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Chhatrapati Shivaji



Shivaji Bhosle was a Maratha warrior who started the movement for independence from Sultanate of Bijapur and later became the King of Maratha Kingdom. Shivaji Bhosle led a resistance to free the Marathas from the Sultanate of Bijapur and frequently raided and defended themselves from Mughal Empire. He created an independent Maratha Kingdom with Raigad as its capital and thus is also the founder of Maratha Empire. He fought against the Deccan Sultanates and the Mughal Empire to establish an independent Maratha kingdom in 1674 with Raigad as its capital. He became the crowned king 'Chatrapati' of the Maratha Kingdom in 1674. He is today remembered in Maharashtra and all over India as a hero and a great King who stood for freedom and for the right of Maratha independence. Even after his death his call for freedom and to fight and live like free men was an inspiration to the Marathi people which was the main reason for expansion of Maratha Kingdom into a Maratha Empire.

Shivaji's father Shahaji was a Maratha general who rendered military services to the Deccan Sultanates of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur. Shivaji espoused the ideology of Hindavi Swarajya (self-rule of the natives). The subsequent expansion of the Maratha Empire, was partly responsible for re-establishment of Maratha rule on there land after being ruled and dominated by various Muslim dynasties for few hundred years. The ideology of freedom and self rule was in part the inspiration that propelled the succeeding generation of Marathas to expand the Maratha kingdom into a Maratha empire.

Shivaji established and set up a competent and progressive civil rule with the help of well regulated and disciplined military and well structured administrative organizations. The prevalent practices of treating women as war booty, destruction of religious monuments, slavery and forceful religious conversions were firmly opposed under his administration. Shivaji was a religious Hindu, but showed respect toward other religions. He also innovated rules of military engagement of that era. He pioneered "Shiva sutra" or Ganimi Kava (guerrilla tactics), which leveraged strategic factors like demographics, speed, surprise and focused attack to defeat his bigger and more powerful enemies.

Shivaji was born in the hill-fort of Shivneri near the city of Junnar. While Jijabai was pregnant, she had prayed the local deity "Shivai" for the good of her expected child. Shivaji was named after this local deity. Shivaji's father Shahaji Bhosle was the chieftan of a band of mercenaries that served the Deccan Sultanates. His mother was Jijabai, the daughter of Lakhujirao Jadhav of Sindkhed. During the period of Shivaji's birth, the power in Deccan was shared by three Islamic Sultanates - Bijapur, Ahmednagar, and Golconda. Shahaji kept changing his loyalty between the Nizamshahi of Ahmadnagar, Adil Shah of Bijapur and the Mughals, but always kept his jagir (fiefdom) at Pune and his small force of men with him.

According to Tarikh-i-Shivaji, Shahaji placed his jagir (Land holdings / Fiefdom) in the Pune region under Dadoji Konddeo, who had shown good administrative skills as the kulkarni (land-steward) of Malthan. He asked Konddev to bring Jijabai and Shivaji from Shivneri to Pune, and appointed him as their guardian. Dadoji Konddeo trained Shivaji personally especially revenue, and also appointed an excellent teacher for him. In a short time, Shivaji became a skilled fighter and a good horseman trained rigorously by Maratha warriors like Baji Pasalkar.



Shivaji with his mother Jijabai

Shivaji was extremely devoted to his mother Jijabai. Jijabai led a deeply religious, and almost ascetic life in virtual isolation. This religious environment had a profound influence on Shivaji. He studied the two great Hindu epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, by listening to recitations and story-tellings. The morality and spiritual messages of the epics made a great impression on him. He was deeply interested in religious teachings, and sought the company of Hindu and Muslim saints throught out his life.

As the administrator of Shahaji's jagir (fiefdom), Dadoji Konddeo established complete control over the Maval region. He won over most of the local Maval deshpande (chiefs), and subdued others. Shivaji drew his earliest trusted comrades and a large number of his soldiers from this region, including Yesaji Kank, Baji Pasalkar and Tanaji Malusare. In the company of his Maval comrades, a young Shivaji wandered over the hills and forests of the Sahyadri range, hardening himself and getting a first-hand knowledge of the land. By 1639, he commanded a hardy and loyal band of officers and soldiers.

Confrontation with the Regional Sultanates

In 1645, at the age of 16, Shivaji carried out his first military action by attacking and capturing Torna Fort of the Bijapur kingdom. By 1647 he had captured Kondana and Rajgad forts and had control of much of the southern Pune region. By 1654 Shivaji had captured forts in the Western Ghats and along the Konkan coast.

[edit] Battles

- [History](#)
- [Aims](#)
- [Concept](#)
- [Parenting](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Training Programmes](#)
- [Expansion](#)
- [Development](#)
- [Syllabus](#)
- [Bal Vikas Administration](#)
- [Past Students](#)
- [Home](#)

Activities from States

[At the Lotus Feet](#)

[Gurus Corner](#)

[Children's Corner](#)

[From the Annals of the World History](#)

[Special Page](#)

[Glory of Bharath](#)

Pratapgad

Adilshah sent Afzal Khan, a seasoned commander and an accomplished warrior, to destroy Shivaji in an effort to put down what was seen by Bijapur as a regional revolt. After leaving Bijapur, Afzal Khan desecrated Hindu temples at Tuljapur and Pandharpur hoping to draw an emotionally overwrought Shivaji to the plains to retaliate with his limited military resources and thus lead him and his budding military power to easy destruction by the numerically bigger, better-armed and more professional Bijapur army.

Shivaji, upon carefully weighing his options, strategically decided to confront and surprise Afzal Khan on his home turf under the guise of diplomatic negotiations. Shivaji sent a letter to Afzal Khan stating that he was not eager for confrontation and sought some type of understanding. A meeting was arranged between Afzal Khan and Shivaji at the foothills of Fort Pratapgad. Expecting certain skulduggery from Afzal Khan, Shivaji armed himself with the concealable weapons bichhwa (dagger) and wagh nakh (tiger claws) and wore a chilkhat (chain-mail armour) under his clothing for the meeting. What transpired during the meeting was not recorded by scribes, but folklore has it that Afzal Khan pretended to graciously embrace Shivaji as per custom and attempted to stab Shivaji in the back with a kataar (a short waist-holstered dagger). Shivaji's agility, strength and his armour in addition to being prepared helped him survive this attack. Shivaji drew his wagh nakh and counter-attacked, disemboweling Afzal Khan. Afzal Khan's bodyguard Sayyed Banda responding to this, lunged at Shivaji but was intercepted by Jiva Mahala, Shivaji's personal bodyguard, cutting off one of Sayyed Banda's hands with a Dandpatta (Pata - a medieval weapon). Meanwhile, Afzal Khan stumbled out of the tent, clutching his wounds to get help and collapsed into a waiting palanquin, but was swiftly decapitated by Shivaji's associate Sambhaji Kavji Kondhalkar, before he could raise further alarm.. Krishnaji Bhaskar - a Brahmin who was legal advisor to Afzal Khan - attacked Shivaji as Afzal Khan stumbled out of the tent. He swung his sword wildly at Shivaji's head. Shivaji reacted quickly and killed Krishnaji.



**Chhatrapati Shivaji Raje Bhosle
(statue at Raigad)**

Kolhapur

To counter the loss at Pratapgad and to defeat the newly emerging Maratha power, another army, this time numbering over 10,000, was sent against Shivaji, commanded by Bijapur's renowned Abyssinian general Rustamjaman. In a swift movement, Shivaji led a full frontal attack at the center of the enemy forces while other two portions of his cavalry attacked the flanks. This battle lasted for several hours and at the end Bijapuri forces were soundly defeated and Rustamjaman ignominiously fled the battlefield. This victory alarmed the mighty Mughal empire who now derisively referred to Shivaji as the "Mountain Rat". Aurangzeb the Mughal emperor was now actively preparing to bring the full might and resources of the Mughal Empire to bear down on the potential Maratha threat.

Upon the request of Badi Begum of Bijapur, Aurangzeb sent his maternal uncle (brother of late Queen Mumtaz Mahal) Shaista Khan, with an army numbering over 100,000 along with a powerful artillery division in January 1660 to defeat Shivaji. Khan was accompanied by eminent commanders like Turktaj, Hussain, Haider, Naamdar Khan, Kartalab Khan, Uzbek Khan, Fateh Jung and Rajputs namely Bhau Singh, Shyam Singh, Rai Singh Sisodiya, Pradyuman and many more. Khan was an experienced commander who had defeated Shahaji in the same region in 1636. He was ordered to attack the Maratha kingdom in conjunction with Bijapur's army led by Siddi Jauhar. Aurangzeb ordered Shaista Khan to capture the Maratha kingdom to add to the empire (he intended to deceive the Adilshah), after Shivaji's expected defeat by Jauhar.

Trip to Agra and Escape

In 1666, Aurangzeb summoned Shivaji to Agra, along with his nine-year-old son Sambhaji, on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday. Aurangzeb's plan was to send Shivaji to Kandahar, modern day Afghanistan to consolidate the Mughal Empire's north-western frontier. However in the court, on May 12, 1666, Aurangzeb made Shivaji stand behind mansabdars (military commanders) of his court. Shivaji took offense at this seeming insult and stormed out of court and was promptly placed under house arrest, under the watch of Fulad Khan, Kotwal of Agra. From his spies, Shivaji learned that Aurangzeb planned to move his residence to Raja Vitthaldas's Haveli and then to possibly kill him or send him to fight in the Afghan frontier. As a result Shivaji planned his escape.

He feigned almost fatal sickness and requested to send most of his contingent back to the Deccan, thereby ensuring the safety of his army and deceiving Aurangzeb. Thereafter, on his request, he was allowed to send daily shipments of sweets and gifts to saints, fakirs, and temples in Agra as offerings for getting well. After several days and weeks of sending out boxes containing sweets, Shivaji and his nine year old son Sambhaji hid themselves in two of the boxes and managed to escape. Shivaji and his son fled to the Deccan disguised as sadhus (holy men). After the escape, rumours of Sambhaji's death were intentionally spread by Shivaji himself in order to deceive the Mughals and to protect Sambhaji.

Preparing for War and Battle of Sinhagad

Kondana fort, on the outskirts of Pune, was still under Mughal control. Uday Bhan Rathod, the fort keeper, led an army of about 1,500 Rajputs and Mughals for the protection of the fort. On February 4, 1670 Shivaji deputed one of his most senior and trusted generals, Tanaji Malusare, to head a mission to capture Kondana. At that time, Tanhaji's son's (Raiba's) wedding plans were underway. However, putting his duty for the Maratha Kingdom over his family he said "Aadhi lagin Kondanyache, mag majhya Raibache" (First Kondana's marriage, and then my son Raiba's).

The Maratha army under Tanaji Malusare assigned to capture the fort was much smaller than the Mughal army posted at the fort. Tanaji Malusare surveyed the fort and its defenses for some days. The fort was well guarded. One very sheer cliff caught Tanaji's eye. This side was least guarded as one could not possibly imagine climbing the fort from this steep side. Tanaji decided to scale this cliff to enter the fort. The legend

is that, he used a monitor lizard (known as a ghorpad in Marathi named "Yeshwanti" with a rope tied around its body for climbing this cliff on a moonless night. The lizard was made to climb to the top of the fort. As is the characteristic feature of this lizard, it braced and lodged itself in a tight corner of the fort. Then a soldier climbed to the top and threw ropes for others to climb.

Meanwhile Tanaji's brother Suryaji moved close to the gates of the fort, namely Kalyan Darwaja, with another 300 Mavalas. The gates were soon opened and once inside, all his soldiers joined Tanaji in the surprise attack. Tanaji and Uday Bhan came face to face and a fierce fight ensued. Uday Bhan broke Tanaji's shield with a single blow, Tanaji was not deterred and continued to fight by wrapping his turban around his left hand for protection, to cover up his wounds and stanch the bleeding. Tanaji being grievously wounded, staggered back and fell. Seeing their leader mortally wounded and dying before them, the Maratha soldiers started to back-up and retreat, Suryaji and Shelar Mama stepped up and assumed leadership.

Shelar Mama, an old Sardar in his seventies, took charge and faced to challenge Uday Bhan and killed him in short order. Suryaji, then stepped in front and center to rally the troops and led them back on the offensive. Legend and folk lore has it that, after the fall of Tanaji, the mavlas panicked and made a hasty retreat. Seeing this, Suryaji commented, "Why are you running like sheep? I have cut the ropes and all the escape routes are gone. Now we either fight or die." Marathas now out of any other options, charged the Mughal defenders fiercely and succeeded in capturing the fort. When Shivaji reached the fort after the victory, he was deeply bereaved at the loss of his good friend Tanaji. He sadly commented "Gadh ala puhn sinha gela" (The fort was won but the lion was lost). Thereafter Kondana Fort was renamed Sinhagad (Lion Fort) to honour Tanaji Malusare's sacrifice and bravery.

Coronation and Southern Expedition

Shivaji was formally crowned Chhatrapati (Chief, or King of the Kshatriyas), on June 6, 1674 at Raigad fort, and given the title Kshatriya Kulavantas Sinhasanadheeshwar Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Pandit Gaga Bhatt, a renowned Brahmin from Varanasi, officially presided over the ceremony declaring that Shivaji's lineage was a bonafide and recognized Kshatriya. He was bestowed with the Jaanva, (in Hindi- Janeu, the sacred thread), with the Vedas and was bathed in an abhisheka. Shivaji had insisted on an Indrabhishek ritual, which had fallen into disuse since the 9th century. Shivaji then had the title of "shakkarta" conferred upon him. He started his own calendar.

Rule

Shivaji Maharaj was an able administrator who established a government that included modern concepts such as cabinet (Ashtapradhan mandal), foreign affairs (Dabir) and internal intelligence. Shivaji established an effective civil and military administration. He also built a powerful navy and erected new forts like Sindhudurg and strengthened old ones like Vijaydurg on the west coast in which Mughals were greatly unsuccessful. The Maratha navy held its own against the British, Portuguese and Dutch.

Shivaji is well known for his benevolent attitude towards his subjects. He believed that there was a close bond between the state and the citizens. He encouraged all accomplished and competent individuals to participate in the ongoing political/military struggle. He is remembered as a just and welfare-minded king. He brought revolutionary changes in military organisation, fort architecture, society and politics. Shivaji successfully led and marshalled his forces to cope and overcome several major, well co-ordinated and successive enemy invasions. He was inexorable in expanding the boundaries of his kingdom. His success was driven by his determination to establish a free and independent homeland, and in this goal he was supported by the high level of loyalty, respect and dedication he received from his soldiers, followers and citizens.

He was an innovator and an able commander, he successfully used effective tactics including hit-and-run, strategic expansion of territories and forts, formation of highly mobile light cavalry and infantry units, adaptation of strategic battle plans and formations, whereby he succeeded in out-manoeuvering, time and again, his vastly bigger and highly determined enemies. Towards the end of his reign he had built up the Maratha forces to be over one hundred thousand strong. He was able to effectively keep the Mughal forces in check and on the defensive while expanding his kingdom southwards to Jinji, Tamil Nadu. Shivaji Maharaj's kingdom served as a Hindu bulwark against Mughal powers within India. His brilliant strategic and tactical maneuvering on battlefields, acute management and administrative skills helped him to lay the foundations of the future Maratha empire in India.

Character

During his long military career and various campaigns his strong religious and warrior code of ethics, exemplary character and deep seated and uncompromising spiritual values directed him to offer protection to houses of worship, non-combatants, women and children. He always showed respect, defended and protected places of worship of all denominations and religions. He boldly risked his life, his treasure, his personal well being and that of his family, to openly challenge his immensely larger enemies to defend and achieve freedom and independence for his country. He unflinchingly defied overwhelming odds stacked against him by the mighty Mughal Empire and the regional sultanates. He overcame and succeeded in the face of an unprecedented level of difficulties and challenges unrelentingly posed by his enemies. He did not spend any resources on projects designed for self-aggrandizement or vanity, instead he was propelled by his deeply held sense of Dharma (sacred duty) to his people and country.

Shivaji's genius is most evident in his military organisation, which lasted till the demise of the Maratha empire. He was one of the pioneers of commando actions, "Ganimi Kava" a term used for such a warfare, (though the term "commando" is modern). His Mavala army's war cry was 'Har Har Mahadev' (Hail Lord Shiva). Shivaji was responsible for many significant changes in military organization.

Religion



As per legend, the family deity of the Bhosle's, goddess Bhavani presented a divine sword to Shivaji Maharaj.



**Chhatrapati Shivaji Raje Bhosle
(statue at Raigad)**

Shivaji Maharaj, requested Samarth Ramdas Swami to stay at Parali Fort which was subsequently renamed as "Sajjangad" (Fort of the Decent/Holy ones). It is said that Shivaji Maharaj and Sant Ramdas first met in 1674. There are many credible historical references that Samarth Ramdas Swami was the spiritual guru of Shivaji. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was a devout Hindu and he respected all religions within the region. Shivaji Maharaj had great respect for Warkari saints like Tukaram and Sufi Muslim pir Shaikh Yacub Baba Avaliya of Konkan. He also visited Mouni Maharaj temple and Samadhi at Patgaon (Bhudargad Taluka near to Gargoti) in Kolhapur district. Shahaji had donated a huge piece of land to Shaha-Sharif Durgah of Ahmednagar (the names "Shahaji", the father of Shivaji, and "Sarfoji", the uncle of Shivaji, are derived in deference to this Shah Sharifji). Shivaji Maharaj allowed his

subjects freedom of religion and opposed forced conversion. The first thing Shivaji did after a conquest was to promulgate protection of mosques and Muslim tombs.

He commanded the respect and fealty of the Muslims under his command by his fair treatment of his friends as well as enemies. He prohibited slavery in his kingdom. Shivaji Maharaj applied a humane and liberal policy to the women of his state. Shivaji's sentiments of inclusivity and tolerance of other religions can be seen in an admonishing letter to Aurangzeb, in which he wrote:

"Verily, Islam and Hinduism are terms of contrast. They are used by the true Divine Painter for blending the colours and filling in the outlines. If it is a mosque, the call to prayer is chanted in remembrance of Him. If it is a temple, the bells are rung in yearning for Him alone."

Death and succession

The funeral ceremony was arranged in Raigad in presence of his son Rajaram, and wife Soyarabai. After Shivaji Maharaj's death, his elder son Sambhaji and Soyarabai, fought for control of the kingdom. After a brief struggle Sambhaji was crowned king.

Legacy

Because of his struggle against an imperial power, Shivaji became an icon of freedom fighters in the Indian independence struggle that followed two centuries later. He is remembered as a just and wise king and his rule is called one of the six golden ages in Indian history.



**Old
Edition**

- » October 2009
- » February 2010
- » December 2009
- » March 2010
- » January 2010
- » April 2010