, forgetting caste distinctions. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, Hindustan is one. This means that the problems of every person living in Hindustan are our own problems. Do not ask us what our caste is, because it is –

'स्वभाषा स्वदेशा स्वधर्मास्तवे जे। स्वभाग्ये इथे जन्मलो मानितो जे। असा जन्महेतू जयांच्या उरांत। अशांची 'शिवाजी' असे जन्मजात ।।'

“Those who are born with the conviction that they must sacrifice everything for their language, their country, and their religion; those who consider it their fortune to be born with such a purpose, such people are born as 'Shivaji' itself.”

After this, Prof. Sachinji Kanitkar addressed the gathering.

Shri Kanitkar, who completed his M.E. degree from Walchand College, Sangli, is currently serving as a professor of Mechanical Engineering at Ichalkaranji. Along with teaching, he has established a distinct identity in writing, impactful oratory, and social work. He has written extensively on historical as well as contemporary subjects and is widely known across Maharashtra as a powerful and scholarly speaker.

In his speech, he said:

“...When I first came here as a speaker, I had the usual feelings of wanting name, fame, money, recognition, and greatness. But as time passed and I became more familiar with this place, I realized that being invited here itself is a great fortune, and I reached a point where I feel I should not be called anywhere else; it is enough to be called here.

In this journey, I have grown to understand that I truly gain something meaningful when I come here wholeheartedly and speak before you. I also notice that everyone here performs their assigned duties with complete honesty. These 'Mavlas' (soldiers of Shivaji) are still standing here year after year, guarding their assigned posts. Just like them, you will find living Mavlas who continue to perform their duties with dedication.

If we treat the work assigned to us with joy and enthusiasm, then we truly become part of this mission. If we can add enthusiasm, we can truly contribute.

While speaking today, as you witness this Shiv Jayanti celebration, you may feel as if you have travelled back into history. Experiencing Shiv Jayanti here in Shiv Srushti, according to the traditional calendar, is truly a matter of great fortune, as the entire life of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is depicted around you. Sculptures created by Dada Patkar have brought the events of Shivaji Maharaj's life to life.

We know that Shivaji Maharaj took an oath of Swarajya, but how exactly he might have been seated at that moment, who might have been around him, such imaginative ideas come alive before us. Today, I will try to express those same ideas through words, creating verbal sculptures, presenting my speech in a slightly different style than usual.

The poet Tiwari has said about the work of Ramdas Swami:

आहे प्रबळ यवन जाहले होते वंघ या महाराष्ट्रात। आक्रंदत होता धर्म परसत्तेच्या दारात। शौर्य धैर्य रूतले होते परसेवेच्या पंकात। ऐशा वेळी कल्याणी। धीराची केवळ खाणी। श्री समर्थ सदुरु वाणी। दुमदुमली हो सर्वत्र। जय जय रघुवीर समर्थ। जय जय रघुवीर समर्थ ॥'

*'When powerful foreign rulers had become dominant in Maharashtra,
The religion cried out under foreign rule,
Bravery and courage were trapped in the mud of servitude,
At such a time, O Kalyani,
The mine of courage,
The voice of Sadguru Shri Samarth,
Echoed everywhere
Victory to Raghuveer Samarth! Victory to Raghuveer Samarth!'*

And the final line of that poem says:

ही वाणी म्हणजे जननी धर्माच्या अभिमानाची। संजीवनि दुर्लभ मात्रा ऐक्याच्या सद्भावाची। यक्षिणीच केवळ गमली राष्ट्राच्या उद्धाराची। त्या काळाची स्मृती होते। या काळाला मन विटते। मागे हो धावत जाते। परिसता आज मंत्रार्थ। जय जय रघुवीर समर्थ। जय जय रघुवीर समर्थ ॥

*'This voice is the mother of religious pride,
The rare life-giving nectar of unity,
The vision of national upliftment,
That era becomes a memory,
And the mind travels back to it,
Touching the essence of that mantra
Victory to Raghuveer Samarth! Victory to Raghuveer Samarth!'*

If, through what I am about to present before you, you feel as though we have entered that bygone era, then I will consider my effort truly worthwhile."

Friends, why does it happen that in front of us we see the sculpture of Shivaji Maharaj killing Afzal Khan? Afzal Khan used many strategies to lure Shivaji Maharaj into open battle. He even attacked the temple of Tulja Bhavani, the family deity of Shivaji Maharaj, and destroyed it, hoping to provoke him into open confrontation so that he could defeat him on the battlefield.

But Shivaji Maharaj did not come out. He did not descend from the mountainous region. We all know the historical reasons why he did not come out. But at that time, what must have been the mental state of the people? And to strengthen, energize, and mobilize them, what role must Ramdas Swami have played?

Let us enter this subject while reflecting on these thoughts.

The location is the Ramvardayini temple at the foothills of Pratapgad. Near Pratapgad, there is a village called Par, where the deity Ramvardayini is worshipped. There is a legend connected to this. While Tulsidas was writing the Ramcharitmanas, he imagined that Lord Shiva was narrating the story of Lord Rama to Goddess Parvati and he was in deep separation from Lord Rama, wandering everywhere in extreme sorrow, crying out "Sita! Sita! Sita!" and embracing trees and creepers as he moved about.

At that moment, Goddess Parvati said, "You are chanting His name, yet He Himself is wandering like an ordinary man, crying out in grief for his wife. What kind of gods are these? What kind of enlightened beings are these?"

Lord Shiva remained silent. Parvati realized that her argument had not convinced Him. She said, “Wait, I will demonstrate this myself and show you the truth through an experiment.”

Saying this, Parvati assumed the form of Sita and manifested herself in the Jawali valley, where Pratapgad now stands. She appeared from behind a tree before Lord Rama.

Now imagine what the scene must have been like! But He was Rama. Calmly, He stepped forward and bowed down before her and said, “Mother, is this the test of me?”

Parvati felt deeply ashamed. She realized that what Shiva had said was indeed true. She then revealed her original form and blessed Rama abundantly, saying that he would be reunited with his wife and would defeat Ravana. After granting these blessings, she returned to her divine abode.

It is in memory of this event that the temple established there is called the **Ramvardayini Temple**.

The desecration of Tulja Bhavani had taken place. Ramdas Swami was deeply disturbed in his heart. He was awakening people. While doing so, he was aware of all the internal dimensions of politics. He knew that Afzal Khan had once declared while slaughtering a cow before the goddess and striking it with a hammer:

“Tell me your service, tell me your greatness!”

And Shivaji Maharaj was destined to fulfil his demand at Pratapgad itself, this Ramdas Swami knew. He was moving through the region, awakening people.

The villagers gathered there, assembled in the Ramvardayini temple. In imagination, Ramdas Swami was seated on a raised stone platform (rangshila), and he began to speak.

The evening temple courtyard was full of people. Torches were lit at a few places. There was a tiled assembly hall facing the goddess. On the other side, on a grand stone platform facing the deity, sat a radiant ascetic, occasionally casting his gaze over the audience.

A broad forehead, flowing hair on his neck, a long beard on his chest, a piercing gaze that seemed to reach the heart, and a voice that penetrated deep into the listener’s being; he wore a saffron robe.

He was speaking with intense emotion. The torchlight fell on his face in such a way that it seemed as if fire itself had taken form. It was not words but burning embers that were falling.

Addressing the goddess, he spoke, and the gathered people listened with complete attention.

He said:

“O Mother Chandika, slayer of Chanda and Munda, Mahishasura-mardini! You have killed countless demons. Was this Khan too insignificant for you, or have you turned away from us? Or have we failed to protect you with our weak and powerless strength?

Whom should we tell our sorrow to now, if not to this mother herself?

Mother, because you manifested here, this place became Parvatipur; and because it was ruined by foreign invasion, it came to be called ‘Par’.

Mother, you appeared here to test Lord Rama, did you not? The same divine being who gave blessings to Rama for the destruction of Ravana, now the evil Afzal Khan is destroying your shrine in Tuljapur, breaking your idol. Why are you silent? Will you not reveal your power? Will you not bless our king to destroy Afzal Khan?

We have heard so much about you! You destroyed demons like Shumbha, Nishumbha, Chanda, Munda, and Raktabija, and adorned yourself with garlands of their heads. Yet this wicked man slaughters cows and challenges you directly: ‘Tell me your greatness, tell me your power!’

Mother, will you not show your strength? Will you not show it?”

The saint’s voice became choked with emotion. The audience had now lost awareness of themselves. It felt as though the real goddess Ramvardayini was standing before them and the saint was directly addressing her.

At that moment, from his mouth flowed a self-composed hymn to the goddess:

*“You have destroyed the wicked in the past, this we have heard often;
But now, O Mother, show your true power openly.
Raise your king quickly before our eyes;
This is my only request to you.
Ramdas says, my words are full of urgency;
O Mother Tulja, forgive me;
May you fulfil this desire completely.”*

After hearing these final lines, even those who did not know the name came to know it: **Ramdas, Ramdas Swami**, the one who lived in Chaphal and established Hanuman temples across villages.

Thus, the entire scene came alive there. Ramdas continued to tell everyone: “Be patient, be patient. Do not panic or rush. Even if enemy forces enter this region, do not be frightened; hide in the forests and hills. Keep women and children safe from the enemy’s reach. Truly, those who are brave and possess strength, those who carry Rama within them, should fight. And those who do not have that strength should at least throw a stone from hiding. And even if that is not possible, at least ensure that the enemy does not receive food and water.

“Do not provide the enemy with food or water.” Such exhortations addressed to the people as ‘*Gadyanno!*’ (O brave men!) penetrated deep into the hearts of many. Inspired by these words, numerous individuals joined Shivaji Maharaj’s army. In this way, the awakening movement led by Samarth Ramdas was spreading everywhere, and it was evident that something had begun to change in a Maharashtra that had long been under foreign domination.

The message of the Swami was clear and true:

“Maratha tituka melavava, Maharashtra dharma vadhavava.”
“Let every Maratha unite; let the Dharma of Maharashtra flourish.”

After concluding his discourse, the Swami said, “Come, let us perform the Aarti.” Following the Aarti of Lord Ganesh, the remover of all obstacles, everyone sang in unison:

*“Durge durghat bhaari tujavin sansari,
Anathanathe Ambe karuna vistari.
Vari vari janma maranate vari,
Hari padalo ata sankat nivari.
Jay Devi Jay Devi Jay Mahishasuramardini,
Suravar Ishwar varade tarak sanjeevani.
Jay Devi Jay Devi.”*

Outside the temple, darkness had descended, while inside, the resounding chants in praise of the Divine Mother echoed with great fervour.

Friends, while such events were taking place, we often fail to imagine what was happening around them. When we read the *Ramayana*, we travel alongside Lord Rama; when we study *Shivabharat*, we accompany Shivaji Maharaj. Yet society, too, was living and evolving during those times. This narrative is merely an attempt to envision how that society might have been awakening.

Let us now imagine another gathering, one that is also rooted in history. Shivaji Maharaj had completed all preparations and had gone to inspect the site where Afzal Khan would be encountered. At the same time, he had summoned key leaders to the royal council. They were assembled in the court, awaiting his arrival.

At the appointed hour, Maharaj entered. Greetings were exchanged, and everyone waited attentively to hear the assignments he would give.

“Commander Netaji Rao,” Maharaj began, “conceal your cavalry in the forests of Kadesar. From there, strike directly at the enemy camp. Raghunath Ballal Atre will accompany you.

Kanhoji Naik and Bandal, remain near the village of Par at the foothills. Do not allow Khan to ascend Par Ghat.

Haibatrao Balaji Naik Shilimkar, you are to do the same in the Bocheholi pass.

Moropant, advance with the infantry through the forests of Kineshwar.

Remember this well: Fazal Khan, Muse Khan, and Sultanrao Jagdale have their camps in the Koyna Valley. Khan has left a contingent at Wai to protect his harem and much of his wealth. He has brought the main force into Javali.

Never forget, these scoundrels desecrated the idol of Goddess Bhavani. They challenged Her and demanded that She demonstrate Her power. It is we who shall demonstrate that power. There will be no mercy now. Once the meeting begins, three cannon shots will be fired. After that, do not concern yourselves with what has happened to me. Focus only on destroying the enemy. Grant protection only to those who genuinely surrender.

I know you have had to remain patient for a long time. The anger that has been bottled up within you may now be unleashed. Remember, upon this victory rests the future establishment of Swarajya.”

Every officer had received an assignment, but everyone was curious about one thing: who would remain at Maharaj’s side during the crucial meeting with Afzal Khan? Each man desired that honor.

Maharaj announced the names:

Sambhaji Kavji Kondhalkar, Jiva Mahala, Yesaji Kank, Kondaji Kank, Tanaji Ingle, Suruji Katke, Krishnaji Gaikwad, Sambhaji Karvar, and Visaji Murumbak.

The others envied them, for these were the men who would directly aid Maharaj in the moment of danger and, if necessary, sacrifice their lives for him.

As the assignments concluded, neither Tanaji Malusare nor Ramaji Pangera had been given any specific duty. Tanaji asked,

“Maharaj, you have not told Ramaji and me what we are to do.”

Maharaj smiled and replied,

“Tanaji, not a single man has ever returned alive to tell me how you fight in battle. So how am I to determine what assignment to give you? Let someone survive your sword someday and tell me, and then I shall decide what task suits you!”

The entire court erupted in laughter.

Moropant, who had remained silent until then, remarked,

“What a grave situation! Such a formidable enemy stands before us, and yet there is such carefree laughter. This truly is the wonder of Shivaji’s spirit.”

Maharaj responded,

“Pant, our objective is sacred, and there is nothing personal for us to gain. These men value neither their own lives nor comforts when it comes to serving the nation and Dharma. That is why they can laugh.”

Hearing this, Moropant folded his hands and said,

“Blessed indeed!”

Tanaji immediately added,

“Pant, save the salutations for later! We shall be fighting alongside you. Just tell us one thing, where should we pile them up?”

Moropant looked puzzled.

“Pile up what?”

Tanaji answered,

“What else? The enemy corpses!”

Once again, laughter filled the hall.

Then, becoming serious in an instant, everyone rose to depart.

Each one repeated the same words:

“Maharaj, take care. Maharaj, take care.”

With a serene smile, Shivaji Maharaj bade farewell to them all.

Thus, the fate of whether this righteous and virtuous kingdom, this Swarajya founded upon Dharma, would come into existence or not was about to be decided.

The next day was to be the decisive one. This incident took place on the previous day. We have briefly experienced that moment; now let us experience another incident from that very day.

Let us move to a different scene. On **Rajgad, Jijau Aaisaheb** was present. Her son's life was at stake. Of her six sons, only one remained, **Shivaji Maharaj**. What must she have been doing at the moment when Shivaji Maharaj set out to meet **Afzal Khan**? Let us imagine that scene on Rajgad.

Jijau sat before the household shrine in the citadel. The flame of the sacred lamp reflected in her eyes, making her naturally radiant eyes appear even more moist and expressive. It was not merely the reflection of the flame; it symbolized the burning anguish hidden within her heart. This mother had willingly placed the only piece of her heart into the mouth of a volcano. Just as the flame burned, so did her soul. In every sense, she was burning within. To preserve the honor, marital happiness, and faith of countless women, she had sent her own son to face death. Such is the nature of a flame—it burns itself to give light to others.

Jijau gazed steadily at God. Tears that had gathered in her eyes now began to roll down her cheeks. At that moment, a tiny hand rested upon her shoulder. Quickly wiping her tears with the edge of her saree, she composed herself and said in a choked voice, “Come, Shambhu Bala! Sit here.”

Before Afzal Khan's slaying, **Sambhaji Maharaj's** mother had already passed away, and therefore little Shambhu, only about one and a half to two years old, lived among his stepmothers and Aaisaheb. He now came to Jijau. The young prince sat beside her lap. Taking his head onto her lap, Jijau gently stroked his curly hair.

A few moments passed in silence, and Shambhu grew restless. Everyone seemed to be behaving strangely that day, and even his stepmothers were not embracing him as usual. So, he had come to the one place where he felt he truly belonged, his grandmother. Seeing her silent too, he said,

“Aausaheb, tell me a story!”

What could that little child understand? Jijau looked at him with deep compassion. His mother had left him and gone to heaven. His father wandered about carrying out God's work and rarely had time for him. Even now, he had gone to embrace death for the sake of God, the nation, and religion. News of any kind could arrive at any moment. The adults knew this, and their minds were unsettled. That was why everyone was acting so strangely. But little Shambhu knew nothing of it.

And so Jijau truly began telling him a story.

“Long, long ago, my child, there was a great demon named **Hiranyakashipu**. He was so huge that when he stood up, he looked like a mountain.”

Shambhu's eyes widened in amazement.

“As big as a mountain? Oh my!”

The child became absorbed in the story, while the thoughts churning within Jijau's mind flowed out in the form of a tale.

In her mind, **Afzal Khan**, the representative of the Adilshahi Sultanate, stood in the place of Hiranyakashipu, while the innocent and devout people of the land stood in the place of **Prahlad**. To protect them, a divine incarnation was needed. For many selfish and fearful people among them had together erected a strong pillar of slavery. The sultans repeatedly kicked at that pillar, abducting women, breaking idols, demolishing temples, and forcing conversions, while taunting:

"Show me your service, show me your miracles, show me your greatness!"

The pillar of slavery kept receiving blow after blow. To demonstrate true greatness, true divine power and valor, **Lord Vishnu** now had to emerge as **Narasimha**, shattering that pillar of bondage. That responsibility had fallen upon Jijau's son and upon the father of this little Shambhu.

And that is exactly what happened.

Meanwhile, in the story, Jijau continued:

“...And Narasimha, in tremendous anger, drove his claws into Hiranyakashipu’s stomach, tore it open, and pulled out his entrails!”

As this story was being told in the shrine on Rajgad, by a remarkable coincidence, on **Pratapgad**, Shivaji Maharaj had become a lion and torn open Afzal Khan’s belly. The story in Jijau’s heart was becoming reality.

As we visualize and experience these scenes, we understand their significance. Today, on the occasion of **Shiv Jayanti**, we have briefly revisited them. Such remembrance is important, because if one wishes to illuminate others, one must be willing to burn oneself. Through that sacrifice, light reaches the world. May that light continue to grow through institutions and many other paths. With this prayer, I bow at the feet of the revered Guru and conclude my speech.

Victory to Mother India!

The chief speaker, **Kumari Ashwini Kudekar**, said in her address:

“...One evening, the elephant of a nobleman named **Khandagale** ran amok. It trampled many people under its feet. Then **Dattaji Jadhav** courageously charged toward the elephant, calmed it down, and, overcome with anger, also turned against Khandagale himself. The Bhosales and the Khandagales shared friendly relations. Sambhaji Bhosale went to assist Khandagale. During the clash between the Bhosales and the Jadhavs, Dattaji Jadhav was killed at the hands of Sambhaji Bhosale. Lakhuji Jadhav, who had ridden ahead on horseback, learned of this incident and returned at great speed. Shouting, "Where is that, Bhosale?" Lakhuji Jadhav attacked Sambhaji Bhosale and killed him as well.

Lakhuji Jadhav was the father of Jijau Aausaheb, Sambhaji Bhosale was Jijau's brother-in-law, and Dattaji Jadhav was her own brother. The Bhosale family mourned the loss of Sambhaji Bhosale, while the Jadhav family mourned the death of Dattaji Jadhav. But for whom was Jijau Aausaheb to grieve? On one side, she had lost her own brother; on the other, her brother-in-law. This entire tragic episode permanently severed her ties with her maternal family.

Shahaji Maharaj then left Jijau Aausaheb at Shivneri Fort. It was on the soil of Shivneri that Jijau developed aspirations of swordsmanship, horse riding, and wielding the dandpatta (gauntlet sword). She longed to crush the tyrannical forces just as Goddess Mahishasuramardini had destroyed the demons. At that time, the entire land of Hindustan seemed trapped in the grip of the demon-like Aurangzeb.

Jijau stood before Goddess Shivai and prayed, "Mother! Even today, the women of our households live with hope in their hearts. O Jagadamba, let all suffering disappear and let the reign of justice prevail. Mother, I bow down before you; grant that such a noble king may be born from my womb. Open your doors, Mother!"

The months of pregnancy passed. After nine months and nine days, on the third day of the dark fortnight of the month of Phalguna, a bright star shone over Shivneri. A son was born to Jijau Aausaheb. The child was named **Shivaji**. The one who would spend his entire life struggling, risking his very life for his people, was born to Jijau Aausaheb. With the birth of Shivaji Maharaj, the soil of Maharashtra found its true guardian.

Consider this: Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj lived for fifty years. He was born in 1630. The first five years of his life, from 1630 to 1635, were spent at Shivneri, and that sacred land was blessed by his childhood. In 1635, Shahaji Maharaj received the jagir of Pune. The land of Pune, which had once been symbolically ploughed by a donkey to signify destruction, was transformed when young Shivaji ploughed it with a golden plough. Through this act, Jijau Aausaheb fulfilled her vision of turning Pune into a land of prosperity and glory.

Shivaji Maharaj was married to Queen Saibai in 1640. In 1639, at the age of nine, he punished the Patil of Ranjhe by ordering the amputation of his hands and feet for his wrongdoing. Between 1641 and 1644, Maharaj began gathering small groups of loyal Mavalas (mountain warriors). He would often travel around on horseback. Whenever he noticed a skilled marksman or a strong and capable young man, he would recruit him. During these four years, Shivaji Maharaj steadily built a network of dedicated followers.

He would take these Mavalas into the forests and hills, where they engaged in various activities and training. What were these activities? They practiced sword fighting, horse riding, and even the fundamentals of statecraft and politics.

Over these years, Maharaj assembled warriors from different regions. Standing before Lord Shambhu Mahadev, he is said to have offered a symbolic blood ablution and prayed:

"O Mahadev, I wish to establish a righteous kingdom, a kingdom for the poor and the oppressed. Grant me the strength to accomplish this mission."

And Shambhu Mahadev granted him that strength.

Soon afterward, in 1646, Shivaji Maharaj captured his first fort and laid the foundation of Swarajya. That fort was **Torna Fort**. He then seized **Murumbdev Hill** (which later became Rajgad), followed by **Rohida Fort**, and soon after, **Sinhagad** also came under his control.

Introduction of the Chief Speaker: Ms. Ashwini Baban Kudekar

Having earned a Bachelor of Commerce degree along with training in computers and Tally, Ms. Ashwini Kudekar has successfully established herself professionally through S. Loan Consultancy. However, her true identity extends beyond business success, she is a dedicated social worker committed to nation-building.

She is the founder and director of Sahyadri Career Academy, where she guides students preparing for police recruitment, military recruitment, and MPSC examinations. Through A.K. Yoga Classes and Sahyadri Coaching Classes (for students of Classes 8 to 12), she works toward both physical and educational empowerment.

In the social sector, she serves as the President of the Women's Wing of Sahyadri Pratishthan, Deccan Division. She is also an active member of the Lions Club of Pimpri-Chinchwad. Through more than 250 lectures delivered across Maharashtra and Karnataka, she has inspired countless young people.

She is the President of Shivshambhu Sanghatana, Maharashtra State (Pune District) and a member of Rayateche Swarajya Pratishthan, Pune. She is also an active spokesperson for Sahyadri Pratishthan Hindustan, an organization dedicated to the conservation of forts and historical heritage. Her direct involvement in fort conservation activities is especially noteworthy.

As a yoga instructor at Nashik Gurukul, she has guided many individuals toward healthier lives. She consistently mentors' school and college students for their brighter future. In 2025, she was honored through the Miss Maharashtra Awards by the Shivraj Multipurpose Organization in recognition of her contributions.

Sinhagad was formerly known as Kondhana. Capturing forts alone was not enough; they also had to be repaired, maintained, and preserved. In 1647, construction and fortification work began on Murumbdev Hill, and it was renamed **Rajgad**. For many years, the administration of the Maratha Swarajya was conducted from Rajgad.

All the forts mentioned earlier were under the control of the Adilshahi Sultanate. From 1647 to 1652, Shahaji Maharaj was kept under arrest for nearly four to five years. However, Shivaji Maharaj did not remain idle. Between 1653 and 1656, he conquered **Javali**, a region encompassing much of present-day Satara district. He then captured **Pratapgad**, followed by **Vasota**, **Kenjalgad**, **Bhairavgad**, **Makrandgad**, and many other forts, bringing them into Swarajya.

It was then that **Afzal Khan** emerged and marched against Shivaji Maharaj. After Afzal Khan was slain, news of his death spread throughout Hindustan. People began wondering whether Shivaji had the blessings of Goddess Bhavani herself. If Shivaji could defeat a powerful commander like Afzal Khan, many great generals of the time felt insignificant in comparison.

Thereafter, Maharaj expanded his influence over the Adilshahi territories and began the process of dismantling the Nizamshahi power. In 1664–65, he carried out the famous raid on **Surat**. This enraged **Aurangzeb**. Following the attack on the Mughal province, Aurangzeb realized that a storm called Swarajya was rising in the south. He therefore dispatched **Mirza Raja Jai Singh** to deal with Shivaji Maharaj.

This led to the **Treaty of Purandar**. Under the treaty, 23 forts and territory worth four lakh hons were ceded. In other words, much of what had been gained until then was lost. Following the treaty, Shivaji Maharaj had to travel to **Agra** in 1666. From there, however, he famously escaped from Aurangzeb's custody and returned safely.

What is remarkable is the political wisdom Maharaj displayed afterward. He corresponded with Aurangzeb through letters, writing in a humble tone:

"Please forgive me. My health had deteriorated greatly. I never intended to leave, but circumstances forced me to do so. I had to depart without taking your final leave."

Such affectionate and diplomatic correspondence concealed his strategic brilliance.

The humiliation of the 1665 treaty was completely reversed five years later, in 1670. Every fort that had been surrendered under the Treaty of Purandar was recaptured by Shivaji Maharaj with interest, so to speak.

There is a small fort near Nashik called **Kanhergad**. A battle took place at its foothills, and in that battle, the brave warrior **Ramji Panger** attained martyrdom. To console his family, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj personally visited their home.

Introduction of the President of the Session: Shri Prashant Pol

Shri Prashant Pol holds a **B.E. (Honours) in Electronics and Telecommunications** and an **M.A. in Marathi**. He is the Director of **Disha Consultants, Jabalpur**, and **Bharti Web Pvt. Ltd., Nagpur**.

He has over **40 years of professional experience** and has travelled to more than **40 countries**.

He served as the Head of the Research Department at **MELTRON (Maharashtra Electronics Development Corporation)**, where he developed several innovative products. In 1990, he designed specialized equipment for the missile-firing Interim Test Range at Balasore.

During 1998–99, he was a member of the **Information Technology Task Force of the Government of Maharashtra**. In 1999, he was included in **World Who's Who**.

He has served as a consultant to numerous multinational telecommunications and IT companies and has also been a member of the **IT Task Force of the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Shipping**.

Additionally, he has served as:

- Consultant to the Public Works Department of the Government of Madhya Pradesh.
- Chairman of the Governing Board of **GKCIT, Malda (West Bengal)**.
- Member of the Academic Council of **Makhanlal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism and Communication**.
- Member of the Governing Council of **IIT Jabalpur**.
- Member of the Governing Board of **SGGS Institute of Engineering and Technology, Nanded**.
- IT Consultant to the **University of Mumbai**.

In 2024, he was honoured by the Government of Madhya Pradesh with the **National Summit Award** in the field of Information Technology.

He is a regular columnist for publications such as **Lokmat, Tarun Bharat, Vivek, Ekta, Panchjanya**, and **Organiser**.

Published Books

- **"Ve Pandrah Din"** (*Those Fifteen Days*) – Published in Hindi, Marathi, English, Gujarati, Punjabi, Assamese, Tamil, and Telugu. This book received the **Madhya Pradesh Sahitya Akademi Award**.
- **"Bharatiya Gyan Ka Khazana"** (*The Treasure of Indian Knowledge*) – Published in Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, and English.
- **"Khazane Ki Shodhyatra"** (*Journey in Search of Treasure*) – Published in Hindi, Marathi, and Gujarati.
- **"Vinashparv"** (*The Era of Destruction*) – Published in Hindi, Marathi, and Gujarati.
- **"Hindutva: Various Aspects, Simply Explained"** – Published in Hindi and Gujarati.

He also serves as the Executive President of the **Mahakoshal Vishwa Samvad Kendra**.



"...But now this India has awakened. Awareness of that 'Self' has arisen, and inspired by Maharaj, a new India is being built, an India that is self-respecting and proud!"— Mr. Prashant Pol

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj arrived at the home of Ramji Pangera. Ramji Pangera's mother welcomed him with jaggery and water, as was customary. Maharaj thought to himself, *"I have come carrying the bitter news of your son's death. How can I sweeten my mouth, Mother?"*

With great difficulty, he finally said, *"Mother, I have come with the sorrowful news of your son's death. Your Ramji Pangera has laid down his life for the soil of Swarajya. He attained martyrdom in its service."*

The mother smiled and replied, *"Yes, my child, I already know. If my Ramji were alive, would he not have returned with you?"*

Outside stood Ramji Pangera's seventy-year-old grandfather. Calling out to Ramji's brother, Rupaji, he said:

"Maharaj, although my Ramji has been sacrificed for the cause of Swarajya, please accept this Rupaji as well into your service. If tomorrow he too sacrifices his life for the soil of Swarajya, then know this, this seventy-year-old old man is also ready at any moment to take up a sword and fight for Swarajya!"

He then respectfully placed before Maharaj the pouch filled with gold coins that the king had brought as assistance, offering it back for the cause of Swarajya.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj represents the highest ideal. It is impossible to describe such a king in words fully. Even if we absorb just one of his virtues, carry it home with us, and try to share it with society, our lives will be blessed.

May each one of you contribute to the noble work of protecting Dharma and culture. May this institution continue to flourish for generations to come. May this platform dedicated to Dharma remain vibrant through the efforts of this institution. Through this organization, the great work of building a vast Swarajya is being carried forward. May it continue for many generations, this is my prayer at the feet of Mother Tulja Bhavani and Mother Jagadamba. With these words, I conclude my thoughts.

While expressing his views, Shri Prashant Pol said:

"I will not take much of your time, but I must say that I felt truly delighted to be here. This is the first time I have seen such work being carried out in this manner, and I am deeply impressed. Just as divine work unfolds through God's will, the entire endeavor at Dervan has been built in that spirit."

"Another highly commendable aspect is that you celebrate Shiv Jayanti according to the traditional lunar date. During Shivaji Maharaj's birth, even the calendar systems were in flux, and those in power were constantly altering calendars. Therefore, instead of celebrating Shiv Jayanti on a date derived from the Gregorian calendar, it is more appropriate to observe it according to the traditional date. For this, I wish to congratulate and thank all of you."

"Just now, Mr. Sachinji narrated the story of Afzal Khan's death in a powerful and unique style. The day was Thursday, Margashirsha Shuddha Shashthi or Champa Shashthi. On 10 November 1659, Maharaj slew Afzal Khan. It would have been around two or three in the afternoon when that 'goat' was killed."

"Usually, this is where the story ends. Most of us stop the narrative at that point because killing Afzal Khan was indeed an extraordinary achievement. As our speaker explained, Afzal Khan was a symbol of the demonic and destructive forces that plagued this land. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's victory over him was undoubtedly a great event."

"But according to Shivaji Maharaj's plan, the story did not end there it actually began there!"

"If we examine the entire strategy of Maharaj, we realize that Afzal Khan's death was merely the beginning. After killing Afzal Khan, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj returned to Pratapgad. The meeting with Khan had taken place in the area between the fort and the camp below. Once Maharaj reached Pratapgad, what do you think he did? He changed his blood-stained clothes. Some of the blood was his own, some belonged to Khan, and the garments had become soiled."

"After changing, he held a brief strategic meeting. During that meeting, some immediate plans were finalized. Once those plans were in place, Maharaj descended from the fort that very night and proceeded toward Wai."

"Now, Afzal Khan's main camp was located at Wai. We all know that. After the cannon signal was fired announcing Khan's death, the entire army of Afzal Khan was attacked. His forces were thoroughly crushed and massacred. Some people fled, while others surrendered. Early in the morning, Maharaj came down to Wai. There he saw Afzal Khan's army, some soldiers were dead, while others had surrendered. Afzal Khan's entire treasury had been seized. Maharaj personally supervised the arrangements for the captured troops and the officers present there.

Afzal Khan had come with a mighty army of thirty to thirty-five thousand men, whereas Maharaj had only about six to six and a half thousand soldiers in the entire Swarajya. Maharaj divided his army into three parts. He entrusted a small contingent to Doroji and instructed him:

"Go to Konkan. At Dabhol port, three of Afzal Khan's ships are anchored, carrying his treasure. Some of his men are also planning to depart from there for the Hajj pilgrimage. Seize the treasure, and as you advance through Konkan, capture every fort and every territory that can be brought under our control."

Maharaj then instructed Netaji Palkar to launch a direct attack on Bijapur. Notice the significance of this: the very Bijapur that had sent Afzal Khan to destroy Shivaji was now to be attacked directly. Maharaj himself set out along the central route toward Kolhapur. Thus, the trident of Swarajya was thrust against the Adilshahi Sultanate.

It was Friday, 11 November 1659 (Saptami). From that day onward, Doroji advanced toward the coast. He raided Dabhol port. Two ships escaped, but he caught one ship. A great amount of treasure was captured. Moving further south toward Rajapur and beyond, he plundered enemy wealth, seized strategic posts, and brought territories under Swarajya's control.

Meanwhile, Netaji Palkar marched toward Bijapur, attacking every outpost that came in his way. Significantly, he reached these areas before the news of Afzal Khan's death could spread. As a result, nobody knew what had happened. The officers and commanders of the Adilshahi outposts still believed that Afzal Khan must have already eliminated Shivaji and destroyed Swarajya. It was a complete surprise attack.

By the tenth day, Netaji Palkar had reached the very gates of Bijapur. The city was shaken to its core. The people of Bijapur could not understand what had happened or how Netaji Palkar had managed to reach their doorstep. Their forces were scattered.

Historians record that at that moment Netaji had only about two to two-and-a-half thousand troops with him. Had he possessed a somewhat larger force, Bijapur itself might have fallen then and there. However, Maharaj had given clear instructions: Bijapur was not to be captured. "Threaten them, plunder them, take as much of their treasury as possible! And keep capturing all the intermediate forts and return."

And Shivaji Maharaj himself set out through the middle route, moving toward Kolhapur while capturing every fort along the way.

Now understand this carefully. It is the 10th of November, the day they killed Afzal Khan. Without taking any rest, they traveled through the night and came down immediately. After that, without stopping for even a moment or taking any rest, they continued advancing, capturing one fort after another.

They took control of Satara, and also captured Karad. All the intermediate posts and villages were brought under their control as they moved forward toward Kolhapur. They captured many forts in between, such as Chandangad, Vandan, and several other famous forts including Prasiddhagad. In total, they captured nearly twelve to fourteen forts, along with several towns.

And exactly on the eighteenth day, on 28 November 1659, Shivaji Maharaj had already taken Kolhapur the previous day, and on that day he launched an attack on Panhala Fort. By 4 p.m. on 28 November, the mighty Panhala Fort was brought under his control.

This means that from the afternoon of 10 November 1659, when Shivaji Maharaj's kingdom was at one point—within just 18 days, by the afternoon of 28 November 1659, it had more than doubled in size. Along with this, enormous treasure and around 5,000 horses were acquired.

There is perhaps no greater example in the world of turning a crisis into an opportunity. Afzal Khan's campaign had come as a massive threat to Swarajya. Shivaji Maharaj did not merely defeat him. Even if he had only destroyed him, Maharaj would still be great, but Shivaji Maharaj was beyond that. He had a clear vision of the future in front of him.



"Afzal Khan was a symbol of the demonic, destructive forces in this country. The fact that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj killed him was a very significant achievement. But according to the Chhatrapati's plan, the matter did not end there—it actually began there!"
— M. Prashant Pol

The plan was very clear, how to turn this crisis into an opportunity. It was an understood fact that Afzal Khan was going to be killed anyway. That was only one part of it. Afzal Khan would certainly be eliminated, but the larger strategy lay beyond that, and it unfolded exactly as planned. Within eighteen days, Maharaj had more than doubled the Swarajya, accumulated a vast amount of treasure, and secured over 5,000 horses along with elephants and other resources.

This is an enduring example of transforming a crisis into an opportunity, and it continues to inspire us.

Similarly, the greatest crisis our country or the world faced in recent years was COVID-19.

The COVID crisis was unprecedented because never before had everything come to such a complete standstill. None of our ancestors, our grandparents or great-grandparents, had ever witnessed anything like it. It was truly an extraordinary

crisis. But India treated this crisis as an opportunity as well. I will give two small examples.

On 25 March 2020, a nationwide lockdown was announced. Even before that, COVID cases had already begun to appear. The first case in Kerala was reported in January itself. Soon after, it became clear that treating COVID patients required PPE kits. Without PPE kits, doctors could not go near infected patients. Orders for PPE kits had already been placed, and they were being imported from China. However, those Chinese PPE kits turned out to be defective. Entire consignments for India and Italy were found to be unusable. Suddenly, a critical shortage arose.

What could be done? Where would they be sourced from? Everyone needed them urgently. The Ministry of MSME held meetings. They asked a simple question: Is producing a PPE kit really rocket science? Why can't we manufacture it ourselves?

Specifications were prepared. Textile and garment manufacturers across the country were identified and contacted. Production was initiated in India. Within just one month, production reached 1.5 lakh kits per month. Within three months, India was producing around 7 lakh PPE kits.

And interestingly, India, which initially considered importing PPE kits, began exporting them. Very soon, it was realized that India had become the world's second-largest producer of PPE kits after China. A crisis had been converted into an opportunity. Today, "medical textiles", a sector that includes aprons, gloves, masks, and related protective gear, is a major industry, and India is the second-largest producer in the world. It may soon overtake China. There are around 1900 manufacturers in this sector across the country, something most people were not even aware of before.

The first phase of COVID passed, and the second wave was expected. It was realized that ventilators would be needed in large numbers. Based on expert inputs, it was estimated that around 75,000 ventilators would be required. At that time, India had only about 16,000 ventilators in total, most of them imported. Of these, around 6,800 were in government hospitals, and the rest in private hospitals. In 70 years, only about 16,000 ventilators had been imported.

Now the requirement was 60,000 more. The situation seemed impossible. When inquiries were made globally, manufacturers said that under normal conditions it would take two to three months, but during a pandemic, with factories shut, it was nearly impossible.

Once again, the response was: is this rocket science? Why can't we do it ourselves?

The MSME ministry became active. The DRDO was asked to prepare specifications. Various government agencies were involved in quality control and inspection. It was ensured that every ventilator met global standards. Manufacturers were identified, online workshops were conducted, and support and seed funding were provided.

India created history. Within three months, around 60,000 ventilators were produced domestically, at nearly half the cost of imported ones. Earlier, we did not even know that we could manufacture ventilators no one had told us that we could. COVID was a crisis but we turned it into an opportunity.

Floor tiles used for flooring were imported in very large quantities from China. During the COVID period, there was widespread anger against China, and imports from China were stopped. However, these tiles were also produced in India, especially in Morbi.

With imports from China halted, a huge demand suddenly emerged in India. The manufacturers in Morbi said, “Fine, we will increase our production.” They expanded their production capacity, and Indian entrepreneurs invested funds into it. Within just four to five months, tile production nearly tripled. Earlier, exports accounted for about 17–18%, but that rose sharply to nearly 38%.

The raw material used for tiles, a type of dust, is produced in Rajasthan. Traders there also decided to scale up production. As a result, India became almost self-sufficient in tiles and no longer needed to depend on China.

Similarly, India’s arms exports were previously quite low. The export value was around ₹686 crore, which may sound large, but in global terms it was very small, and it was limited to only a few countries such as Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, and a few other small nations.

During the COVID period itself, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh issued a notification banning the import of 101 defence items and announced that they would be manufactured in India. While India was importing defence goods worth ₹686 crore in 2013–14, the latest 2024–25 figures show that exports have increased by 34 times, reaching around ₹26,600 crore. From ₹686 crore to ₹26,600 crore what a transformation.

Today, India exports defence equipment to around 80 countries. A country that once used to request weapons from others is now exporting them. The entire direction has changed.

In 2013–14, about 90% of mobile phones used in India were imported and manufactured outside the country. According to official 2024–25 data, 96% of the mobile phones used in India are now manufactured within the country. India has also become one of the largest producers of iPhones in the world. Samsung and Apple devices are now made in India. Around 36% of the phones imported into the United States are manufactured in India.

This is India’s growing global presence. This transformation happened because challenges gave rise to ideas, and those ideas-built confidence. And this confidence was not created overnight, it developed gradually as we began discovering our own capabilities.

After independence, we had the opportunity to build our nation. Before independence, the British suppressed many aspects of our knowledge system and distorted our history. Some fragments were taught to us, but much was hidden or incomplete.

After 15 August 1947, we had our own government and the opportunity to shape our country into a strong nation. At that time, people were largely ready to follow leadership decisions. There was no major social division like the Hindu-Muslim tension in the way it is sometimes perceived today in that context; many believed they had accepted historical outcomes such as Partition.

At independence, about 75% of the population was below the poverty line. The economic condition was extremely poor. The colonial mindset and distortions left behind by the British had to be corrected and detoxified, while rebuilding national pride.

According to renowned economist Angus Maddison (who passed away in 2010), in his work *The Millennium History of the World Economy*, India’s share in the global economy was historically very significant. His data suggests that in the first century, India accounted for around 33% of the world’s GDP, an extraordinary figure that no single country matches even today.

In the tenth century, it was still around 32.83%. Even during early Islamic periods, the share remained substantial. By the time of the Battle of Plassey, it had fallen to about 22–23%. By the time the British left India, it had declined to around 4%.



Shri Ashokrao Joshi and Shri Prashant Pol

This shows that India was once an extremely prosperous, wealthy, and knowledge-rich civilization. However, this aspect of history was never properly highlighted. In school, I too learned only that, India was discovered by Vasco Da Gama. While reading it today, one may feel how foolish we were as learners. Who taught us this? Why did this become part of the curriculum?

Long before that, Indian ships were sailing across the world. There is historical evidence for this, and it has been acknowledged by scholars worldwide just not sufficiently by us.

Take a small example of Israel. Because of the ongoing war, Israel is widely known today. On 14 May 1948, Israel was

established as a nation. Jews from all over the world migrated there from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Germany, Russia, Italy, and even from places like the Konkan region of India, where they were known as the Bene Israel.

They all spoke different languages. Hebrew was their ancient language, but as a spoken, living language it had become almost dormant. After the nation was formed, a major question arose: what should be the national language?

One view was that English could be used as a temporary link language, and Hebrew could be gradually reintroduced later. The other, dominant view was firm: Hebrew is our language, so we must revive Hebrew itself.

The challenge was significant. Hebrew was a language from nearly two thousand years ago. It had not evolved with modern usage, vocabulary, or literature. It was like reading an 800-year-old text such as *Dnyaneshwari*—beautiful, but requiring interpretation because many words are no longer in common use. Hebrew was even more ancient and had not developed continuously.

Still, they decided to adopt Hebrew. A standardized curriculum was created. In that curriculum, words that did not exist in Hebrew were newly created. Just as Swatantryaveer Savarkar contributed many words to Marathi—such as “Doordarshan,” “Mahapaur,” “Hutatma,” “Doorbhani,” and others to enrich the language, similarly in Israel, individuals like Ben-Yehuda worked to modernize Hebrew and create new vocabulary.

A structured curriculum was prepared. Those who completed it were encouraged to teach the language. It was appealed that anyone who knew or understood Hebrew whether doctors, engineers, carpenters, gardeners, tailors, homemakers, or anyone from any profession, should teach Hebrew in nearby schools every day from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM as part of their social responsibility.

Employers were also informed that this was part of their duty. The system was mapped and implemented.

But what about adults? The solution was that children learning Hebrew would teach their parents at home from 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM in the evening. Where children were not present, radio broadcasts were arranged during that same time slot.

There was such widespread participation that, as observers have noted, Israel would fall into near silence between 7 and 8 in the evening, as the entire country was engaged in learning Hebrew.

Within five years, the campaign ended. The entire nation had begun writing, speaking, listening, singing, and reading in Hebrew. The language problem was solved.

Today, Israel is among the world leaders in several advanced fields such as optics, drip irrigation (which was invented there), and cyber security. If one wants access to cutting-edge knowledge in these areas, knowing Hebrew becomes highly valuable. There is no alternative to it. Just as our children go abroad for education and must pass the TOEFL exam for English, or German language exams like Level 1 and Level 2, or Spanish and Italian proficiency tests, only then are they granted admission to universities, similarly, people there take Hebrew examinations.

A language that was considered “dead” just 60–70 years ago was not only revived by these patriots as a spoken language, but was also transformed into a language of trade, daily use, and knowledge.

This is how a nation is built. This is how a nation must be built. Unless our identity is formed and our self-respect is awakened, building a strong nation is difficult. And yet, historically, we were once among the greatest nations in the

world in science, technology, medicine, and education. The world acknowledges this, but unfortunately, we were never properly told this.

That is why the inspiration from Shivaji Maharaj must be taken as an inspiration of self-respect. Maharaj established Swarajya the idea of the “self.” That awareness of the “self” is the most important thing.

What was the cost of awakening that “self”? What was its impact?

After his coronation, Maharaj established the *Rajvyavahar Kosh* (dictionary of administrative usage). Many Persian words had entered our language, and he removed them, replacing them with Sanskrit and Marathi words. He institutionalized this linguistic reform and encouraged the use of these terms in administration. He nurtured pride in the “self” within governance itself.

Maharaj’s life was only fifty years long. But what matters is not how long one lives, but how one lives. Otherwise, only the banyan tree would be remembered in the world, and not the sandalwood tree.

The merit of those fifty years was so immense that just one year after his death, Aurangzeb came to Maharashtra with a massive four-branch army. As we know, first came Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, then Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj, and then for seven years, Tarabai fought bravely. During this time, Maharashtra functioned without a central ruler, yet resistance continued.

Every ordinary farmer became a soldier, and such fierce resistance was given that Aurangzeb’s own grave was eventually dug in this land of Maharashtra.

Often in school, students learn the Mughal lineage, Akbar, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb. But if you ask, “Who came after Aurangzeb?” there is no clear answer. That is because Shivaji Maharaj’s legacy was so powerful that it effectively ended the Mughal line as a dominant force.

Maharaj’s active political life was about 30–32 years within his fifty-year lifespan. Yet the impact of those years was so great that the saffron flag continued to fly across the country for 138 years afterward. It even flew over the Red Fort in Delhi for about 36 years.

This is why I feel Maharaj was a deeply multidimensional personality, truly extraordinary.

Let me share a final incident and conclude.

I first went to America in 1994. Before that, I had lived in Japan for several years and travelled across Europe. At that time, America was not yet known for the IT boom. I went there for technical work. My host was an Indian, fortunately a Bengali gentleman, who was very eager to show me everything about the United States.

He showed me how advanced the country was, how you could drive into an ATM and do transactions without stepping out of your car. I was somewhat impressed.

Four years later, I came to Raigad Fort in India. There, on the Holicha Maidan, I saw six-foot-high platforms on both sides. I asked the guide what they were for. He casually replied that Shivaji Maharaj’s soldiers used to come on horseback to do their market shopping, and since there was nowhere to tie the horses, Maharaj had these platforms built so that they could shop while still mounted on horseback.

I got goosebumps.

So, the “drive-in” system that we are told is a modern American innovation of the last 60–65 years, was actually created in India 350 years ago by our king.

This is the extraordinary leap of Shivaji Maharaj. His system of instilling self-respect is unparalleled.

And today, India is awakening. The awareness of the “self” has begun to emerge. Just as Hanuman hesitated before crossing the ocean, unsure of his strength, Jambavan reminded him of his power and said, “Get up, leap, you will reach there.”

Sometimes it is a person, sometimes a situation that awakens us. And today, India has awakened. The awareness of the “self” has been realized.



“Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti is not merely a festival, but a celebration of self-respect for every Indian. It is a reminder of our cultural identity and our national aspirations,” said the moderator, Sharayu Yashwantarao.

Taking inspiration from Maharaj, a new India is emerging, a self-respecting India, an India that is also highly successful in trade and commerce, an India that is capable of shaping politics on its own strength and on its own terms.

Therefore, as we move forward on this journey of awakening self-respect inspired by Maharaj, let us all walk together.

You invited me here, listened patiently, and gave me so much time; my heartfelt thanks to you for that.

With this vote of thanks and the recitation of the closing prayer (*Varayachana Pathan*), the session came to an end.

In the evening, the concluding ceremony of the “Dervan Youth Games” was held, followed by a grand procession of the image of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj from the sports complex to Shivsamarth Fort. The celebration concluded with great joy and enthusiasm.



Recitation of Varayachana (Prayer)



Recitation of Varayachana (Prayer)

A Diverse Musical Performance by Medical Students at Shivsamarth Gad – 'Shivrajani 26'



Inspired by the vision of Shri Ashokrao Joshi, the student orchestra 'Shivrajani' was established three years ago at Shivsamarth Gad under the initiative of Dr. Suvarna Patil, Medical Director of Bhaktashreshtha Kamalakar pant Laxmanrao Walawalkar Rural Medical College & Hospital, and Dr. Netaji Patil. Since its inception, the orchestra has been nurturing a rich tradition of presenting diverse and innovative musical performances each year, delighting audiences with its artistic excellence.

On 5 March 2026, from 8:00 PM to 9:30 PM, on the eve of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti, the orchestra once again demonstrated its versatility and experimental spirit through an exceptional musical presentation.

The evening commenced with a captivating medley, blending instrumental and vocal performances by Sneha Khambe, Pranav Waghchaure, and Dr. Mihir Bairat. The ensemble featured harmonium by Aditya Bolke and Pranav Waghchaure, tabla by Piyush Shelke and Soham Khambe, pakhawaj by Shreyas Mane and Akash Sabale, cymbals (taal) by Akash Sabale, Shreyas Mane, Aarti Chougule, and Sai Gokhale, along with flute by Gaurav Ravanang. Their collective performance lent remarkable depth and grandeur to the entire musical presentation.

A special mention must be made of the harmonium, tabla, and pakhawaj gifted by Hon. Shri Vikas Walawalkar to encourage the student artists of Shivrajani. These instruments played a vital role in transforming the vision of this musical initiative into reality.

The concert continued with a series of memorable performances. Sneha Khambe is currently pursuing her internship after completing her B.Sc. Nursing beautifully rendered the devotional song "He Bhaskara." Dr. Mihir Bairat, an MD Radiology trainee, performed "Vitthal Aavadi Prembhavo" with his trademark finesse. Pranav Waghchaure, a final-year MBBS student, impressed the audience with his distinctive renditions of "Ye Ga Yeg Vithabai", based on Raag Des, and "Man Mandira." These performances set a high artistic standard for the evening.

The musical journey continued with Sneha Khambe's soulful rendition of "Runujhunu Runujhunu Re Bhramara," followed by the energetic performance of "Bagh Ughadoni Dar" by Nikhil Talap, Aditya Bolke, and Shreyas Mane, all third-year MBBS students. Dr. Mihir Bairat's heartfelt performance of "Abir Gulal" further enhanced the atmosphere.

A particularly moving moment came when Sneha Khambe performed Veer Savarkar's devotional composition "Prabho Shivaji Raja" with deep emotion and reverence, leaving the entire audience spellbound.

Adding further colour and variety to the program were performances of:

"Hi Duniya Mayajaal" by Nikhil Talap and Aditya Bolke , "Jeev Rangla" by Dr. Mihir Bairat and Sneha Khambe

"Tum Pukar Lo" by Nikhil Talap , "Shukratara Mand Vara" by Sneha Khambe and Soham Khambe

A unique highlight of the evening was the fusion performance by the second-year B.Sc. Nursing students Gaurav Ravanang (flute) and Soham Khambe (dholki) received widespread appreciation from the audience.

As the concert approached its conclusion, Pranav Waghchaure captivated listeners with his rendition of "Albela Sajan Aayo Re," followed by Dr. Mihir Bairat's performance, Mala Sanga Sukh Mhanje Nakki Kay Aste" which left the audience completely mesmerised. The program then featured Sant Eknath's renowned composition "Donhi Sarkhe Sarkhe," presented by Dr. Mihir Bairat and Pranav Waghchaure, accompanied on the tabla by Piyush Shelke (Final Year MBBS) and Soham Khambe, on the pakhawaj by Akash Sabale (Final Year B.Sc. Nursing) and Shreyas Mane, and on the taal (cymbals) by Aarti Chougule and Sai Gokhale (First Year MBBS). Seamlessly transitioning into the devotional abhang "Hechi Daan Dega Deva," the artists concluded the evening with a spirited chorus of Lord Vitthal's holy name, bringing the concert to a deeply spiritual and memorable close.

As the entire event was organised under "Mrudgandha," the institution's Arts and Cultural Association, the program was conceptualised and coordinated under the guidance of Dr. Advait Godse, Associate Professor, Department of Physiology, who serves as the chief coordinator and mentor of the association. Dr. Godse also authored the script for the entire program. The event was compered by Ishwari Ithape (Second Year MBBS), Rama Shetye (Third Year B.Sc. Psychology), Shreya Patekar (Final Year B.Sc. Nursing), and Dr. Advait Godse.

The program was graced by the presence of distinguished guests, including Shri Vikas Walawalkar, Mrs. Mukta Walawalkar, Shri Shripati Walawalkar, Dr. Shripad Banavali, a renowned oncologist and the proposed Vice-Chancellor of Shri Vithalrao Joshi University, Dr. Suvarna Patil, Medical Director, and Dr. Netaji Patil, among other dignitaries. Following the performance, all the guests personally congratulated the student artists and appreciated their outstanding efforts.

The invaluable guidance provided by Dr. Suvarna Patil and Dr. Netaji Patil throughout the rehearsal process inspired the students to refine every minute detail of their performances with dedication and enthusiasm.

As always, Shri Swapnil Kshirsagar, Shri Mukund Mungekar, and their entire support staff provided excellent technical and managerial assistance during both the rehearsal sessions and the final presentation. The responsibility of sound engineering was once again handled with exceptional professionalism by Shri Kamlesh Kokate.



Dr. Netaji Patil, Shri Shripati Walawalkar, Dr. Shripad Banavali, Shri Vikasrao Walawalkar, and Dr. Advait Godse (third from the left, seated among the students) wholeheartedly applaud and encourage the student artists.

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Executive Editor: Dr. Suvarna Patil – 99223 51656,

Assistant Editors: Mrs. Sharayu Yashwantrao – 98676 11174, Shri Shrikant Padalkar – 98688 57220