

*Sarsenapati Prataprao Gujar's letter to Mughal officers at Surat- April 1672*

*Know all you officers, qanunogoes, desais, merchants, mahajans, brokers, captains of the English, French, Dutch, and the general public of the port of Surat, living between fear and hope.*

*That at this time, the Maharaja (Shivaji) has ordered a true estimate to be made of annual custom duties on goods and merchandise in Surat, and one-fourth (Chauth) of this revenue to be levied as a tribute to the lion-like swordsman (Maratha army). For the performance of this work, he had appointed me, the humblest of his slaves. Therefore, in accordance with the royal order I write to you that if you, under the guidance of good fortune, deem obedience and submission to this order as politic and tending to your own good, obey the agent (gumasta) sent by me, and correctly show the records of the collection, it will be the cause of your good and the prosperity of the kingdom.*

*Otherwise soon expect the heroes of my army to come to this country for a tour and hunt and raze all the houses of the place to the ground so that no vestige of habitation will be visible; all the inhabitants of the place will be seized in the grasp of our wrath and fury; and not a man of them will al find the escape from the claws of the lion-hunting soldiers.*

*If you fondly hope for help from your Emperor, you will be utterly ruined, as we have already trampled on this realm twice and what remedy has he done? Should the smoke of your artillery and muskets becloud your brains, and make you consider your mere city walls as an impregnable fortress, then God willing, very soon our grand army will arrive here and scatter to the wind every stone of your city walls like a cotton-dresser scatters cotton. The very gun and muskets on which you are keeping the faith for your protection will then be used to the destruction of houses in this city.*

*Although the forts of Salher and Mulher rival Alexanders' ramparts in strength & none else has grasped their battlements even in the noose of his imagination, we captured them through our King's luck in such a short time as it takes to speak the word. Your fort of Surat is no better than a wall. How long it can bar the path of our hill-climbing heroes? You may have heard what misery and disgrace your Emperor's generals, Bahadur Khan, and Diler Khan bit the back of their hands,*

*struck the ground with their arms in despair, and were glad to flee from Salher to Pune.*

*It is simply out of graciousness to the humble that I have shown you pity and refrained from dispatching our army before the arrival of your answer. If providence befriends you and you pull the plug of negligence out of your ear of discretion and listen to the words of advice and good counsel then it will in every way result in your profit and heart's content. Otherwise, it will lead to your humiliation.*

*The letter was first published by Sir Jadunath Sarkar and republished here from his book 'House of Shivaji-Pg 158-160' Orient Longman, 1978.*

*The letter must have been written after the Battle of Salher as it clearly mentions the flight of Diler and Bahadur Khan.*