

RISE OF MARATHA POWER

SEM-IV

MAJOR

Paper Title- History of India(1526-1757)

UNIT-IV

EMPIRE

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The Marathas are responsible for the end of the MUGHAL Empire over most of the INDIAN subcontinent.



The **Maratha Empire** or the **Maratha Confederacy** was a power that dominated a large portion of the Indian subcontinent in the 18th century. The empire formally existed from 1674 with the coronation of Shivaji as the Chhatrapati and ended in 1818 with the defeat of *Peshwa* Bajirao II at the hands of the British East India Company.

The Marathas are credited to a large extent for ending Mughal Rule over most of the Indian subcontinent.¹ The Marathas were a Marathi-speaking warrior group from the western Deccan Plateau (present-day Maharashtra) who rose to prominence by establishing a Hindavi Swarajya (meaning "self-rule of Native Hindu/Indian people").¹ The Marathas became prominent in the 17th century under the leadership of Shivaji Maharaj, who revolted against the Adil Shahi dynasty, and carved out a kingdom with Raigad as his capital. His father, Shahji had earlier conquered Thanjavur which Shivaji's half-brother, Venkoji Rao alias Ekoji inherited and that Kingdom was known as the Thanjavur Maratha kingdom.

After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, Shahu, grandson of Shivaji, was released by the Mughals. Following a brief struggle with his aunt Tarabai, Shahu became the ruler with the help of Balaji Vishwanath and Dhanaji Jadhav.

Pleased by his help, Shahu appointed Balaji Vishwanath and later, his descendants, as the *peshwas* or prime ministers of the empire. Balaji and his descendants played a key role in the expansion of Maratha rule. The empire at its peak stretched from Tamil Nadu in the south, to Peshawar (modern-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan) in the north, and Orissa & western Bengal up to the Hooghly River, in the east. The Marathas discussed abolishing the Mughal throne and placing Vishwasrao Peshwa on the Mughal imperial throne in Delhi but were not able to do so. In 1761, the Maratha Army lost the Third Battle of Panipat against Ahmad Shah Abdali of the Afghan Durrani Empire, which halted their imperial expansion into Afghanistan. Ten years after Panipat, the young Peshwa Madhavrao I's Maratha Resurrection reinstated Maratha authority over North India.

In a bid to effectively manage the large empire, Madhavrao gave semi-autonomy to the strongest of the knights, and created a confederacy of Maratha states. These leaders became known as the Gaekwads of Baroda,

CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ

. Raje Chattrapati Shivaji was a military genius who built the Maratha Empire from ground-up; but he is revered and remembered for the revival of Indian pride and honor. Shivaji Maharaj was the Maratha warrior who carved out a powerful Hindu kingdom in 1642, in the south-west part of the Indian sub-continent; building his Empire against impossible odds. India in the 17th century was hurtling towards catastrophe. Hindus, who comprised the vast majority of the country, were hopelessly divided, leading a disenfranchised and moribund existence under the Muslim rule. The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb had launched jihad against Hindus by destroying their ancient and beloved temples and re-imposing the hated jaziya, a punitive and offensive tax which every Hindu had to pay for failing to convert to Islam. For generations before this the fore-fathers of Aurangzeb had banned the construction of Hindu temples, and destroyed many new ones. Hinduism was battling for survival. New threats were emerging in the form of European nations like Portugal, France, Britain and Holland who, under the pretext of trade, were looking for opportunities to colonize India. Beyond that Shivaji had to fight with Aurangzeb's mighty Mughal army, the smaller but powerful Bijapur sultanate, the Pathans, the





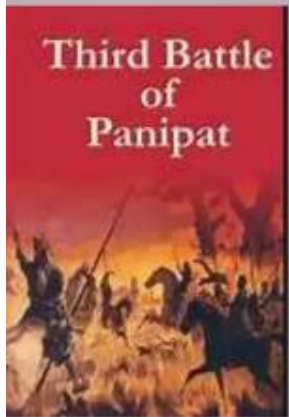
PESHWA ERA

Shahu appointed Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath in 1713. From his time, the office of Peshwa became supreme while Shahu became a figurehead.

→ His first major achievement was the conclusion of the *Treaty of Lonavala* in 1714 with Kanhoji Angre, the most powerful naval chief on the Western Coast. He later accepted Shahu as Chhatrapati.

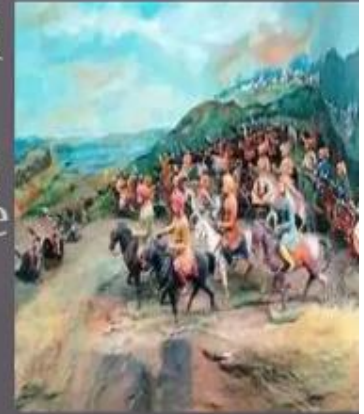
→ In 1719, an army of Marathas marched to Delhi after defeating Sayyid Hussain Ali, the Mughal governor of Deccan, and deposed

THIRD BATTLE OF PANIPAT



In 1759, the Marathas under Sadashivra Bhau (referred to as the Bhau or Bhao in sources) responded to the news of the Afghans' return to North India by sending a large army north. Bhau's force was bolstered by some Maratha forces

under Holkar, Scindia, Gaikwad and Govind Pant Bundele. The combined army of over 100,000 regular troops re-captured the former Mughal capital, Delhi, from an Afghan garrison in August 1760. Delhi had been reduced to ashes many times due to previous invasions, and there was an acute shortage of supplies in the Maratha camp. Bhau ordered the sacking of the already depopulated city. He is said to have planned to place his nephew and the Peshwa's son, Vishwasrao, on the Mughal throne. By 1760, with defeat of the Nizam in the Deccan, Maratha power had reached its zenith with a territory of over 2,500,000 square miles (6,500,000 km²).



Shivaji's Administration

He was a great administrator .

He laid the foundations of a sound system of administration.

The King was the head of the Government .

He was assisted by a Council of Ministers called Ashtapradhan .

Each minister was directly responsible to Shivaji .

1. **Peshwa** __ Finance and general administration , Later he became the Prime Minister .
2. **Sar – I – Naubat or Senapati** ___ Military Commander , a honorary post .
3. **Amatya** ___ Accountant General
4. **Waqenavis** __ Intelligence , Posts and household affairs .
5. **Sachiv** __ Correspondence .

6. **Sumanta** __ Master of Ceremonies .
7. **Nyayadish** __ Justice
8. **Panditarao** __ Charities and religious administration .

Most of the administrative reforms of Shivaji were based on the Practices of the Deccan Sultanates . For example , Peshwa was the Persian title .

The revenue system of Shivaji was based on that of Malik Amber of Ahmadnagar .

Lands were measured by using the measuring rod called Kathi .

Lands were classified into three categories __ Paddy fields , Garden lands and hilly tracks .

He reduced the powers of the existing Deshmuks and Kulkarnis .

He appointed his own revenue officials called Karkuns .

Rise of the Marathas

- The Maratha rise began during Aurangzeb's rule under their brilliant leader Shivaji, who united people of all castes under a common Maratha identity.
- By 1691, the Marathas (under the Peshwas) had become strong enough to rise up in rebellion under Raja Ram, one of Shivaji's sons and other Maratha chiefs.
- The Marathas waged guerilla warfare and were never completely subdued by Aurangzeb, even after 20 years of fighting. They ravaged the countryside and went as far as Mysore in the south, Bengal in the east and Delhi in the north.
- The Maratha conquests accelerated the disintegration of the Empire.