



**INDIAN SCHOOL MUSCAT**  
**SENIOR SECTION**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**  
**CLASS XI**  
**THE ADVENTURE**  
**JAYANT NARLIKAR**



---

In this story, a fantasy, the writer combines history, science and philosophy in a unique way. Professor Gaitonde is hit by a truck and loses his consciousness for a few days. During this period he finds himself in a different world. In that different world, Bombay is still under the British rule and the rest of India is independent. In independent India, there is the Prime Minister called Peshwa staying in Pune, and the Mughal Emperor, now a titular head of the state, staying in Delhi. In the real world, the Marathas lost the Battle of Panipat. However, in this different world of the professor, the Marathas had won the Battle of Panipat. The Maratha confederacy is as strong as ever, and the British are confined only to Bombay (now Mumbai).

The Physicist Professor Rajendra Deshpande tries to explain Professor Gaitonde's experience on the basis of theories of catastrophe and lack of determinism in quantum theory. He tells Gaitonde that he travelled neither to the past nor to the future, and that he was in the present, only experiencing the kind of the world he wished to see. He says his history was the history as it ought to have taken place in his view. At the time of collision the professor might have been thinking of the catastrophe theory.

### **TEXTUAL NOTES**

➤ **Professor Gaitonde's adventure into a different world**

- Gaitonde finds himself in a train going to Bombay
- One 'Khan Sahib' tells him that the British Raj has begun from the station called 'Sarhad'
- An Anglo Indian in uniform is seen checking permits in the train.
- Gaitonde (Gangadhar Pant) is surprised to find Bombay under the British rule
- Sees East India Company's office, British companies and stores
- Fails to see his son, Mr. Vinay Gaitonde at his office (his son lives in modern day Bombay)
- Goes to the Asiatic society library to check historical facts

➤ **New history versus actual history**

➤ **New History**

- Professor reads startling facts, even in his own book – he finds history upto Aurangzeb's death, but it takes a different turn thereafter

- Marathas won the Battle of Panipat
- Abdali chased away
- the influence of the East India Company got restricted to pockets like Bombay, Madras and Calcutta
- Marathas retained the puppet Mughal regime for political reasons
- set up centres for science and technology
- Peshwas gradually replaced by elected representatives in a democratic India
- Bombay was a British business outpost, on lease up to 2001
- Professor wants to know how Marathas had won the Battle of Panipat
- learnt that a bullet brushed past Vishwasrao and he was saved

➤ **Actual History**

- Marathas had lost the Battle of Panipat
- Vishwasrao was killed and his uncle Bhausaheb had disappeared for ever – the Marathas had been led by the two
- the British came to rule over the whole of India
- the Mughal king became a puppet king

➤ **Professor Gaitonde at a public meeting**

- Professor fond of addressing public meetings strolled into Azad Maidan
- a meeting was going on
- occupies the vacant chair of the President
- roughed up by the public that hurl tomatoes and eggs at him
- ejected out of the meeting bodily by some persons

➤ **scientific explanation**

- Professor lay unconscious after a collision with a truck
- his mind travelled back in time
- before the accident, Professor was preparing a lecture on ‘What course history would have taken if the result of the Battle of Panipat had gone the other way?’
- thus his mind took him to the Battle of Panipat
- Professor Rajendra Deshpande, a physicist friend, explained his experience by using catastrophe theory and the lack of determinism in quantum theory which makes us see reality from a different viewpoint
- Professor Gaitonde asks his friend why he made the transition
- Professor Rajendra said he might be thinking of the catastrophe theory at the time of collision

**TEXTUAL QUESTIONS AND SHORT ANSWERS**

1. ‘You neither travelled to the past nor to the future. You were in the present experiencing a different world’

Explain.

According to RajendraDeshpande, Professor Gaitonde was experiencing a different reality in a different world in the present. He had undergone the experience of the two different worlds one at a time. After the collision, he saw what he wanted to see about the Indian history in the real world of the present, not of the past.

2. ‘You have passed through a fantastic experience or more correctly a catastrophic experience.’ Explain

Professor RajendraDeshpande viewed Professor Gaitonde’s experience as catastrophic because it was really unusual. He saw the victory of the Marathas just as most Indians would like to see. His experience at the Azad Maidan where he was hooted and mishandled by the public was really catastrophic.

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

Explain.

Gangadharpart was surprised to see Bombay still under British rule and to read that the Marathas had won the Battle of Panipat. He could not reconcile what he saw with what he knew. So he consulted books on History in a library. Thus, he could not help comparing the actual part with what he was seeing. One part of his mind instinctively told him that what he was seeing could not be real.

4. Explain the statement that there is ‘the lack of determinism in quantum theory.’

RajendraDeshpande refers to the lack of determination in quantum theory. Experiments on atoms and their constituent particles (electrons, for instance) show that reality may not be unique. The behavior of atomic particles cannot be predicted definitely. If a bullet is fired, we can determine where it will be at a later time. But an electron fired from a source may be found anywhere. It can be orbiting in any of a large number of specified states. Moreover, it can jump from a higher energy level to a lower energy level, and vice versa. Such transitions are common in what we call microscopic systems.

5. ‘You need some interaction to cause a transition.’ Discuss the statement.

So far reality is concerned, all alternatives are viable. However, the observer can experience only one of them at a time. Gaitonde made a transition from one world to another and back again. Two situations were totally different. Gaitonde underwent the experience of two worlds one at a time. The transition from one world to the other needs some trigger. In Gaitonde’s case, it seems that his thoughts about the catastrophe theory and its role in wars and the Battle of Panipat at the time of his being hit by the truck caused the transient. Of course, the precise cause of transition would remain a mystery.

**Answer the following questions in 30-40 words:**

1. What did Professor Gaitonde think of while he was travelling in a train?

Prof. Gaitonde was thinking of a plan to go to a big library and read the history books to know how the present state of affairs was reached. He also planned to consult RajendraDeshpande after coming back to Pune.

2. Why was Gangadhar shocked when he came out of the train?

Gangadhar came out of the train and the railway station. He was shocked to see a very big building on which it was written that it was the Head Quarters of the East India Company. But he remembered that the company had already left India after the events of 1857.

3. What did Professor Gaitonde do at the Forbes Office?

Prof. Gaitonde went to the Forbes Office and told the English receptionist that he wanted to meet Mr. Vinay Gaitonde. She searched through the telephone list, the staff list and the directory of employees of all other branches but could not find any employee of that name.

4. Why did Gaitonde go to the Town Hall? What did he do there?

Professor went to the library of the Asiatic Society in the Town Hall to solve the riddle of the history. He got many books on history including his own. He studied the books keenly to find the solution to his problem.

5. ‘The change evidently had occurred in the last volume.’ How?

Professor Gaitonde studied all the five volumes of the book but in the last volume, history had taken a different turn. It was that the Marathas had won the Battle of Panipat handsomely. Abdali was routed by Vishwasrao.

6. What was the result of the Maratha victory over Abdali?

The victory was a great morale booster to the Marathas. Moreover, it also established the Maratha supremacy in northern India. The East India Company had to temporarily abandon its expansionist programme.

7. What were the changes seen in the twentieth century?

In the twentieth century, changes were inspired by the West. India became a democratic country. The Peshwas were replaced by democratically elected bodies. The Shahenshah of Delhi became the nominal head.

8. Why did Gangadhar begin to appreciate the India he had seen?

Gangadhar began to appreciate the India he had seen because it was independent, not a slave of the whites. It was self-reliant and powerful and had allowed the British to hold Bombay as the sole outpost purely for commercial reasons.

9. How was Gangadhar treated when he occupied the presidential chair?

When Gangadhar occupied the presidential chair, the audience reacted sharply. The people asked him to vacate the chair. He tried to convince them but became the target of tomatoes, eggs and other objects. Ultimately, he was ejected out of it physically.

10. What is Rajendra Deshpande’s view of reality?

Rajendra Deshpande opines that reality is not limited to what we see. It has other manifestations. We experience it directly with our senses or indirectly via instruments. The idea ‘it might have been’ is good for the sake of speculation but not for reality.

**11. What was Gangadhar’s ‘vital piece of evidence’?**

Gangadhar had inadvertently slipped the Bakhar in his pocket when he left the library. He was left with only a torn off page of the book which contained the vital evidence that described how Vishwasrao narrowly missed the bullet.

**12. How was Catastrophic Theory applied to the Battle of Panipat?**

Rajendra justified the application of the Catastrophic Theory by saying that the Maratha army was facing Abdali’s troops. Both the armies were equally strong. But the turning point came when the bullet missed Vishwasrao, which made all the difference.

**Answer the following questions in 100-120 words:**

**1. What is Catastrophic theory? How is it used in this chapter?**

Jayant Narlikar in the story ‘The Adventure’ combines history, science and philosophy in a unique way. Catastrophic Theory was originated by the French mathematician, Rene Thom, in 1960s. It is a special branch of dynamical systems theory. It studies and classifies phenomena characterised by sudden shifts in behavior arising from small changes in circumstances.

Rajendra Deshpande uses this theory to explain the Battle of Panipat. Both the armies of Abdali and the Marathas were equally strong. But the bullet missed Vishwasrao. Its effect on the troops was that of morale booster. Similar statements are made about the Battle of Waterloo which Napolean could have won. As regards Gangadhar who, by making transition, was able to experience two worlds although one at a time, the one he lived in at that time and the other where he spent two days.

**2. ‘You have passed through a fantastic experience: or more correctly, a catastrophic experience.’ Explain.**

Jayant Narlikar in the story ‘The Adventure’ combines history, science and philosophy in a unique way. Rajendra Deshpande calls Gaitonde’s experience of the alternative world fantastic, rather catastrophic.

In reality, seen from the historical point of view, the Marathas lost the Battle of Panipat when Vishwasrao, the heir to the Peshwas, fell to a stray bullet. In the alternative world, the bullet missed Vishwasrao by a whisker. The Marathas won the battle. The Marathas won over the whole country except for Bombay which continues to be ruled by the British. That is why, in the different world, there is the Head Quarter of the East India Company in Bombay, which was historically shut down

soon after 1857. Gaitonde's experience of the audience at the Azad Maidan where he had to face a shower of tomatoes, eggs and other objects by the hostile audience was really catastrophic.

3. Gangadhar could not help comparing the country he knew with what he was witnessing around him. Discuss the statement.

JayantNarlikar in the story 'The Adventure' combines history, science and philosophy in a unique way. In the new world, different from the actual, Gangadhar saw that Bombay was still under the British. He was surprised. When he went to a library, he was greatly surprised to read in the historical accounts something different from what he knew about the actual world. The Marathas, he learnt, had won the Battle of Panipat and established their rule in northern India. The British did not rule the whole of India. The influence of the East India Company was limited to the areas near Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. The Peshwas kept the Mughal emperor as the titular head of the state. The East India Company offered aid and experts which were accepted to develop the local centres.

Gangadhar was happy to learn that India had not been subjected to slavery and flourished under the Maratha rule. Only Bombay was allowed to remain with the British on lease. The lease was going to expire in 2001.

4. 'You neither travelled to the past nor the future. You were in the present experiencing a different world.' Explain briefly.

JayantNarlikar in the story 'The Adventure' combines history, science and philosophy in a unique way. RajendraDeshpande made it clear to Professor Gangadhar that he had not been transported. He was experiencing a different reality in a different world in the present itself.

He explained his point in detail. He said that when a bullet is fired, we can determine where it will be at a later time. In the case of an electron, we cannot determine its destination. In one world the electron may be found at one place and in the other at a different one. The electron, he said, can orbit in any of a large number of states. It can make a jump from one level to the other.

This is what happened to Gaitonde. After the collision, he had been in an alternative universe by making a transition. In fact, he had undergone the experience of two different worlds one at a time.