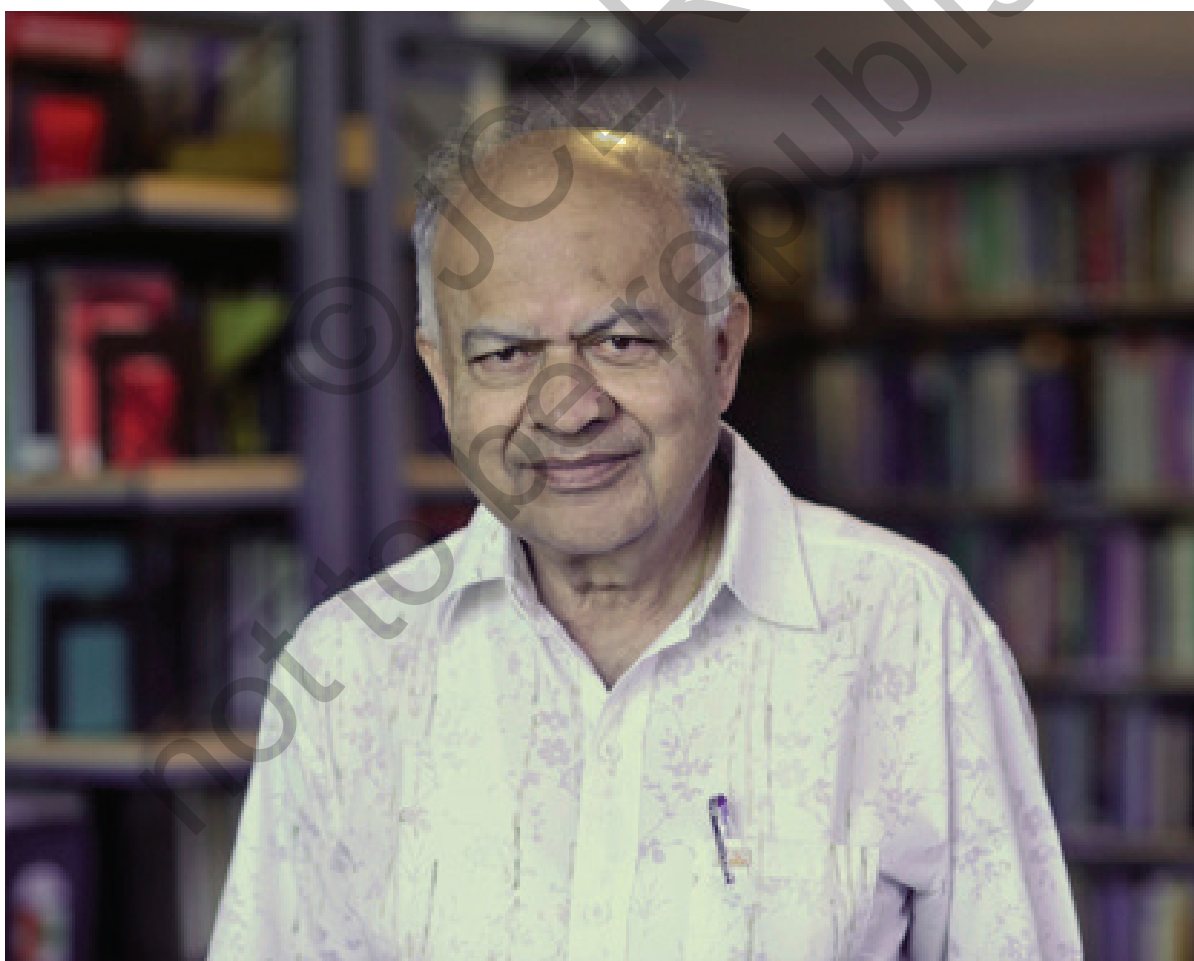


# The Adventure



**Jayant Narlikar**

## INTRODUCTION

The Adventure by Jayant Narlikar is a fictional narrative which belongs to the genre of science fiction and deals with the much intriguing aspect of time. The protagonist of this story, Professor Gaitonde, a historian is preparing for his thousandth presidential address in which he would speak on the topic "What course history would have taken if the result of the Battle of Panipat had gone the other way?". While on an evening stroll he is hit by a truck. In his state of unconsciousness his mind travels back into time where he experiences a different perspective of history from the prevalent one.

## SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The Jijamata Express train was running on Pune-Bombay route even faster than the Deccan Queen. The first stop came in 40 minutes. Then there was the Western Ghat section which Professor Gaitonde knew quite well. The train then passed through Kalyan station. It was, however, Gangadharpant's first visit to Bombay.

Professor Gaitonde worked out a plan of action in Bombay. He was a historian who had published five volumes. He planned to go to a big library and find out what historical events had led to the present state of affairs. Next, he would return to Pune to have a long talk with Rajendra Deshpande for further clarification.

The train stopped beyond the long tunnel. At a small station called Sarhad, an Anglo-Indian ticket checker entered the compartment. The professor had a fellow traveller Khan sahib who was on the way to Peshawar. Khan said that from Sarhad began the British Raj. The words painted on the blue carriages were Great Bombay metropolitan railway. The Union Jack was also painted on each bogey.

The train finally stopped at Victoria terminus. The station was neat and clean. The staff was mostly made up of Anglo-Indians and Parsees. Gangadhar walked out of the station. He found himself standing in front of Headquarters of East India Company. He hadn't expected this. The company had been wound up after 1857 according to the history book. Yet here he found the company alive and flourishing. He wondered how and when it had happened.

He walked along Hornby Road. He found British firms and offices of British banks there. He then entered Forbes building. He wished to meet Mr Vinay Gaitonde, working there. The receptionist was sorry to say that there was no such person on the staff. This was a blow but not totally unexpected. If he himself was dead in the world, his son could not be alive.

He wanted to go to the Town Hall library. He took a quick lunch and reached there.

He now got all the five volumes he himself had written up to the death of Aurangzeb. There was no change in history. The change had occurred only in the last volume. He turned over the

pages and came to the exact points where history had taken a different turn. The Battle of Panipat was fought between the Marathas and Abdali. Abdali was defeated and chased back to Kabul. The victorious Maratha army was led by Sadashivrao Bhau and his nephew, young Vishwasrao. This victory established the supremacy of the Marathas in northern India. The East India Company got the message to keep functioning for the time being. Its Influence was reduced to three cities—Bombay, Calcutta and Madras.

For political reasons, the Peshwas kept the puppet Mughal rule alive in Delhi. But in the 19th century, the Maratha rulers recognised the importance of science and technology. They set up their own centres of study and research. The East India Company grabbed the opportunity to extend its influence. It offered help as well as expertise.

The 20th century brought about further changes. India moved towards democracy and the grip of Peshwas grew weak. Gangadhar Pant began to admire the India that he had seen. He felt that India gave concession to East India Company from a position of strength and for commercial reasons. The Marathas leased out Bombay to the British in 1908. The lease was to expire in the year 2001. He could not help comparing the country he knew with what he was seeing around him.

He decided to find out how the Marathas won the Battle of Panipat. He found the clue in Bakhar. He read the three-

line account of how close Vishwasrao had come to being killed. The young general guided his horse to the scene of actual fighting. A shot brushed past his ear, and he luckily escaped death.

The librarian reminded Gangadhar that it was time to close the library. The professor put some notes into his right pocket. Absent-mindedly he put the Bakhar also into his left pocket.

He put up for the night in a guest house. After a frugal meal, he set out for a walk towards the Azad Maidan, where a lecture was in progress. But the table and chair on the dais were unoccupied. It was the presidential chair. The professor sank into that chair. There were protests. He proceeded with his lecture. But the audience was in no mood to listen. They hit him with tomatoes and eggs. It was his 999th lecture. He kept on talking. He was removed bodily and was thereafter seen nowhere.

When he finally met Rajendra at Pune, he had no idea where and how he had spent the past two days. He had met with a road accident and collided with a truck. At that time he was thinking of that crucial moment when history could have taken a U-turn. He produced a page torn out of a book to establish that his imagination was not running amuck. The book Bakhar was, however, lost somewhere in the Azad Maidan. Rajendra read that account how Vishwas Rao was hit by the bullet. It was material evidence. The professor's account was not a mere fantasy or a trick being played by his mind.

Rajendra tried to rationalise Gaitonde's experience. He called it a catastrophic experience. This theory could be aptly applied to the Battle of Panipat. The two armies of the Marathas and Abdali were equally matched. So a lot depended on the leadership and the morale of the soldiers. The point at which Vishwas Rao, the heir-son of the Peshwa, was killed, proved to be the turning point. His uncle was also perhaps killed. The loss of their two leaders killed the fighting spirit of the Maratha troops and they suffered defeat.

But Rajendra pointed out that Vishwas Rao was saved and the Maratha troops won the battle. Similar statements are made about the Battle of Waterloo which Napoleon could have won.

Rajendra then explained the second point—we experience reality directly with our senses. But It is limited to what we see. There are other manifestations of reality. Take the example of the atom and its particles. Their behaviour cannot be foretold definitely. If an electron is fired from a source, it won't go in the given direction as does a bullet from a gun. In one world the electron is found here, in another it is over there. The observer bases his experience on one finding. But other worlds exist just the same. The electron can make a jump from high to

low energy level. Such transitions are common. In other words, the professor also had made a move from one world to another and back again. So far as reality is concerned, all alternatives are true but the observer can see only one of them at a time. Professor Gaitonde was able to experience two worlds or periods of history although only one at a time. The one was his present, the other was where he had spent two days after the accident. He travelled neither to the past nor to the future. He was in the present, but he was experiencing a different world of what might have been.

But the professor wanted to know why he made the transition. Rajendra explained that perhaps at the time of the accident, he was thinking about the catastrophic theory and its role in wars. Perhaps he was wondering about the Battle of Panipat. The professor admitted that he had been wondering what course history would have taken if the result of the Battle had gone the other way. In fact, that was going to be the topic of his thousandth presidential address. But he wasn't going to deliver that thousandth lecture. He had tried to do that at the Azad Maidan where he was hooted down. So he had informed the organisers of the Panipat seminar about his inability to attend it.

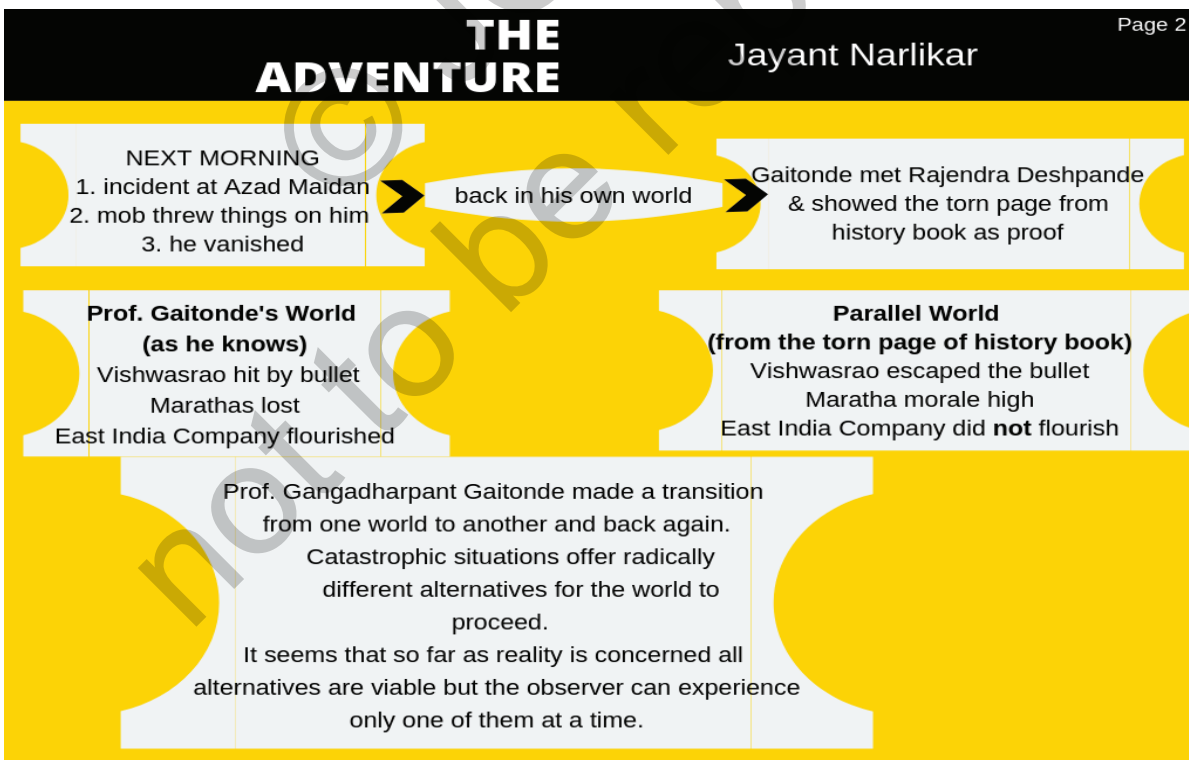
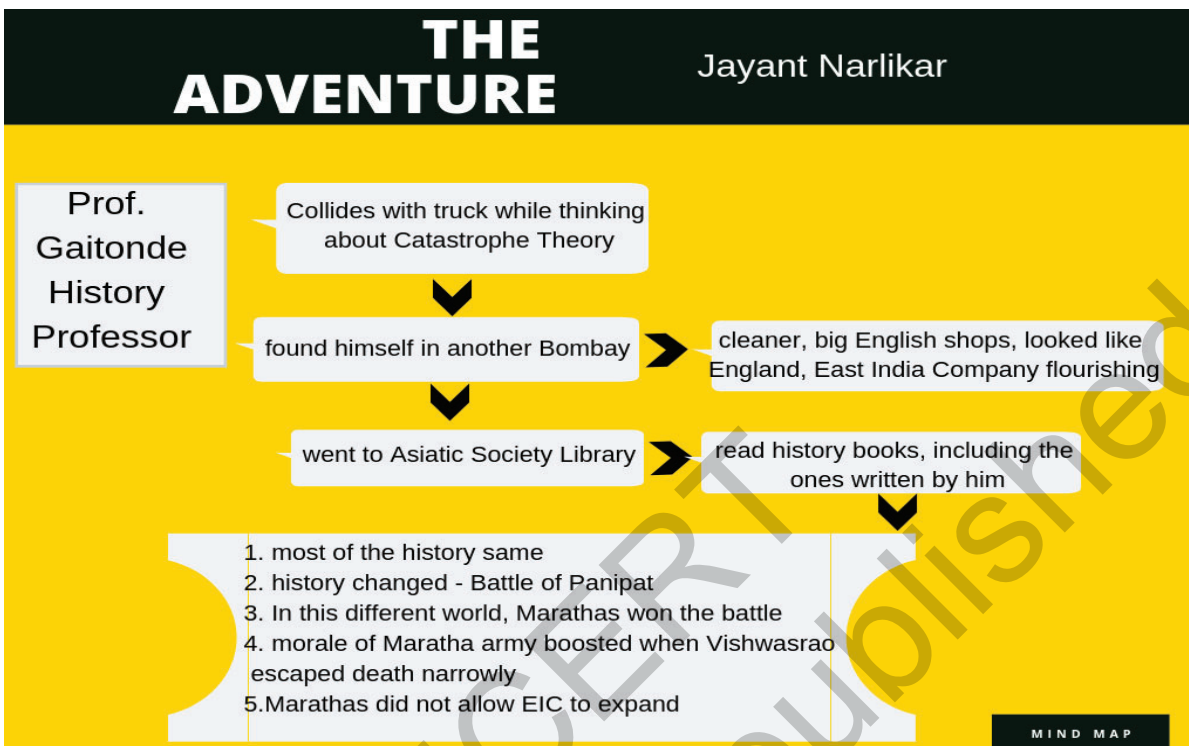
## IMPORTANT WORD NOTES

WORDS	MEANINGS
Blow by blow account	A detailed description of an event
Morale booster	Motivation, Feeling more confident
Relegated to	Moved to lower position, Exiled
De facto	In reality, Actually
Astute	Clever, Shrewd
Doctored account	Manipulated details, Incorrectly written details
Racing mind	Thinking quickly
Willing	Having the desire, Ready
Union jack	National flag of England
Imposing	Very big, Impressive, Grand
Wound up	Closed
Blow	Shock, Shocking information
Riddle	Puzzle
Converge	Meet, Coincide, Connect
Routed	Defeated
Consequence	Effect, Outcome,
Avidly	With great interest, Enthusiastically
Shelved	Postponed
Succeeded	Took over the throne, Take the position
Valour	Bravery
Rival	Opponent
Transition	Period of change
Outpost	A small office away from main area
Lease	To give on rent for a specified period
Treaty	Agreement normally between two groups
Emerged	Came out of
Dumbfounded	Surprised, Astonished
Inadvertently	Unintentionally
I am all ears	I am listening carefully
Viable	Possible



## MINDMAP

(1)



(2)

## MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. Whom did the Professor meet at the Hospital?

- (a) Speaker
- (b) Doctor
- (c) Rajendra
- (d) Khan Sahib

**Ans. (c) Rajendra**

2. For how many days did the professor live in the parallel world?

- (a) one day
- (b) two days
- (c) three days
- (d) a week

**Ans. (b) two days**

3. Why did Professor Rajendra say that the incidents narrated by Gaitonde were not real?

- (a) as his leg was broken
- (b) as he was not well
- (c) as he was in coma for two days
- (d) as he has severe disease

**Ans. (c) as he was in coma for two days**

4. What happened to Marathas in reality?

- (a) they lost the battle
- (b) they won the battle
- (c) they didn't make necessary arrangements
- (d) they made treaty

**Ans. (a) they lost the battle**

5. What happens in the case of electrons in lack of determinism in Quantum theory?

- (a) electrons don't move from their path
- (b) one cannot predict which path the electron takes at a point of time
- (c) electrons merge with other atoms
- (d) None of the above

**Ans. (b) one cannot predict which path the electron takes at a point of time**

6. Where did Professor Gaitonde and Khan Sahib get off?

- (a) Mumbai Central Railway Station.
- (b) Pune
- (c) Delhi
- (d) Victoria Terminus station

**Ans. (d) Victoria Terminus station**

7. How did the crowd react when he sat on the empty presidential chair?

- (a) heard his speech
- (b) did nothing but ignored him
- (c) threw several objects at him and pushed him away
- (d) asked him to leave rudely

**Ans. (c) threw several objects at him and pushed him away**

8. What did the Professor start investigating at Town Hall?

- (a) War of Succession
- (b) Battle of Buxar
- (c) The period of Asoka to the third battle of Panipat
- (d) Battle of Plassey

**Ans. (c) The period of Asoka to the third battle of Panipat**

9. What happened after the Battle of Panipat in India?

- (a) India merged with neighbouring nations
- (b) India moved to the path of democracy
- (c) British Rule came
- (d) Portuguese rule ended

**Ans. (b) India moved to the path of democracy**

10. What did the Professor notice at the Hornby road?

- (a) shops were different
- (b) drainage work was completed
- (c) shopping complex were destroyed
- (d) residential buildings were made

**Ans. (a) shops were different**

11. Where did the train stop beyond the tunnel?

- (a) a small town called Sarhad
- (b) a small town called Nera
- (c) In Ajmer
- (d) a small town called Majuli

**Ans. (a) a small town called Sarhad**

12. Why did the professor go to town hall?

- (a) to play snooker
- (b) to check facts from history books
- (c) to buy books
- (d) to meet someone

**Ans. (b) to check facts from history books**



## SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. Who was Professor Gaitonde? What was his plan in Bombay?

**Ans.** Professor Gaitonde or Gangadharpant was a historian. He had written five volumes on history. But his research work was still going on. He was on his way to Bombay. He planned to go to a big library and consult the history books there to find out how the present state of affairs was reached.

2. What was Gangadharpant's experience on way to Bombay?

**Ans.** Gangadharpant travelled by the Jijamata express along the Pune-Bombay route. His plan was to consult some history books at the library. At Sarhad station, an Anglo-Indian checked the permits. That was the place where the British Raj began. He got the company of one Khan Sahib on the train. He noticed that the city was quite different from what he had known about it.

3. What was Gangadhar's experience when he reached a small station Sarhad?

**Ans.** It was Gangadhar's first visit to this new Bombay. Every blue carriage carried the words 'Greater Bombay metropolitan railway' and also a small Union Jack painted on it. It gently

reminded him that he had entered British territory. An Anglo-Indian checked the train permits of the passengers.

4. What did Professor Gaitonde enter the Forbes building for? What was his experience there?

**Ans.** The professor went to Forbes building to meet Vinay Gaitonde, his own son. The receptionist searched through the telephone list and directory of employees. There was no one bearing that name. It was a big blow. He felt that so far everything had been shocking and surprising so the blow of non-existence of his son was not totally unexpected.

5. What did the professor do in the Town Hall library?

**Ans.** The professor asked for the history books he himself had written. There was no change in the events up to the death of Aurangzeb. The change had occurred in the last volume. He read the description of the Battle of Panipat. Abdali was defeated by the Maratha army led by Sadashiv Rao Bhau and his nephew Vishwas Rao. This event led to a power struggle. It established the supremacy of the Marathas. The British company was reduced to pockets of influence near Bombay. The Marathas set up their science research centres. They accepted the help of English experts.

6. What did the professor wish to find out in history books?

**Ans.** He wanted to find the answer to his question about how the Marathas had won the Battle of Panipat. He found a clue in the book on history titled Bakhar. Vishwasrao had a narrow escape from being killed by a bullet that brushed past his ear. This boosted the morale of the Maratha army and they fought bravely.

7. What bitter experience did the professor have at the meeting in Azad Maidan?

**Ans.** A lecture was in progress when the professor reached Azad Maidan. Seeing the presidential chair vacant, he occupied it swiftly. The audience protested. They said the chair was symbolic. But when the professor began to address the gathering, he was physically removed from the dais.

8. Why did Gangadhar decide to cancel his thousandth address?

**Ans.** Gangadhar informed the organisers of the Panipat seminar that he won't be able to keep his commitment. The reason was his bitter experience at the Azad Maidan meeting when the hostile crowd refused to listen to him and threw eggs and tomatoes at him.

## LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. Describe Gangadharpant's journey by train from Pune to Bombay.

**Ans.** Professor Gaitonde (Gangadharpant) travelled from Pune to Bombay by

train. The Jijamata express had its first stop at Lonavala. The ghat section was quite familiar to him. The train passed through Kalyan.

He made a plan of action in Bombay. He was a historian. He had written five volumes. He planned to go to a big library and read history books to find out how the present state of affairs had been reached. Thereafter, he would discuss his findings with Rajendra Deshpande.

The train stopped beyond the long tunnel at a small station, Sarhad. An Anglo-Indian checked the permits. This was the place where the British Raj began. Pant had not been to this Bombay before. He talked with his fellow passenger Khan sahib. The professor got some information on life in British India. He also noticed the words written and the Union Jack painted on the carriage. He had not expected all that.

2. Give a brief account of Professor Gaitonde's stay and study of history books at Town Hall library. What riddle was he keen to solve?

**Ans.** In Bombay, the professor went to the Town Hall library. He asked for the five volumes he had written. Up to the death of Aurangzeb, there was no change in history. The change had taken place in the last volume. Turning over the pages, he reached the exact point where history had taken a different turn. It was the Battle of Panipat in which the Maratha army had defeated Abdali. The victorious army was led by the young Vishwasrao. Thereafter began the power struggle in India. It was his own style of writing.

The Maratha victory dampened the spirit and plans of the East India Company. Its influence was reduced to Bombay region. In the 19th century, the Peshwas needed the help of the British at their centres for science and technology. They gave an opportunity to the company to extend its influence. Then came democracy. The professor could

not help comparing the country he knew with what he was witnessing around him.

3. How did Rajendra Deshpande apply his theory of catastrophic experience regarding the Battle of Panipat?

**Ans.** Gangadharpant narrated to Rajendra his experience at the Azad Maidan meeting. For two days he was in a coma. He had met with an accident. He had now returned to the world he was familiar with. He asked Rajendra to explain where he had spent those days.

He admitted that just before the collision he had been thinking of the catastrophic theory and how it could change the course of history. He produced a page from the Bakhar to prove that his mind was working normally. The page described that Vishwasrao had not escaped the bullet, he had rather been hit and killed by the bullet. It was just contrary to what his own history book said. And he wanted to know the facts.