

Jnana Prabodhini Competitive Examinations Centre, Pune.

**Celebrating journey of its alumnus
on account of
Tridashakpurti Varsha 2025-26
(30 years of establishment)**

Shri. Sanjay Shinde

- Chief Officer - Maharashtra Urban Administrative Services - Batch of 2004
- Presently, working as Dy Commissioner, Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation
- BSc Agri, Parbhani - Batch of 2001
- Advance PG Diploma in Urban Management
- Previously worked across Palghar, Mahad, Thane, Khopoli, Mira Bhayandar, Pune under various responsibilities.



Sanjay Shinde is a distinguished officer in the Maharashtra government with a special passion for urban administration. Sanjay emphasizes the crucial familial support, stringent self-discipline, and strong adaptability which has facilitated him in working in one of the demanding services in the rapidly growing Urban centres of Maharashtra.

Roots, Academic Excellence, and Parental Ambition

Sanjay traces his origins to Manoor village, located in the Naigaon Taluka of Nanded District. He completed his initial schooling, up to the fourth standard, within his native village. Subsequently, he pursued his education from the fifth to the tenth standard at his maternal uncle's village, Halda, in the Kandhar Taluka of Nanded District. Sanjay completed his higher secondary education (11th and 12th standard) at Yashwant College, Nanded.

Following his schooling, Sanjay gained admission to the Marathwada Agricultural University, Parbhani, where he pursued a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (B.Sc. Agriculture). He completed his four-year degree from 1997 to 2001.

Sanjay's parents, though uneducated farmers, harbored an intense desire for him to become an officer. They provided all the financial support necessary for his agricultural education. Significantly, Sanjay recounts that during that period, pursuing a D.Ed. (Diploma in Education) after 12th grade was highly in demand, often leading directly to a teaching job. Sanjay was a top scorer in his college and secured admission to D.Ed.. However, his neighbors dissuaded him, asserting that while everyone becomes a teacher, Sanjay should pursue a dream of becoming something different. His father assured him of full financial backing, stipulating only that Sanjay maintain his study efforts and hard work. This encouragement became foundational to Sanjay's journey.

Sanjay also acknowledges the critical support received from his relatives, specifically Shri Sanhay D.Shinde who was then a Asst.Commissioner of Police (ACP), and his brother Shri Shyam Sundar Shinde, as IAS officer. These relatives continually motivated him, stressing the necessity of good classes, focused study, and residing in Pune for optimal preparation. They offered timely assistance that enabled him to pursue his studies at the Jnana Prabodhini center.

The Competitive Leap: MPSC and the Call to Pune

Sanjay began his MPSC preparation immediately after graduating in 2001, coinciding with the MPSC notification for that year. He dedicated the first six months to Preliminary examination preparation in Parbhani University, studying alongside his friends.

A pivotal moment occurred when Sanjay met Dr. Shivaji Patil, who hailed from his village and had achieved selection as a Deputy Collector in the 2000 MPSC batch. Dr. Patil, who had studied at Jnana Prabodhini, advised Sanjay to shift his base to the Jnana Prabodhini Competitive Examination Centre in Pune for his Mains preparation. Dr. Patil assured Sanjay that this move would accelerate his selection and maximize his score, noting that simply passing the preliminary stage was insufficient. Following this crucial advice, Sanjay left Parbhani and moved to Pune.

Sanjay first met the senior management, Tai and Sir, at Jnana Prabodhini at the end of November 2001. He immediately encountered the institution's core principle: admission relied strictly on merit, not influence. Tai and Sir informed him he must pass an entrance exam to gain admission, rejecting any notion that his high scores or prior acquaintance would grant him entry. This experience immediately shattered Sanjay's concept that admission might

be secured simply by paying fees or leveraging personal connections. He observed that Jnana Prabodhini prioritized quality and talent above all else. Sanjay subsequently prepared for and passed the institution's entrance examination, officially commencing his association with Jnana Prabodhini in 2002.



Sanjay with JP batchmates to Raigad trip in 2005.

Discipline, Mentorship, and the Power of the Jnana Prabodhini Ecosystem

Sanjay's time at Jnana Prabodhini spanned approximately seven years, concluding in 2008 upon his final selection. He describes the environment as highly disciplined and focused. In 2002, facilities like social media or mobile phones did not exist. His routine involved travelling from his hostel to the center, spending the day under the guidance of Tai and Sir, and studying in the library. His schedule typically ran from 7 AM to 9 PM, beginning with breakfast and arriving at the library by 7:30 AM. Competition for prime seating in the library was high, pushing students to arrive early. He spent the morning studying, took MPSC classes after 4 PM, and studied for an additional one or two hours after classes ended.

A key difference Sanjay highlights is the lack of commercialism compared to other classes. Jnana Prabodhini focused entirely on merit. The center did not aggressively promote previously selected students. In fact, students lined up to gain admission, and the center selected them via examination, rather than seeking students.

Financially, Jnana Prabodhini displayed remarkable flexibility. Sanjay mentions many rural students who struggled to afford books or hostel fees. Unlike other institutions that demanded full upfront payment for admission, Jnana Prabodhini never pressured students regarding fees. Sanjay himself paid his annual fees only as his finances permitted throughout the year, without ever being denied access to classes or services.

The institutional culture emphasized *sanskar* (values) and discipline. Sanjay notes that the values instilled by Tai and Sir remain crucial guidance even in his current job. He left the institution formally in 2008, yet even today, he vividly recalls the Saturday 7:30 PM prayer and dedicates five minutes to that memory. He stresses that these values are beneficial not just for competitive exams, but for professional life as well.

The teaching staff often comprised formerly selected students who were already employed as officers. This meant the guidance incorporated practical, real-world experience alongside theoretical MPSC knowledge, which proved immensely helpful to the aspirants.

Jnana Prabodhini Competitive Examinations Center (JPCEC) fostered a strong sense of community, the "Jnana Prabodhini Parivar" (Family). This was evident among multiple batches, spanning those selected before 2002 and those who followed. Sanjay entered in the 2002 batch, but the center had operated since 1995. This network created unique teamwork and affection among the alumni, regardless of their seniority. Sanjay equates this bond to the strong affinity found among alumni of Agriculture colleges in Maharashtra. Even 17 years after his selection, Sanjay notes that this identity carries a different prestige in administrative circles, even in the Mantralaya (Government Secretariat).

Tai and Sir provided crucial emotional support. Sanjay recalls that they were like his parents, supporting him through both happiness and sorrow. He failed his MPSC exam three times before securing selection on the fourth attempt, but they constantly encouraged him to keep studying, assuring him that his time would come.

The Four-Year Ordeal and Strategic Subject Change

Sanjay's journey to selection was prolonged and challenging. The 2004 MPSC batch was exceptionally lengthy, taking four years to complete the process, including preliminary, main, interview, selection, and joining.

Initially, Sanjay felt confident. He was only 21 years old when he cleared his 2001 Preliminary exam on the first attempt. However, the MPSC examination cycle itself was irregular during that period; advertisements came out infrequently (once every two or three years) and often offered very few positions.

Sanjay failed the Mains in his first attempt. The 2002 advertisement offered only 64 vacancies, causing the preliminary merit to soar, and Sanjay failed the Preliminary stage that year. In the 2003 attempt, he reached the main exam but failed there.

He attributes his early failures partly to his subject choices. Coming from an agricultural background, he initially chose Agriculture and Horticulture as his optional subjects. Low marks in Horticulture hampered his selection. For his 2003 attempt, he changed Horticulture to Geography, keeping Agriculture. However, low marks in Agriculture again prevented his selection.

The repeated failures—especially reaching the interview and still failing—led to profound depression. Sanjay struggled to understand why hard work was not yielding results. Tai and Sir intervened, advising him to drop Agriculture, noting that there was no mandatory link between his graduation subject and his optional subjects.

Following their counsel, Sanjay replaced Agriculture with Psychology. He kept Geography, a subject he inherently liked since childhood (his uncle was a Geography teacher). Psychology, a subject unrelated to his graduation, was chosen purely based on the guidance of Tai and Sir, and the help of Shitole Sir, the Psychology faculty at the center.

He dedicated himself to exhaustive preparation. He collected notes from Psychology students at Pune University, FC College, and SP College. He also formed a dedicated study group at Jnana Prabodhini that focused on Psychology and Geography, including UPSC aspirants (now IRS officer Dr. Shanteshwar Swami) and other MPSC peers

In his final, successful 2004 attempt, Sanjay secured exceptionally high marks in both Psychology and Geography. He attained 148 marks in Psychology, possibly the highest among MPSC aspirants taking that subject that year. These high scores secured his selection as a Chief Officer.

The dedication required immense personal sacrifice. Throughout his seven years of preparation, Sanjay frequently skipped going home for Diwali. He feared the teasing of villagers and the resulting distress of his parents, who were often mocked for having a son chasing an officer's dream without success. Instead, he celebrated Diwali with Tai, Sir, and fellow students at Jnana Prabodhini who also chose to stay back.

The Shift to Urban Administration: Chief Officer (MUAS)

Sanjay initially harbored the common ambition of MPSC aspirants: becoming a Deputy Collector. Accordingly, his first preference was always Deputy Collector, with Chief Officer placed last.

However, during the 2004 interview stage, his batchmate Shri Ganesh Shete (who was already a Chief Officer from the 2001 batch) advised him to change his preference. GANESH foresaw the future reliance on urbanization and municipal administration. He strongly recommended Sanjay place Chief Officer above the Block Development Officer (BDO) post. Sanjay followed this advice, placing Deputy Collector first, then Tehsildar, and then Chief Officer. He ultimately received the post of Chief Officer.

Sanjay joined the service in 2008, coinciding with the growing importance of the Urban Development Department. Today, candidates frequently place Chief Officer as their first or second preference due to increasing urbanization.

The structure of the service evolved significantly. The "Chief Officer Nagar Parishad" post was abolished in 2022. The Government of Maharashtra, guided by a 15th Finance Commission mandate requiring states to establish dedicated urban administration cadres, became the *first state in India* to form a separate administrative cadre for urban governance. This service, named the "Maharashtra Urban Administrative Services" (MUAS), was formally established on January 25, 2023. The new service merged the former Chief Officer and the Commissioner and Director of Municipal Administration cadres.

The MUAS aims to ensure that trained officers manage urban administration. It reserves specific positions within various urban bodies, including Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils, CIDCO, MMRDA, and other authorities.

Sanjay details the training structure. During his era, officers underwent six months of training at YASHADA, covering all aspects of urban administration, revenue, police, judiciary, and cooperative societies. Currently, all MPSC selected officers undergo a common training period (CTPT) for two years followed by specific departmental training and six months of field training, totaling two years of mandatory training.

The MUAS cadre has grown substantially. Starting with a lower strength, it now comprises 1,000 sanctioned posts, with 700 officers currently working. The state now has over 465 urban local bodies, including 29 Municipal Corporations. With urbanization exceeding 50%

and the government focusing intensely on urban development, Sanjay asserts that the MUAS cadre will gain immense importance in the future. Furthermore, unlike the past where only Revenue services (like Deputy Collector) offered clear paths to IAS, the MUAS cadre now provides IAS opportunities, with one officer gaining IAS status last year.

However, the role demands resilience. Sanjay notes that the service comes with intense political pressure and public pressure. Though the geographical area of administration might be small, the population density is high. For example, his current posting in Navi Mumbai covers 110 square kilometers but serves 20 lakh people. The officer bears responsibility for providing essential amenities like water supply, drainage, roads, lights, and gardens.

A Portfolio of Impact: Achievements Across Nine Postings

In his 17 years of service, Sanjay has held nine different postings.

1) Palghar (2008–2009):

The Initial Transition Sanjay's first posting was as Chief Officer of Palghar Nagar Parishad (then in Thane district). He joined on December 1, 2008. Palghar was a significant urban center, already boasting a population of 1 lakh. It was in a transitional phase, slated to become a district. Sanjay faced challenges typical of a new posting: political issues, staff shortages, and financial difficulties, which he worked to resolve. During his one-year tenure, he successfully conducted two elections—the Municipal elections and the Lok Sabha election, serving as the ARO

2) Mahad: The Learning Ground

His second posting was at Mahad Nagar Palika in Raigad district. Mahad, a smaller, historic city in the Konkan region, served as his true "progression period". The city was established by the British in 1865. Sanjay found the citizens and media highly informed and supportive. People often challenged decisions based on legal arguments, forcing him to learn urban administration thoroughly. The city maintained high discipline and excellent infrastructure, including its own gravitational water supply dam.

Crucially, Mahad is significant as the site of the historic Chaudar Tale (Chaudar Lake), sanctified by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Sanjay, who held deep respect for Dr. Ambedkar and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, used his preparatory habit of reading historical texts to study the site extensively. He confirmed that the name "Chaudar Tale" meant "14 wells". Working with the Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Research Institute in Pune, he documented the history of the 20

March 1927 Satyagraha. With support from state Hon.Chief Ministers (Shri Prithviraj Chavan and Shri Ashokrao Chavan) and then-Principal Secretary Hon.Shri Manu Kumar Srivastava (later Chief Secretary), Sanjay secured government aid to develop the site. In 2011, his team pumped out the water from the lake and located the 14 original wells, which he subsequently restored. He also leveraged Mahad's proximity to Raigad Fort, visiting it 25 times during his posting.



Sanjay Shinde working on-field in the flood areas to manage the 2010 massive floods in Mahad.

3) Kalyan Dombivli (2012–2016):

Financial Innovation Sanjay worked in five Municipal Corporations, including Kalyan Dombivli (KDMC). From 2012 to 2016, he served under senior IAS officers (Shri E Ravindran, Shri Rsmnath Sonawane) A major challenge at the time was the state mandate to abolish Octroi and introduce the Local Body Tax (LBT). While others predicted failure and revenue loss (KDMC earned 132 crore from Octroi), Sanjay was tasked with ensuring successful LBT implementation. Through proper study, organizing meetings with stakeholders (local representatives, traders), and clearly explaining the LBT system's benefits and transparency, he secured public cooperation. Consequently, KDMC generated 152 crore in revenue in the very first year of LBT. This strong financial performance ensured that when the government abolished LBT in 2015, KDMC received substantial state grants based on their final LBT revenue, an ongoing benefit. He also worked to increase Property Tax revenue and focused on early e-governance initiatives, including developing a data center.

4) Thane Municipal Corporation: 2016-17

In Thane, Sanjay worked under Commissioner Sanjeev Jaiswal Sir. His key role involved massive road widening and encroachment removal initiatives, which were foundational to developing modern, smart Thane.

5) Khopoli: 2017-2019

Achieving National Recognition, Sanjay held an independent posting as Chief Officer of Khopoli Nagar Parishad. He focused intensely on the Prime Minister's *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* (SBM). He successfully developed a dumping ground and processing plant and cultivated the habit of waste segregation among citizens. These efforts secured Khopoli the President's Award in 2017 for achieving the third rank nationally among cities with a population of 1 lakh. Sanjay describes this achievement—receiving a national award from the President—as a monumental personal and professional accomplishment.



Sanjay along with local residents and representatives of Khopoli after winning the Presidents Award for Swachh Bharat Mission in 2017.

6) Panvel Municipal Corporation: 2019-2021

Sanjay was requested by the Commissioner to join the newly formed Panvel Municipal Corporation. This new corporation, developing rapidly near Mumbai, presented extreme administrative challenges. He used his ten years of experience to manage the establishment of Property Tax systems, health facilities, and educational infrastructure under Commissioners Shri Ganesh Deshmukh Sir and later Shri Sudhakar Deshmukh Sir. He played a crucial role in providing healthcare services during the COVID-19 pandemic, minimizing deaths despite a lack of prior infrastructure.

7) Mira-Bhayandar Municipal Corporation: 2021-2024

In Mira-Bhayandar, a dense, population-heavy city next to Mumbai, Sanjay realized the scarcity of public amenities (gardens and playgrounds). He concentrated his efforts on developing 79 gardens and 12 playgrounds. This work, under the *Majhi Vasundhara Abhiyan* (Mother Earth Campaign), secured Mira-Bhayandar the State First Award for two consecutive years, along with a prize of 11 crore rupees from the Chief Minister. Additionally, his work in e-governance and the development of the municipal website won the highest state honor, the Rajiv Gandhi Gatimanta Abhiyan Award, presented by the Chief Minister. His team also increased Property Tax collection from 180 crore to 223 crore, earning the corporation the First Prize in the state for collection efficiency. Overall, this service provided him opportunities to receive awards from the President (Clean India), the Governor (COVID response), and the Chief Minister (e-governance and environment).



Sanjay along with officials and stakeholders planting 10,000 saplings in Mira Bhayandar further securing the award under Mazi Vasundhara Abhiyaan.

8) Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC): 2024 - till date

Sanjay served for over a year in Pune, where he had studied. He was posted as the Deputy Commissioner for Zone 3 (Sinhagad, Warje, and Dhankawadi). He also managed the massive Environment and IT departments. Working under Additional Commissioner Prithviraj Sir, Sanjay focused on the National Clean Air Program (NCAP). PMC utilized a central grant of 125 crore for initiatives to improve air quality. These efforts contributed to Pune receiving the First Prize in the Pune division for its environmental report last year.

9) Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) Indias 2nd Smart city, now handling Zone and social welfare department as well as 16th Census

Navigating Political Pressure and Administrative Hurdles

Sanjay maintains that challenges exist in every city and every posting. Success requires convincing two primary authorities. First, the Commissioner must agree with the proposed concept and its benefits. Second, the local representatives—corporators, mayors, and MLAs—must understand and support the decision.

Sanjay often encountered opposition when introducing new concepts. Representatives sometimes claimed a lack of funds or inherent difficulties. He notes that political pressure in this service is immense, extending from corporators up to the Minister level. Politicians, facing elections every five years, require concrete work in their wards. When Sanjay had to say "no" because a request violated the law (*kāyadāt nāhī basat*), he faced resistance.

He recounts instances where local leaders insisted previous officers had complied, questioning why Sanjay was strictly adhering to rules. He often heard demands like, "If you insist on rules every time, we need a different officer". Sanjay learned to calmly explain that following the rules benefited both the administration and the politician, ensuring no future legal trouble.

Specific struggles often centered on financial issues. For instance, developing gardens in Mira-Bhayandar faced initial political opposition because representatives saw it as an unnecessary expenditure, arguing that it did not immediately benefit voters. Sanjay convinced them by emphasizing its long-term necessity, which is now validated as it becomes an electoral benefit for them. Similarly, he faced massive resistance when attempting to increase Property Tax revenues. In Panvel, the transition from a Gram Panchayat tax of ₹500 to a Municipal Corporation tax of ₹2,000 sparked widespread outrage. Representatives were concerned about public backlash. Sanjay stressed that as a major city next to Mumbai, Panvel needed funds for development, arguing that "without money, nothing happens". Although the matter reached the Supreme Court, the court ruled in favor of the Corporation. This persistence ensured Panvel secured roughly 1,200 crore rupees over four years, a significant financial achievement.

Sanjay's management philosophy involves comprehensive study before implementation. He refuses to apply one city's template to another. He makes it a practice to study the specific characteristics, geographical situation, local mindset, and representatives' mentality of each new city before making any decisions. His success stems from his MPSC study habit: deeply

analyzing government resolutions (GRs) and schemes, even traveling to departments to xerox documents to find funding sources, ensuring the city's financial stability.

Vision for Future Urban Development and Sustainability

Sanjay recognizes that rapid, unplanned urbanization creates immense challenges in India. He notes that while new areas (like Navi Mumbai and Chandigarh) are planned, older, established cities (Pune, Delhi, Mumbai) developed organically, leading to congestion and inadequate infrastructure. Redeveloping these areas is difficult due to high congestion, small roads, and the high cost of land acquisition and compensation.

His future vision emphasizes planning for the next 50 years. Sanjay stresses the importance of using modern urban planning tools, such as the Town Planning Schemes (TPS), which the state government is now promoting.

Key strategic priorities include:

1. **Infrastructure First:** New suburban areas and cities must develop infrastructure (roads, drainage, water, electricity) *before* constructing buildings to ensure planned growth.
2. **Decentralization:** Governments must focus on developing smaller, Tier 3 cities (Nagar Panchayats and Municipalities) to create job and development opportunities locally. This will control the migration of populations to already stressed mega-cities.
3. **Sustainability and Amenities:** Cities must be developed not just through vertical towers, but through a focus on comfortable living standards. This requires developing amenities (gardens, parks), promoting public transport (Metro, cycling), maximizing the use of solar energy and green building standards, and expanding green zones.
4. **Inclusivity:** City development must benefit all social strata—the poor, women, and the disabled—by ensuring employment opportunities, planning for street vendors, and addressing slums through redevelopment and affordable housing.

Sanjay highlights that the COVID-19 pandemic taught people the pain of congestion. Future city planning must ensure residents do not feel compelled to flee urban centers for farmhouses, but rather enjoy comfortable, quality living within the city limits.

Worklife Balance:

Apart from work, Sanjay is a passionate trekker. Till date he has visited around 167 Forts across different parts of Maharashtra exploring the culture and geographic diversity. Beyond trekking, Sanjay is also a marathon runner and has run till date 25+ marathons completing

21km, 35km marathons. These hobbies not only help him in keeping healthy, fit but also helps in releasing the stress and pressure of the job. To work tirelessly and sustain the same enthusiasm in work, having a healthy work life balance is must. Sanjay opines having a regular hobby, investing time in fitness and spending time with family and friends is crucial.

Future of JPCEC

Reflecting on Jnana Prabodhini completing 30 years, Sanjay offers congratulations and emphasizes its ongoing role. He recognizes the institution as a banyan tree (*vatvruksha*) that now bears fruit, with thousands of alumni working across India.

He strongly suggests that since the center currently focuses only on UPSC, it should reconsider restarting MPSC classes. He argues that unlike commercialized institutions, Jnana Prabodhini provides selfless support and guidance to poor and rural students, maximizing the benefit of the officers' experience.

Finally, he reaffirms the importance of the center's core output: instilling discipline, time management, duty consciousness (*kartavya nishtha*), and responsibility. He concludes that an officer is not just someone who signs documents but someone deeply aware of every segment of society. Jnana Prabodhini must continue to prioritize these values in the future.

Photo Gallery



Sanjay with wife Rohini and daughter Shanaya.



Sanjay with Dr. Vivek and Dr. Savita Kulkarni at the JPCEC Office at Jnana Prabodhini, Pune.



Sanjay along with parents, siblings and young members of the family.



Sanjay with mother Laxmibai, who's been a pillar of strength throughout the journey.



Sanjay receiving Covid Warrior Award for 2022 from the hands of then Hon. Governor of Maharashtra Shri. Bhagatsingh Koshiyari.



Hon. CM of Maharashtra Shri. Devendra Fadnavis awarding Khopoli Nagar Parishad for securing first rank in State Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan.



Hon. Deputy CM of Maharashtra late. Shri Ajit Pawar awarding Mira Bhayandar MC for winning the Mazi Vasundhara Campaign.



Former CM of Maharashtra Shri. Pruthviraj Chavhan inaugurating the Choudar Lake which was rejuvenated by Sanjay during his tenure at Mahad.



Sanjay at the TATA Mumbai Marathon



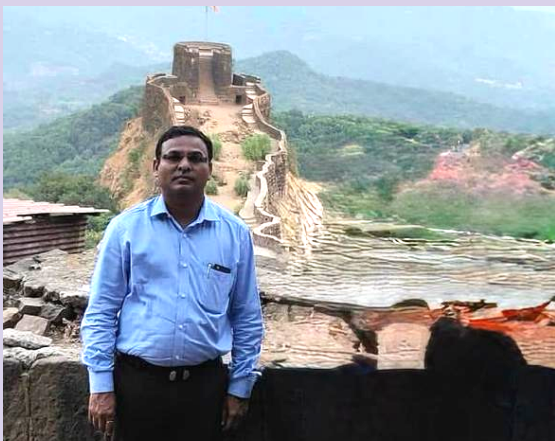
Sanjay, fitness enthusiast enjoying cycling



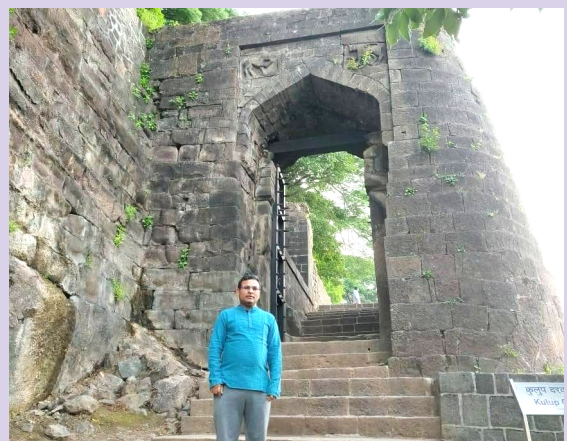
Sanjay along with colleagues receiving award for Property Tax collection from then Hon. CM and current DCM of Maharashtra Shri. Eknath Shinde



Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs awarding Sanjay as CO Khopoli Nagar Parishad for excellent work under Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan



During a trek to Pratapgad



During a trek to Shivneri Fort.