CHAPTER 3

# The Rise of the Marathas

*Among the merchants, the hat-wearers like the Portuguese, the English, the Dutch, the French and the Danes also conduct trade. But they are not like other merchants.... They are fully intent on entering this land, increasing their territory and propagating their religion. They are obstinate people, and Navy and gunpowder are their chief weapons. Their traffic should be controlled, and they shouldn't be allowed to build strong buildings.*

*— Ramachandrapant Amatya, Ādnyāpatra (1715)*



*Fig. 3.1. Raigad Fort, Maharashtra, with the grand entrance to the palace where Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was crowned in 1674, marking the formal beginning of the Maratha Empire.*

## The Big Questions?

1. *Who were the Marathas? How did they manage to become the largest pan-Indian power before the British took over?*
2. *What were some features of their governance?*
3. *What impact did the Maratha Empire leave in Indian history?*

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1630: Birth of Chhatrapati Shivaji

1657: Founding of the Maratha navy

1674: Chhatrapati Shivaji's coronation at Raigad

1680: Death of Chhatrapati Shivaji

1630 1660 1680 1690 1720

1646: Beginning of Chhatrapati Shivaji's rule

1666: Imprisonment at, and escape from, Agra

1677: *Dakṣhiṇa digvijaya* (conquest of the South)

1682–1707: Mughal-Maratha wars

*Fig. 3.2.*

**Literary history:** The historical development of writings in prose or poetry in a particular language.

## Who are the Marathas?

The Marathas are a group of people native to the Deccan plateau, more specifically present-day Maharashtra. They are identified with the language they speak — Marathi — which has had a rich and continuous **literary history** since the 12th century. In this chapter, we will see them rise as a powerful political entity that will alter the course of India's history.



*Fig. 3.3. Sant Ramdas*

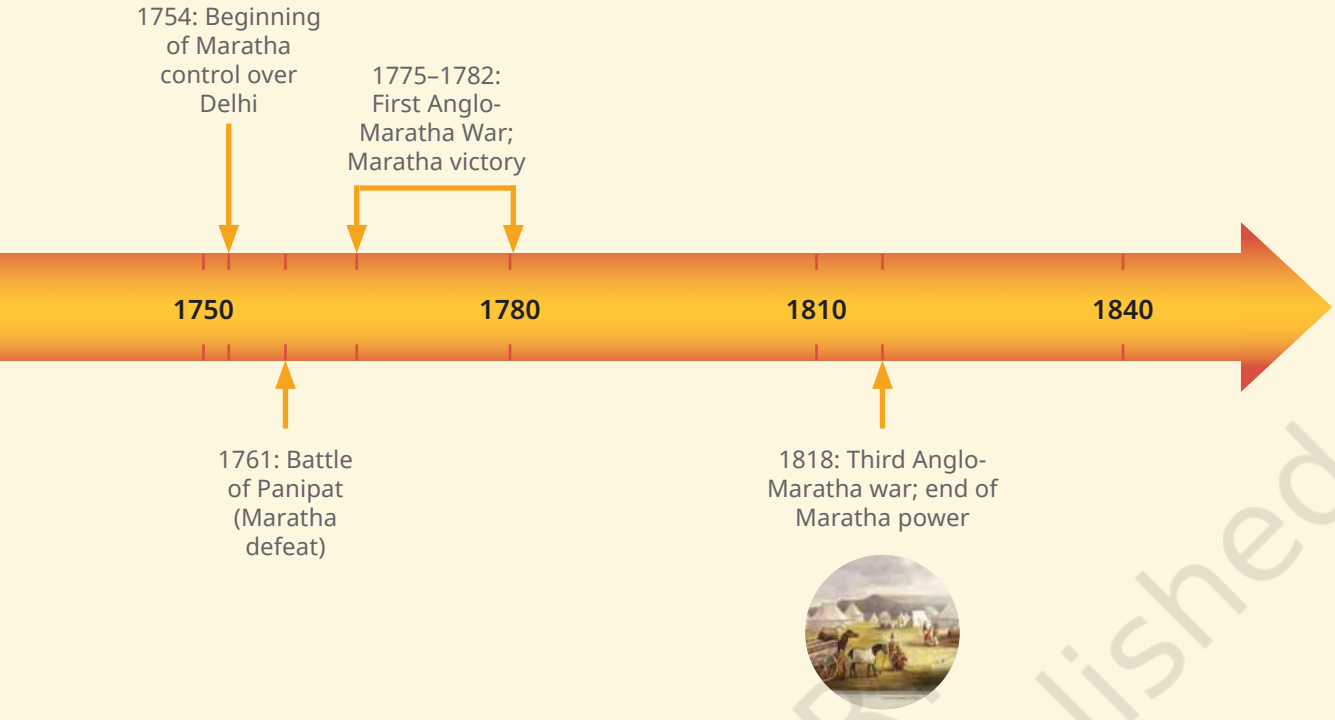



*Fig. 3.4. Postal stamp showing Sant Tukaram*

During the 13th century, most of Maharashtra was ruled by the Yadava dynasty with Devagiri (present-day Daulatabad) as its capital. In the early



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14th century, the Yadava dynasty was overcome by the Khilji Sultanate from Delhi.

Amidst such political changes, the cultural traditions continued, particularly those related to bhakti (devotion to the divine or a particular deity). Between the 7th and the 17th centuries, for spiritual upliftment, saints and seekers from several parts of India preferred the path of bhakti to merely external ritualism. These saints, coming from diverse sections of society, composed devotional songs and poetry in the languages of the masses, which allowed their messages to travel far and wide.

## LET'S EXPLORE



Have you ever heard the term 'bhakti'? What does it mean to you? Choose a bhakti saint from any part of India and learn about their life, their teachings, and the message they shared. You can also find one of their poems or ***bhajans*** and share it with your classmates.

In Maharashtra, many saints like Dnyaneshwar, Namdev, Tukaram, Ramdas, etc., gained popularity at this time. They helped translate important texts like the Upaniṣhads and the Bhagavad Gītā into Marathi, making their philosophy accessible to the people. Some also focused on social organisation and political awareness, similar to the Sikh gurus. As a result, the society acquired a solid cultural foundation, which later helped the Marathas to organise themselves into a political power.

By the 17th century, some Maratha chiefs made early attempts at establishing sovereignty, but they proved unsuccessful — until Chhatrapati Shivaji rose to power and brought the Marathas together. But who was Shivaji?

***Jāgīr*:** A *jāgīr* was a piece of land given by a king or ruler to someone (usually a noble or soldier) as a reward for their service. The person who got the *jāgīr* could collect taxes from the land and use the money to take care of their needs or help the king when needed.

## Foundation of Maratha Power and the Rise of Chhatrapati Shivaji

In 1630, Shivaji was born in the Bhonsle clan to Shahji and Jijabai. At the time, Shahji served the Deccan sultanates and was often away from his family. Meanwhile, in his ***jāgīr*** at Pune, Chhatrapati Shivaji grew up under the watchful eyes of Jijabai and some trusted officials, receiving values and a good education. At this time, the Pune region was deeply affected by constant infighting between the Deccan sultans whom the Marathas served, which caused much hardship for the common people.



*Fig. 3.5. A painting of Shivaji made in the 1680s (British Museum)*

When he was just 16, Chhatrapati Shivaji launched military campaigns, first consolidating his hold over the Pune region by capturing neglected and unoccupied forts and strengthening their defences. His vision of a sovereign kingdom or 'Swarājya' grew over the years, extending to political, economic and cultural aspects, which we will explore in this chapter.



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*Fig. 3.6. The Sindhudurg Fort near the Maharashtra-Goa border is one of the several naval fortifications built by the Marathas.*

Chhatrapati Shivaji's kingdom soon expanded to India's west coast, and to secure access to the resources of coastal regions, he felt the need to establish a navy. This was a truly revolutionary step at the time. By comparison, the Bijapur Sultanate (ruled by the Adil Shahi dynasty), maintained merchant ships but did not possess a full-time naval force which could protect the coast; even the Mughal Empire's use of a navy was very limited. Thus, the Maratha Navy was born, whose exploits became legendary.

To protect his people from powerful enemies, Chhatrapati Shivaji had recourse to the tactic of guerrilla warfare, which uses small groups of people in a focused way, with speed, surprise, and knowledge of the terrain to defeat bigger armies. His successes soon invited the wrath of the Bijapur Sultanate, which sent the veteran general Afzal Khan to confront him. Chhatrapati Shivaji and his advisers managed to convince Afzal Khan to meet him for a one-on-one meeting at the foot of the Pratapgad fort amid thick forests. There, Chhatrapati Shivaji killed Afzal Khan, and the Marathas, hidden in the mountains, routed the Khan's army with guerrilla attacks.



## THINK ABOUT IT

If you could time-travel and meet Chhatrapati Shivaji, what three questions would you ask him and why?

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## DON'T MISS OUT

The *wāgh nakh* is a small weapon shaped like a tiger's claw, which Chhatrapati Shivaji used to kill Afzal Khan in close combat.



*Fig. 3.7. Wāgh nakh or the 'tiger's claw'.*



## LET'S EXPLORE

Try to find out more about guerrilla warfare. Which other countries in the world adopted this method? What geographical advantages did they utilise for this? Discuss your findings in groups.

**Surgical strike:** A military attack intended to damage only a specific target, with no or minimal damage to other people or infrastructure.

Soon afterwards, the Mughal nobleman Shaista Khan invaded Chhatrapati Shivaji's territories with a big army for three years. Finally, with only a few soldiers, Chhatrapati Shivaji raided Shaista Khan's camp at night. The Khan barely escaped from the raid, losing a few fingers, and promptly left Maharashtra. This daring raid resembles the modern-day **surgical strike**.

As a retaliatory action for the three-year-long wave of attacks, Chhatrapati Shivaji sacked Surat, a wealthy port city of the Mughal Empire (in present-day Gujarat). There, he obtained enormous treasure worth almost one crore of rupees, an extremely large sum for the time. However, he was careful not to attack religious places and even spared the house of Mohandas Parekh, a charitable man. He sacked Surat again after a few years. These events became so famous that they appeared in the London Gazette, an English newspaper of the time, which conveyed how Chhatrapati Shivaji wrote to all European diplomatic agents in Surat, demanding 'immediate presents of money', failing which he would 'return and ruin that city'.

The sacking of Surat was a great insult to the might and prestige of the Mughal Empire. Therefore, Aurangzeb sent Jai Singh, a distinguished Rajput general, to defeat Chhatrapati Shivaji. Against him, Chhatrapati Shivaji had to concede defeat at Purandar Fort (near Pune) and enter into a treaty. He had to give up a sizeable part of his kingdom, and his son Sambhaji had to enter Mughal service.



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Chhatrapati Shivaji was persuaded by Jai Singh to visit the Mughal court at Agra, where he was made to stand before Aurangzeb, and a Mughal general whom he had defeated earlier. Incensed at this insult, Chhatrapati Shivaji stormed out of the court, following which Aurangzeb put him under house arrest. To escape this, Chhatrapati Shivaji devised a strategy — he started distributing gifts to holy men and Mughal generals. The gifts often contained fruits and sweets, packed in big baskets. The guards initially checked them, but soon stopped doing so; expecting this, Chhatrapati Shivaji and his son Sambhaji hid themselves in the baskets and made their escape. Aurangzeb could never capture Chhatrapati Shivaji again.



*Fig. 3.8. A court scene with Chhatrapati Shivaji on his throne receiving visitors (panel in Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Park, Mumbai)*

A few years later, in 1674, Chhatrapati Shivaji was coronated with full Vedic rites at the strong mountain fortress of Raigad. His formal title after the coronation was 'Shri Raja Shiva Chhatrapati', and like some past rulers, he started his own era, the *Rājyābhiṣheka shaka*.

After this, Chhatrapati Shivaji embarked upon a conquest of the South, also referred to as the *dakṣhiṇa-digvijaya*, which included the important and then ill-defended region of present-day northern Tamil Nadu and parts of Karnataka (see map in Fig. 3.9). This southern extension later gave the Marathas great strategic depth against the Mughal invasion.



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## DON'T MISS OUT

While in the South, Chhatrapati Shivaji forbade the Dutch from trading slaves. At the time, most Europeans were capturing and selling Indians as slaves and encountered no opposition from Indian powers, until Chhatrapati Shivaji intervened. His stance on this abuse showed his deep concern for his subjects.

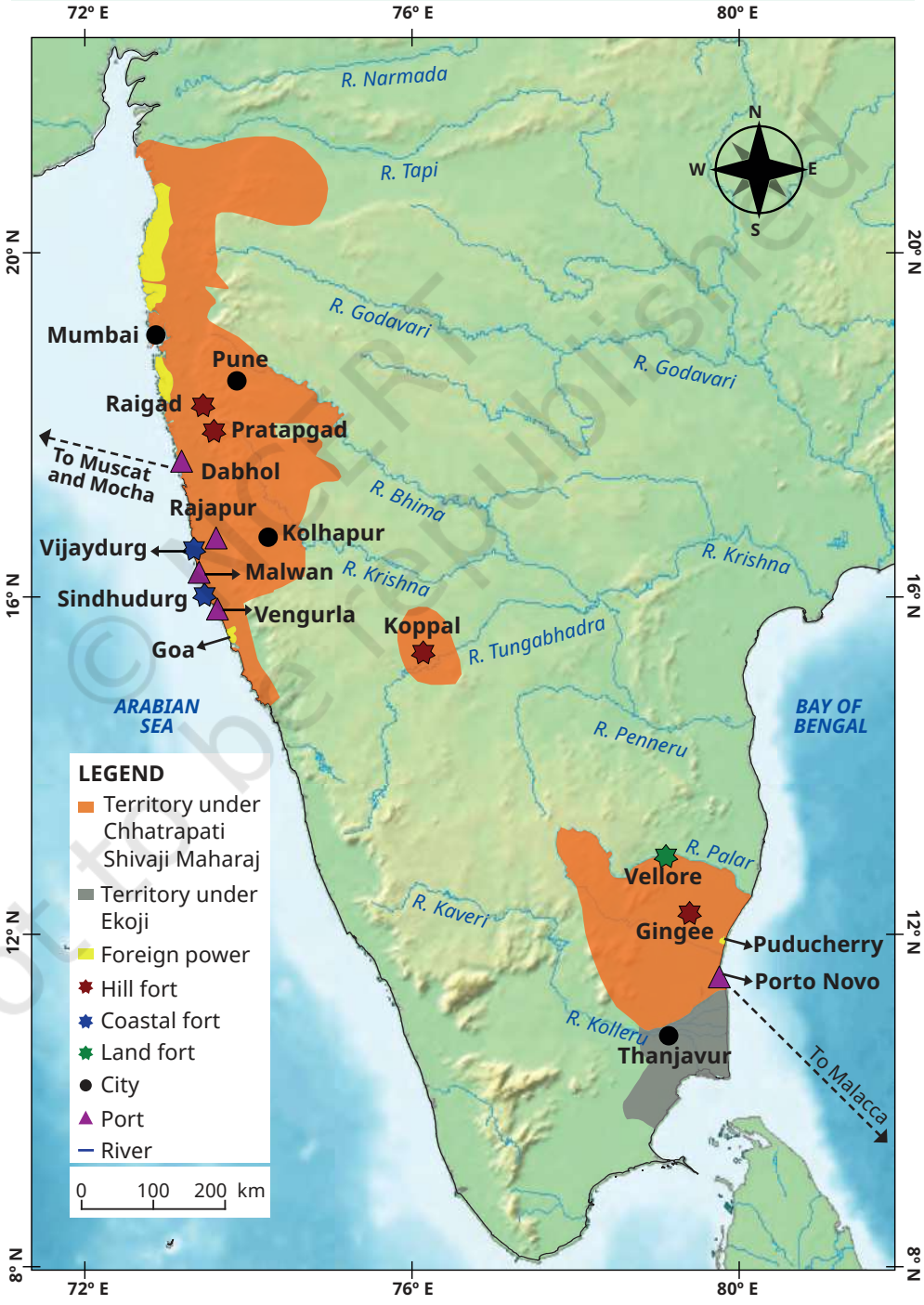



*Fig. 3.9. Chhatrapati Shivaji's Kingdom about 1680 (Ekoji's role is explained later in the chapter).*

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A fever claimed Chhatrapati Shivaji's life when he was fifty. He was a master strategist and a true visionary, and within his lifetime, his exploits had become legendary across India and beyond. The Europeans compared him with ancient generals like Alexander, and the Bundela prince Chhatrasal was so inspired by Chhatrapati Shivaji's struggle against the Mughals that he managed to create an independent kingdom of Bundelkhand (divided between present-day Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh). The famous Hindi poet Bhushan specifically came to Maharashtra to meet Chhatrapati Shivaji and composed poems in his praise, some of which remain famous to this day.

**LET'S EXPLORE**

Pick an event from Chhatrapati Shivaji's life and, with your classmates, stage it as a play.



## The Marathas after Chhatrapati Shivaji

Chhatrapati Shivaji had two sons — Sambhaji and Rajaram. After Chhatrapati Shivaji's death, Sambhaji became the Chhatrapati. The Marathas were then the only obstacle to total Mughal control of the Deccan. Aurangzeb invaded the Deccan and conquered the Bijapur (or Adil Shahi) and Golconda (or Qutb Shahi) Sultanates. He then captured Sambhaji and, after torturing him brutally, executed him. After this, he captured Raigad, the Maratha capital.

After Sambhaji, Rajaram became the Chhatrapati and fled to Gingee (in present-day Tamil Nadu). The Mughal-Maratha conflict thus spread to south India. The Marathas staunchly defended their fortresses and often had the upper hand over the Mughals in battles and skirmishes. Aurangzeb was thus unable to leave the Deccan and died without having succeeded in subduing the Marathas, who emerged as a strong contender to the Mughals. No longer on the defensive, the Marathas led by Tarabai, Rajaram's queen, made large-scale inroads into Mughal territories, eventually conquering large parts of India.

During this rapid expansion, the Marathas themselves underwent a structural transformation. The centralised state

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*Fig. 3.10. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj (Sambhaji's son), seated right and sporting a falcon, in counsel with Nanasaheb Peshwa*

from Chhatrapati Shivaji's time gave way to a more decentralised structure, still nominally centred around the Chhatrapati, but with the chiefs wielding more power. In particular, the Peshwa (a Persian term for 'prime minister') wielded great influence, even over the Chhatrapati himself. In particular, Peshwa Bajirao I and his son Nanasaheb Peshwa were instrumental in the pan-Indian expansion of the Marathas.

The Marathas brought large parts of India under their control and generally ruled them well. But with the regional chiefs acquiring more power and autonomy, this also resulted in occasional indiscipline and abuse, in stark contrast with Chhatrapati Shivaji's values. For instance, the Marathas' ten-year campaign in Bengal inflicted much cruelty and devastation on the common people.

In their northward expansion, the Marathas briefly controlled the areas of Lahore, Attock and even Peshawar (in modern-day Pakistan). They fought with the Afghans, and despite suffering a disastrous defeat at Panipat in 1761, they quickly recovered during the time of Peshwa Madhavrao I. Under the leadership of Mahadji Shinde (also known as Mahadji Scindia), they went on to recapture Delhi in 1771, which remained under their control till the British captured it three decades later.

In the latter half of the 18th century, the chief rivals of the British in India were the Marathas. Three Anglo-Maratha wars (as they are called) were fought between 1775 and 1818. Owing to the Marathas' increased internal disunity and the superior organisational and technological abilities of the British, they succeeded in ending the Maratha power. In effect, the British took India from the Marathas more than from the Mughals or any other power.



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## DON'T MISS OUT

Did you know that Nana Phadnavis, a powerful official under the Peshwas, is credited with organising the first pan-Indian anti-British alliance? He even united with old adversaries like Hyder Ali of Mysore and the Nizam of Hyderabad in this endeavour.



*Fig. 3.11. A mural of a British officer surrendering before Nana Phadnavis and Mahadji Shinde after the first Anglo-Maratha war.*

# Maratha Administration

## Civilian administration

Chhatrapati Shivaji instituted a relatively centralised administration for his kingdom. He abolished the hereditary posts (generally practised under the Sultans or the Mughals) and land assignments and paid a salary to every government official out of the state treasury. Many officials were periodically transferred as well, ensuring that they would not have enough power to dictate terms to the king.

Chhatrapati Shivaji also gave pensions to widows of soldiers who died in battles, even offering military posts to their sons, thus demonstrating his care for the soldiers and their families.



*Fig. 3.12. Chhatrapati Shivaji minted gold and copper coins in his own name, signifying his sovereignty. The use of the Devanagari script was also an assertion of his cultural identity.*

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## THINK ABOUT IT

Chhatrapati Shivaji issued strict instructions to his officials not to mistreat the subjects or to forcefully grab even a blade of grass from them. In one of the letters issued to his officials, Chhatrapati Shivaji says:

*"Wood from big trees like teak is required for the Navy. If needed, secure permission for cutting the trees from the forest and then proceed. Other trees like the mango and jackfruit are also useful, but do not touch them. Because such trees take many years to mature, and the people look after them like their children. If you cut them, will their sorrow ever end? If you accomplish something by oppressing others, it perishes soon, along with the oppressor. There is harm in the absence of such trees as well. Therefore, do not use force in any circumstances."*

Based on Chhatrapati Shivaji's letter, what can you tell about his values as a ruler?

Chhatrapati Shivaji also had an *aṣhṭa pradhāna maṇḍala*, or council of eight ministers (Fig. 3.13), to assist him with administration.

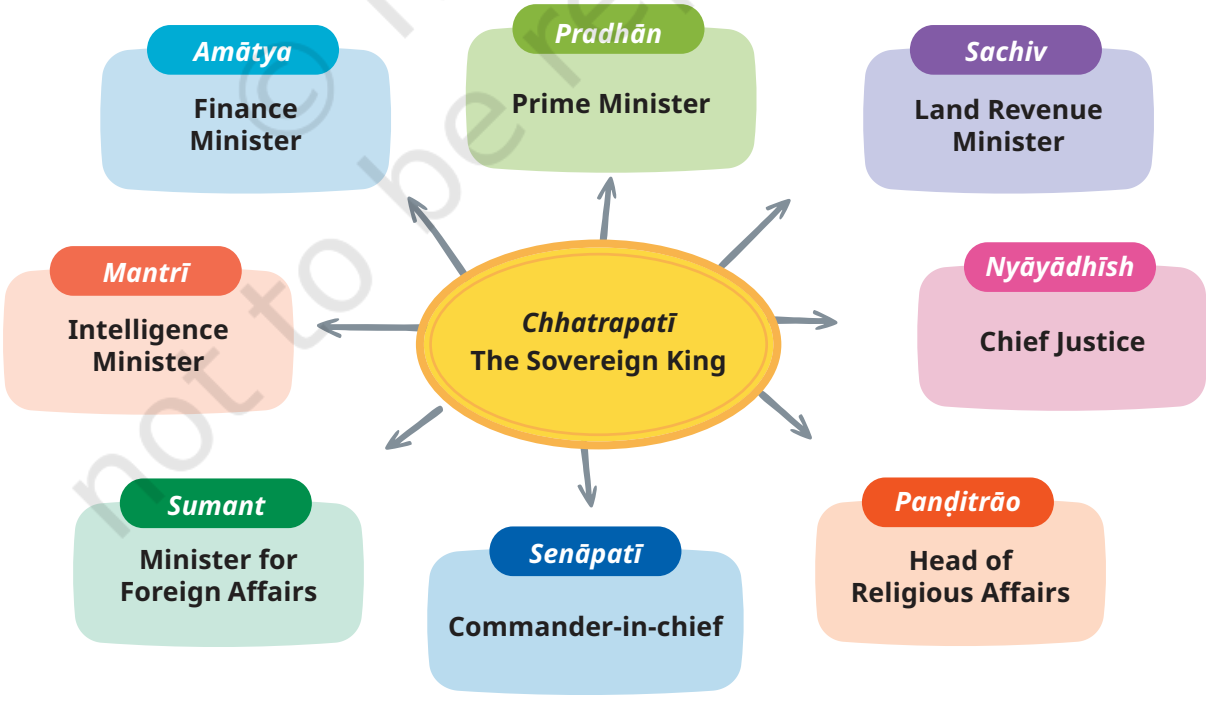



*Fig. 3.13.*



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The Marathas often levied taxes called *chauth* (25 per cent) and *sardeshmukhi* (an additional 10 per cent to *chauth*) from provinces that were not directly under them, including places in the Deccan and north India. In return, the Marathas protected those provinces and did not intervene in their internal administration. The Mughals also approved of this arrangement through various treaties, and over time, some of these provinces became a part of the Maratha Empire.



## DON'T MISS OUT

In the 18th century, the Marathas often adopted the Mughal style of coinage owing to its popularity, but added their own cultural symbols to it. For instance, this rare Maratha coin known as the 'Gaṇapatī-Pantapradhān rupee', minted in the early 19th century by the Patwardhans (generals under the Peshwa), features inscriptions in two scripts — Devanagari and Persian. One side is an invocation to Gaṇapati *(*Gaṇeśha*)* while the other declares loyalty to the Peshwa (often referred to as 'Pantapradhān' in Marathi).



*Fig. 3.14.*

## Military administration

The Maratha armed forces were divided into three parts — infantry, cavalry and navy. The cavalry was made up of two types of soldiers — the *bārgīrs*, whose horses and equipment were paid for by the state, and the *shiledārs*, whose horses and equipment were paid for by the soldiers themselves. In the 18th century, the Marathas also noticed the superiority of European-style disciplined troops and artillery, and they tried to raise and recruit such troops. In particular, Mahadji Shinde had a large European-style army.

Swords and lances were the preferred weapons of the Marathas (Fig. 3.15). However, they also used guns in sizable numbers. Rockets were used in military campaigns from the days of Shivaji himself, and by 1770, metal tube rockets were also being used.

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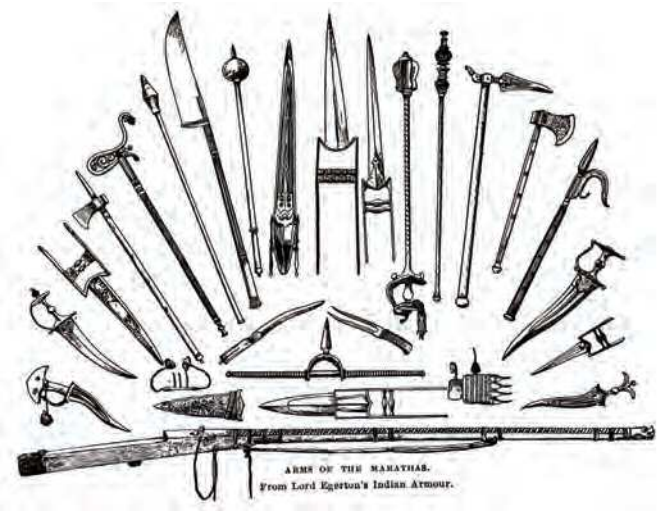



*Fig. 3.15. Some of the weapons used by the Marathas.*

As we saw earlier, forts were initially the mainstay of Maratha power. Chhatrapati Shivaji controlled and built a considerable number of forts, as they were essential to strategically control important routes and shelter the army when engaging in guerrilla warfare.

Ramachandrapant Amatya, the finance minister of Chhatrapati Shivaji, in his work *Ādnyāpatra* ('The Royal Edict') explains,

> "Forts are the core of the state. In their absence, the land gets devastated in the face of an invasion. Therefore, all the former kings secured the country by building forts. This kingdom (Maratha kingdom) was created by the late great master [Shivaji] from forts alone ... A great enemy like Aurangzeb invaded [this kingdom], conquered great empires like Bijapur and Bhaganagar [... but] it was due to forts that the [Maratha] state survived despite decades of onslaught."

## Maritime supremacy

As we saw, Chhatrapati Shivaji created a navy to secure the west coast. In the 18th century, Kanhoji Angre guided the Marathas to victory in many naval battles, thanks to a clever use of geography and battle tactics, despite the Maratha ships not being as technologically advanced as the European ones.

At the time, the main strength of Europeans in India was their navies. They forced Indians to purchase their naval trade passes (*cartaz* in Portuguese) at a price; any ship without a pass was confiscated. The Marathas challenged this practice and started demanding passes from the Europeans themselves — who showed their frustration by labelling Kanhoji Angre a 'pirate'!



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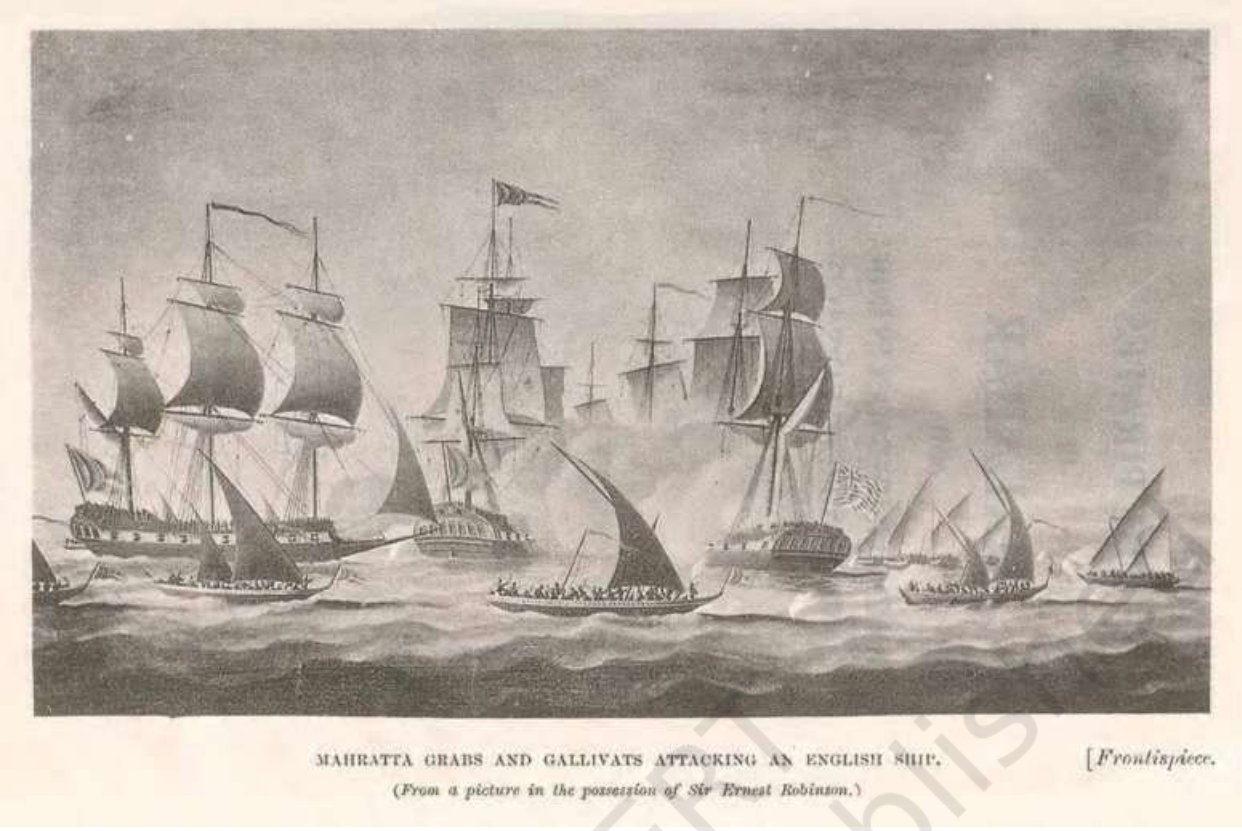



*Fig. 3.16. Maratha ships attacking English ships*



**DON'T MISS OUT**

In 1665, four ships from Chhatrapati Shivaji's fleet reached Muscat, the capital of Oman. The ruler there captured them and arrested the men onboard. He also prepared a few ships to attack Shivaji's coastal possessions. But, on hearing that Chhatrapati Shivaji's Navy contained more than a hundred ships, he retreated inside the harbour with his ships.

## Judicial system

The Marathas had an efficient judicial system, remarkable for its moderation in using capital punishment (the death penalty). The *panchāyat* (not to be confused with the current-day Panchayat, a governmental body) was a local gathering of officials and prominent men, and the main body that delivered justice. An appeal could be made to a Maratha chief in case of an unsatisfactory verdict. Additionally, in various prominent

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towns such as Pune, Indore, etc., the *kotwāl* or the police was also deployed to ensure law and order within the city.

## Trade networks

Chhatrapati Shivaji encouraged trade and actively participated in maritime foreign trade himself. He and his officials had their own ships, which they regularly sent to ports as far away as Mocha in Yemen, Muscat in Oman, and Malacca in Malaysia. Some of these ships carried cargo like gold, textiles, etc.

Roads were constructed and maintained. In places such as Odisha in the 18th century, a network of ferries was maintained for riverine transport. Bridges were built over rivers and small streams.



*Fig. 3.17. Chhatrapati Shivaji's seal*

## Cultural Revival

The Marathas contributed substantially to India's cultural developments. Chhatrapati Shivaji's vision of Swarājya is evident in his seal, which carried a Sanskrit inscription, a notable departure from the prevalent Persian seals — "This seal (i.e. authority) of Chhatrapati Shivaji, the son of Shahji, waxing like the new moon, revered by the world, reigns for the welfare (of the people)."

Chhatrapati Shivaji also commissioned a treatise called *Rājya-Vyavahāra-Koṣha* with the aim of promoting the Marathi language; it provided Sanskrit equivalents for the prevalent Persian words used in diplomatic exchanges, as a result of which, the percentage of foreign loanwords in Maratha diplomacy decreased considerably. Chhatrapati Shivaji was a devout Hindu who respected other religions while upholding his own. His saffron-coloured flag was adopted by all Marathas. He rebuilt desecrated temples, promoted Sanskrit and Marathi literature, religious institutions, and traditional arts.

But perhaps he contributed most to the revival of ancient Indian culture and values by giving people a demonstration that mighty kingdoms and empires could be defeated, and the Marathas could maintain, expand and administer an empire of their own.



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## The mighty Maratha women



*Fig. 3.18. Tarabai in battle (painting by M.V. Dhurandhar)*

**Tarabai** was a fearless Maratha warrior queen who ruled in the early 18th century after the death of her husband Rajaram. Realising that with the presence of Aurangzeb and the Mughal army in the Deccan, north India was unprotected, she organised large Maratha armies and sent them to invade Mughal territories in the north. In that sense, she was the architect of the northward Maratha expansion. Her sense of military strategy and her tenacity outsmarted the Mughal Empire and preserved Maratha independence during a critical period.

**Ahilyabai Holkar** was a scion of the Holkar dynasty, one of the chief families instrumental for the Maratha expansion in north India; during the 18th century, this dynasty ruled a kingdom of considerable extent in central India, around present-day Indore. Even after losing her husband and son, she bravely governed the state for thirty years, administering it wisely while caring for the common people. Ahilyabai was a devout person who built and restored hundreds of temples, ghats, wells, and roads throughout India, from Kedarnath in the north to Rameswaram in the south.




*Fig. 3.19. A postage stamp commemorating Ahilyabai Holkar*

Most famously, she rebuilt the Kashi Vishwanath temple in Varanasi that had been destroyed by Aurangzeb and the Somnath temple in Gujarat that had been destroyed by Mahmud of Ghazni. Ahilyabai Holkar is also credited with promoting the Maheshwar weaving industry in Madhya Pradesh, revitalising traditional handloom crafts that continue to thrive today.

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## DON'T MISS OUT

The Moḍī script (a cursive form of Devanagari) was the main script used by Marathas for their correspondence.

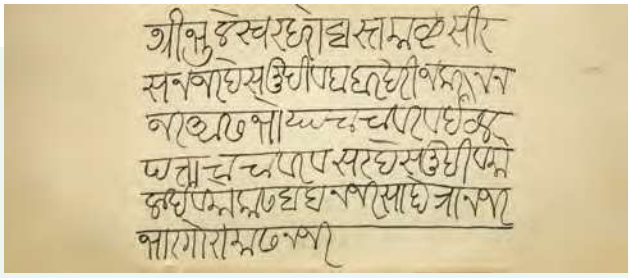


*Fig. 3.20. A sample of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj's handwriting in the Moḍī script*

Chhatrapati Shivaji's example continued to inspire his successors. For instance, the Bhonsles of Nagpur emerged as the enthusiastic supporters of local culture and tradition, and the worship of the deity Jagannath at Puri (in Odisha), which was often interrupted during the Mughal rule, was revived with the support of the Marathas. But perhaps the most impressive contribution came from a few remarkable Maratha women. Let us hear about two of them (see Page 77).

## In focus: Thanjavur



*Fig. 3.21. A traditional Thanjavur style painting, featuring delicate gold foil work that lends it a rich, radiant appearance; this style flourished under the patronage of the Marathas*

Let us turn southward to witness another example of cultural contribution. Ekoji, the half-brother of Chhatrapati Shivaji, conquered the Thanjavur region (in present-day Tamil Nadu) in the late 17th century, marking the beginning of Maratha rule in the area. The Thanjavur Marathas especially helped create a syncretic culture that was rich and full of innovation. They were great patrons of the arts, and many of the rulers themselves were poets and dramatists.



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## LET'S EXPLORE



Have you heard of the dance form 'Bharatnatyam'? Did you know that this dance form has a deep connection with the Marathas? Can you find out what this connection was?

Of all the Thanjavur Maratha rulers, the contributions of Serfoji II are the most notable. He was well-versed in many Indian and European languages and wrote a Marathi play named *Devendra Kuravanji,* where he describes world geography in detail as was known at the time. Serfoji patronised many talented musicians, and it was during his time that modern Carnatic music took shape, as did the early stages of the famous classical dance form of Bharatanatyam.

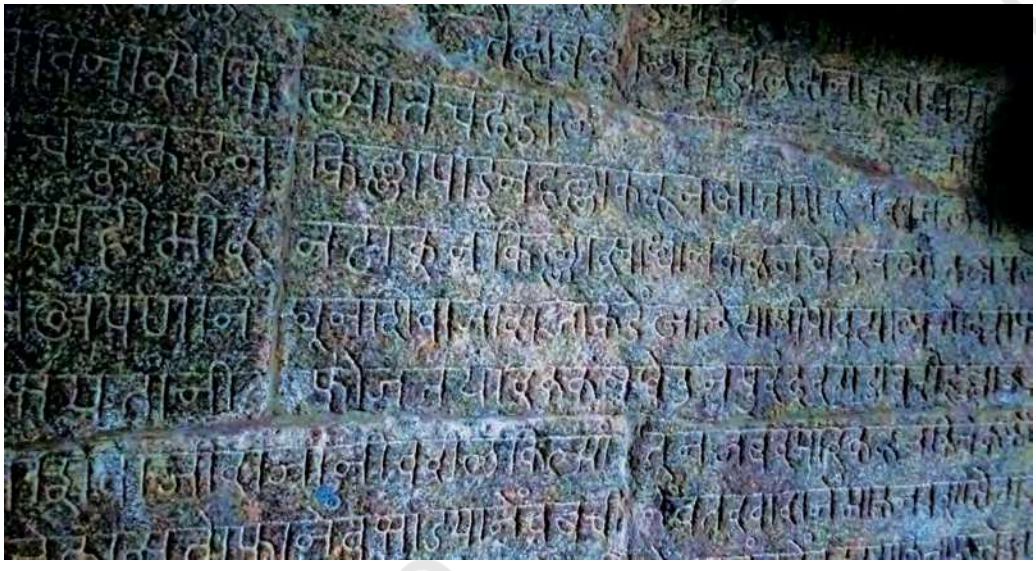


*Fig. 3.22. Marathi inscription on a wall of the Brihadishwara temple wall recording the history of the Bhonsle family.*

Serfoji was quite interested in medicine and established the Dhanwantari Mahal, a centre of medicine that offered free treatment of diseases using both Indian and Western medicine. He also started a printing press, the first such example in India by a native ruler. He got the history of the Bhonsle family inscribed on the walls of the Brihadishwara temple at Thanjavur, which is one of the largest single inscriptions in India, a record for posterity.



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The cultural environment of Thanjavur was multilingual, with a mix of many influences. The local Tamil culture, the Telugu culture of the former rulers, and the current rulers' Marathi culture interacted with each other freely.

## The Maratha legacy

The Maratha rule challenged Mughal dominance and established the largest Indian empire before the British took over the Subcontinent, controlling much of central and northern India. They set up a new way of governing with an efficient administration, and also revived the local Hindu traditions without religious discrimination. Their brave fight against oppressive rule and foreign power was driven by the fiery ideal of Swarājya. Later it inspired many Indians to believe they could govern themselves, planting the early seeds for India's freedom movement.



## Before we move on ...

- Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj founded the Maratha kingdom in the 17th century. Its decades-long resistance to Mughal power, and the experience gained from this, helped in its pan-Indian expansion in the 18th century.
- The British captured India effectively from the Marathas more than from any other Indian power.
- Forts were the core of Maratha state; the Marathas controlled hundreds of forts, thus strategically strengthening their control over the region.
- Their formidable navy resisted European naval supremacy for quite some time despite lack of access to the latest technology of the time.
- The Marathas inspired a new cultural confidence amongst Indians in various regions, thus contributing to the cultural revival and innovation.

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## Questions and activities

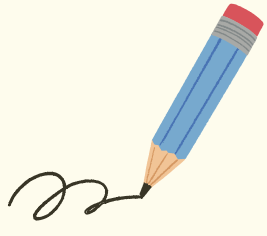
1. Analyse how geography (particularly mountains and coastlines) guided Maratha military strategy and state formation.
2. Imagine you are creating a short biography of a Maratha leader for younger students. Choose one personality (Kanhoji Angre, Bajirao I, Mahadji Shinde, Ahilyabai Holkar or Tarabai) and write 3-4 paragraphs highlighting what makes them inspirational. Include at least one challenge they overcame.
3. If you could visit one Maratha fort today (such as Raigad, Sindhudurg, Gingee, or Pratapgad), which would you choose and why? Research its history, architecture, and strategic importance. Present your findings as a digital presentation or a poster in class.
4. The chapter states, "The British took India from the Marathas more than from the Mughals or any other power." What do you think this means? What evidence from the chapter supports this idea?
5. Compare how Chhatrapati Shivaji and later Marathas treated religious places and people of different faiths. What evidence from the chapter shows their approach to religious diversity?
6. The chapter describes how forts were 'the core of the state' for Marathas. Why were they so important? How did they help the Marathas survive against larger enemies?
7. You have been appointed as the chief designer for Maratha coins. Design a coin that represents Maratha achievements and values. Explain the symbols you chose.
8. After this introduction to the Maratha period, what do you think was their most important contribution to Indian history? Write a paragraph supporting your opinion with examples from the chapter. Then share and discuss your ideas with classmates.

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# Noodles

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*‘Noodles’ is our abbreviation for ‘Notes and Doodles’!





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