

4. Colonialism and the Marathas

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In the last chapter we learnt about the spread of colonialism in India. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had foreseen the ulterior motives of these foreigners and their ways of infiltration. He built up strategies to arrest their advances in India. The immediate measures taken by him in this direction included creation of a strong naval force and construction of sea forts. He levied octroi on British salt trade as a measure to protect

local salt trade. Thus, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj adopted a very strong policy against the European colonisers. Later, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj also fiercely fought the Portuguese. Chimajiappa, brother of Bajirao Peshwa I, defeated the Portuguese at Vasai. The Marathas were the only Indian rulers to adopt a policy of resistance against the European colonisers.

4.1 Colonialism vs. the Maratha Empire

Portuguese, French, Dutch, British, all of them came to India as traders. However, they did not stop at that, in the course of time they also grabbed the political power. It is often said that they came to India with weighing scales but used swords and ultimately seized the Indian throne. The Portuguese were the first to arrive in India. They were mentioned as ‘Firangis’* in the

You would like to know this:

The foresight of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in his judgement of the Europeans was hardly shown by other contemporary Indian rulers. His strategy in this regard, is stated very clearly in *Adnyapatra* :

“The Portuguese, British, Dutch and the Danish are money lenders. However, they are not like other common moneylenders. They arrive here, with the help of the rulers in this country. Their kings are desirous of grabbing land in our country. They want to rule this country.”

“European traders are going everywhere. They are establishing themselves in foreign lands. They are very stubborn. Once they acquire a space, they will never let go of it. If required, they will die but will not leave it. We should keep them at bay, maintaining only business relations. Never allot them any space near a sea fort. If for any reason they have to be allotted a plot for their factory, it should never be near entrance of a creek or on the sea coast. There is not much to worry as long as they keep within their limits. However, at the first opportunity these people flaunt their military strength with the help of their naval force, canons and ammunition. They build new sea forts with the help of their naval force. This is the reason for not allotting them any space, if allotted, it should be far away from the seacoast and near a village. Precaution has to be taken to see that their establishment does not cause any nuisance. Do not permit them to erect permanent buildings. They must accept these conditions, otherwise they are of no use. We should not obstruct them and should not let them obstruct us. If you find foreign traders in the enemy land during our expeditions there, a fine should be collected from them. After they pay the fine, they should be sent back to the factory or the place from where they had arrived. They should not be treated in the same manner like an enemy is treated”.

historical documents of that period. The regions under Portuguese rule were mentioned as 'Firangaan'

**Firang means Indian sword made with Portuguese blades and hence, 'Firangis' means the Portuguese later applied to all Europeans.*

4.1.1 Portuguese and Maratha Empire

The Portuguese had their forts at Diu, Daman, Sanjan, Atori, Vasai, Karanja, Chaul etc. Because of these forts the region of Bardesh* was well protected. They used to store all ammunition at Panvel.

**The northern region of Goa was known as 'Bardesh'.*



Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

Try to do this:

Make a note of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's thoughts on 'Construction of Forts' from the book entitled, 'Adnyapatra'.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj first came in contact with the Portuguese when he established his control on Kalyan and Bhiwandi. The Portuguese were alarmed when Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj built a strong Maratha navy. Soon, the Portuguese were brought to a point of despair by the Marathas. In fact, in the beginning the Portuguese had extended technological help for shipbuilding to the Marathas. However, the Portuguese Governor of Goa, withdrew this help. The Portuguese now promptly provided help to Siddis when the Maratha

You would like to know this:

A book written by Cosme da Guarda, a Portuguese historian is very important as a source of the history of Maharashtra. He wrote a book entitled *Vide de Celebre Sevagy* (Life of the Celebrated Shivaji). He was the first European author to write a biography of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Here are a couple of passages from this book:

"Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is such awe-inspiring name that there is hardly anybody, who would ever think of challenging him."

"He (Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj) is very impartial when it comes either to reward or punish a person... He never left a virtue unrewarded or a crime unpunished... He is loved by all because of his valour and humane conduct. He is regarded throughout India as the greatest king, whose name was feared, and at the same time he was also known as the one who cared the most for the welfare of his subjects."

army was organising an attack on the Janjira fort against them.

Both the Portuguese and the Marathas, in the matters of diplomatic relations adopted policies to suit the situation. In 1665, the Portuguese waylaid 13 ships of the Marathas, while it was passing by the ports on the Karnataka coast. However, they soon released those ships as they were scared of the powerful Maratha navy. In 1666, while the Fort of Fonda ruled by Adilshah was under siege by Marathas, the Portuguese supplied ammunition to the Adilshahi *Killedar*. On the other hand, they let Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj cross through their territory when he was returning after the sack of Surat. When Mirza Raje Jaysingh had attacked Swarajya, the Portuguese extended support to the Marathas.

The Portuguese established a factory at Dabhol by obtaining a sanction from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. At the same time the local people were unhappy because of the Portuguese laws, which were favourable for religious conversions. Therefore, in 1667, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj decided to attack the region of Bardesh. People of Bardesh welcomed Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj wholeheartedly. Again, when the region of Dandarajpuri, under the Siddi rule, was under Maratha siege, the Portuguese supplied war provisions and ammunition to the Siddis. During the Adilshahi Sultanate versus Maratha conflict, the Portuguese, while acting neutral, were surreptitiously helping Adilashah. Prior to that, Gonsalo Martez, the Portuguese emissary, had met Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Both agreed to avoid any future conflict between them. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, with an intention of uprooting the Portuguese rule, started sending small groups of his men to Goa. It was decided that once their number was enough in Goa, they should strike a revolt against the Portuguese rule. The Portuguese viceroy somehow became aware of the plan. Hence, the plan failed. A treaty was signed between the Portuguese and the Marathas on 10th February 1670. The following conditions were agreed upon – if either of them plundered the other's ships, then the victim party should be properly compensated, all those concessions given to the Mughal ships in transit should also be given to the Maratha ships, no help be extended to the Siddis against the Marathas and not to build forts in the territory of Ramnagar (presently a village in Jawhar Tehsil, Thane). There was a dispute about the issue of collecting Chauthai* between the Portuguese and the Marathas which remained unresolved till the end. To resolve this issue Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had appointed Pitambar Shenavi and Jivaji

Shenavi as mediators. However, they were not much successful in their negotiations. In 1679, the Portuguese secretly helped the British in their conflict with the Marathas for Khanderi-Underi islands.

**Chauthai is a type of revenue collected from the external territories, protected by the Maratha rulers. It used to be one fourth of the total income of the tax payer.*

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had determined to humble the Portuguese. There were many reasons for it, such as, the Portuguese opposing the construction work by the Marathas in Chaul, forcing their subjects in Goa for religious conversion, and pillaging of the trading ships. The Marathas defeated the Portuguese during the siege of Fonda fort.

The Maratha army gathered at Fonda in 1680. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, himself was to lead the campaign, but for some reasons it could not happen.

The panic felt by the Portuguese because of the warfare skills of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is clearly reflected when the Portuguese Governor said, "Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was no doubt a mighty warrior but his strategies against the enemy during the peaceful times were much more daunting. Now his death has relieved the Portuguese authorities from his terror."

The Portuguese were in alliance with Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor, against Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj. Therefore, the Marathas decided to act against the Portuguese. Hence, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj attacked Revdanda. The Portuguese reacted by putting the Fonda fort under siege. The Maratha army successfully broke through the siege and attacked Goa. Yesaji Kank, the chief of Maratha infantry and a very close associate of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, fought with great valour. The Portuguese governor was injured on the battlefield. He had to beat a retreat. Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj chased the

Portuguese army, which got trapped in a deadlock. However, the news of Mughal attack on south Konkan was received in the Maratha camp. Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj and his army, who were on the verge of conquering Goa had to leave halfway and rush to fight the Mughals.

Later, the conflict between the Marathas and the Portuguese was renewed during the reign of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj. A treaty was signed between the Marathas and Husain Ali Sayyad, the chief representative of the Mughals in the south, which gave the right of collecting chauthai to the Marathas from Kalyan-Bhiwandi region. Accordingly they asked the Portuguese to make the payment. However, the Portuguese governor of Vasai refused to pay. To counter the Marathas, the Portuguese established outposts in Vasai, Asheri, Tarapur, Kelwe, Mahim, Daman and Chaul (Revdanda). They also increased the intensity of their atrocities on the local people.

Chimajiappa, the younger brother of Peshwa Bajirao I, was assigned the responsibility of the campaign against the Portuguese. At the onset of the campaign Chimajiappa took over the fort at Thane. In March 1737, the Maratha army conquered the Sashti island. On another front Shankaraji Phadke entered Vasai island. However, taking over Vasai was not enough to establish a permanent control over the Portuguese territory until there was a complete victory over the fort of Vasai. The Marathas fought valiantly but their naval force was not strong enough. The Maratha siege of Vasai fort continued for two years and in



Chimajiappa

the end the Marathas defeated the Portuguese.

4.1.2 Dutch and Maratha Empire

It was inevitable for the Dutch to have a contact with the Maratha rule when they established a factory in Vengurla. This factory was established in 1649 and the Dutch trade had flourished there. However their trade was affected adversely when Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj attacked Kudal.

In 1665, the Mughal governor (*subhedar*) of Surat asked for help from the Dutch for destroying the Maratha naval force. However, the Dutch offered no help. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had allowed them to build a factory at Dabhol but for some reasons it never functioned. The political relations between the Dutch and the Marathas kept changing to suit the need of the time. The Dutch expected help from the Marathas to evacuate the British from Mumbai. The Marathas did not harm the Dutch factory when they ransacked Surat for the second time. Also during their Karnataka campaign the Marathas ensured the safety of the Dutch factory and also issued them trading permits. For these favours, the Dutch paid tributes to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. The Dutch factories at Porto Novo/Parangipettai and Tegnappattam/Devanapattinam were left unharmed by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

4.1.3 French and Maratha Empire

In 1668, the French established their factory at Rajapur by seeking permission from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. They supplied ammunition to Swarajya in return. The Marathas remaining true to their friendly relations with the French left the French factory unharmed during their second attack on Surat. In return, the French paid a big tribute to them. In 1677, Francois Martin, the Governor General of

Pondicherry obtained permission for opening a factory there and assurance of its safety. After the southern campaign by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Maratha supremacy was established on the coast of Coromandel (Cholamandalam). Later, the rivalry between the British and the French got extended to their colonies in India as well. They competed for dominance on various Indian territories. Both began to interfere in the administration of the local kingdoms. The French gained entry into the courts of Nizam under the pretext of imparting military training.

Ibrahim Khan Gardi, a mercenary trained under the French was hired by Sadashivraobhau Peshwa in the Maratha army as the chief of artillery. In the Third Battle of Panipat Mahadji Shinde had observed Ibrahim Khan's skills. Inspired by it, he built a trained army with the help of de Boigne, a French military trainer and also established a well equipped artillery. Backed by his trained army, Mahadaji Shinde could establish Maratha power in north India. He was also successful in keeping the British under control.

4.1.4 British and Maratha Empire

The political relations between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and the British began due to the Afzal Khan episode. Prior to the meeting between Maharaj and Afzal Khan, Dabhol was conquered by the Maratha army. At that time there were three ships of Afzal Khan unloading in the Dabhol port. On receiving the report of Afzal Khan's death, Mahamud Sharif, his representative in Dabhol, took hold of the ships along with the wealth and goods on it and fled to Rajapur. Fazal Khan, Afzal Khan's son, asked Abdul Karim, the Subhedar of Rajapur, to unload the ships at Rajapur. The Marathas took advantage of this opportunity to attack Rajapur and conquered it. Now, Abdul Karim who had

taken loan from the British, was unable to repay it. Hence, the British seized one out of the three ships, which were in Abdul Karim's charge. Of course, this was unacceptable to the Marathas and they asked the British to return the ship. The British refused to do so. Hence, the Marathas detained Velaji, the local agent of the British at Jaitapur. Phillip Gifford, a British officer, visited the Maratha camp to request Velaji's release but he was also detained there. Later, both of them were released. However, this instance strained Maratha-British relations.

When the 'Panhala fort' was under siege laid by Adilshah's army and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was trapped inside the fort, Henry Revington, a British officer, Gifford and Velaji were supplying ammunition to Adilshah's army. They were certain that there was no escape for Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj from this situation. However, Maharaj was successful in escaping from Panhala. Next year, the Marathas defeated the British in the Rajapur campaign. The British officers – Henry Revington, Randolph Taylor, and Phillip Gifford – were arrested and imprisoned for two years.

Earlier, Lieutenant Stephen Ustick had met Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on Raigad for obtaining permissions for the British factory. A meeting between Sundarji and Pilaji, representatives of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Ustick was arranged but the negotiations in this meeting were not successful.

Henry Oxenden, a British agent, was present in the coronation ceremony of Shivaji Maharaj. He obtained the permission to open a British factory at Rajapur. On 12th June 1674 an agreement was signed by the British and the Marathas. The following terms and conditions were included in the agreement : issuing



permissions for the British to trade in Swarajya; to open factories in Rajapur, Dabhol, Chaul and Kalyan; right of the Marathas to levy 2.5% octroi on the British goods, etc. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj prohibited use of British coinage in the Maratha dominion. He also refuted some of the conditions put by the British, such as, the British goods found afloat from the wrecked ships should be returned to them

and the Marathas should enter a treaty with the Siddis of Janjira. This clearly reveals his resolute policy of safeguarding Maratha sovereignty.

In the times after Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Nana Saheb Peshwa took charge of administration. The British could ensure their entry in the political affairs of the Marathas as Nana Saheb, on one occasion, sought help from the British. Nana Saheb

was succeeded by his second son Madhavrao Peshwa. However Nanasaheb's younger brother, Raghunathrao wanted to become the Peshwa. Raghunathrao alias Raghoba approached the British for help. It resulted in appointing a British envoy in the Peshwa court, in Pune. In 1765, the British took over the fort at Malvan. After the death of Madhavrao Peshwa, his younger brother Narayanrao became Peshwa. In his reign, the British tried to conquer Thane, Vasai, Vijaydurg and Ratnagiri. In north India, the Mughal Emperor was under the protection of Shinde-Holkars. By this time, the British had become active to get the custody of the Mughal Emperor and to reduce the power of Bhosale dynasty of Nagpur in Bengal.

For the British to bring the region from Sashti-Vasai to Konkan under their sway was a priority for trading operations. So, they were already planning and moving in that direction. Raghunathrao Peshwa was offered asylum by the British. The British army marched from Mumbai to Pune with Raghunathrao Peshwa in their escort. The British army and the Maratha army met at Talegaon-Wadgaon near Pune and had a combat between them. The British army (and of course, Raghunathrao also) was defeated by the Marathas. A treaty was signed, which is known as 'Wadgaon treaty'. Later, Nana Phadnavis formed an alliance of four rulers, namely, Peshwa, Bhosale of Nagpur, Nizam and Hyder. However, the British successfully persuaded the Nizam to break the alliance. All through these happenings the British Governor Warren Hastings had realised that if the British had to establish their permanent rule in India, it was crucial to subdue the Marathas. In the battle of Kharda (Taluka Jamkhed, District Ahmednagar) the Maratha army had a sweeping victory over the Nizam. The British envoy who was present

in the Maratha camp could minutely observe and study the military tactics of the Marathas. Later, with the help of this envoy Lord Wellesley could defeat the Marathas.

Nana Phadnavis died during the time of Bajirao Peshwa II. The relations between Holkar and Bajirao Peshwa II had turned bitter. As a result Yashwantrao Holkar attacked Pune. Bajirao Peshwa II panicked and sought asylum from the British. The treaty signed by the British and Peshwa after this instance is known as 'Treaty of Vasai'. However, this treaty was not acceptable to Shinde and Holkar. Hence, there was another Anglo-Maratha War in 1803. The Marathas were defeated in this war. The third Anglo-Maratha War was fought in 1817. The Marathas were again defeated and the Maratha rule came to an end in 1818. Bajirao Peshwa was granted an annual pension by the British and he spent rest of his life in Bithoor, near Kanpur.

4.1.5 Siddi and Maratha Empire

In the latter half of the 15th century Siddi arrived in India from Abyssinia (Ethiopia). They established themselves at Janjira. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj took over the forts at Tale, Ghosale and Rayari. Siddi was alarmed because of this.

Try to do this:

A few treaties were signed between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and various colonial powers. Collect information about these treaties.

In 1671, Maratha army blocked all approaches to Janjira fort. Siddi, agreed to surrender the fort to Marathas but at the same time extended a hand of friendship to the Mughals and expressed readiness to be their feudatory. The Mughals agreed to help him. With the help of Mughals, Siddi successfully repulsed the Maratha army.

Siddi and the British always helped each other against a common enemy. To strengthen the Maratha position against these two, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj began to build a fort on Khanderi island. The construction work was supervised by Mainak Bhandari. Hughes, a British officer attempted to shut down the construction work by stopping the supplies to the site. The British had to face strong opposition from Mainak Bhandari and Daulat Khan, the chief of Maratha navy. They seized British ships and captured a number of British officers. The British deployed one big steamship and seven small ships. 40-50 small ships of the Marathas bravely confronted the British ships. In the end the British were forced to beat a retreat from the vicinity of Khanderi.

Siddi was increasingly getting difficult. Hence, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj decided to curb his movement and planned a campaign against him. Siddi was driven to despair because of the repeated attacks by the Marathas in the vicinity of Underi, Apte, Nagothane and Janjira.

While Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, was thus planning to crush Siddi for ever, the Mughal army was marching toward Swarajya. It would have been unwise to face two enemies on two different fronts. Hence, Maratha army stopped chasing Siddi.

After Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj and Maharani Tarabai were continuously engaged in combating Aurangzeb. Therefore they could not pay much attention to the nuisance created by other enemies.

During the times of Bajirao Peshwa I, (1733 C.E.) once again the Marathas became active against Siddi. Chimajiappa, the younger brother of Bajirao Peshwa I, declared war against Siddi and won it. It

was a great victory. A treaty was signed by the Marathas and Siddi. Siddi accepted a feudatory status under the Marathas.

4.1.6 Afghans and Maratha Empire

In the first half of the 18th century, the mighty Mughal empire had already lost its glory. The Mughal rule was now limited only to Delhi, Agra and Punjab. The year 1748 witnessed the first invasion of India by Ahmadshah Abdali, the king of Afghans. He was defeated at Sirhind by Shahjada Ahmadshah, the elder son of the emperor. In 1751, Abdali again invaded India. This time the Mughal emperor ceded the provinces of Lahore and Multan to Abdali in order to avoid war. In 1752, the Marathas and the Mughals arrived at an agreement. According to that agreement the Marathas accepted the responsibility to defend north India, especially the Mughal dominions. In return Mughal emperor granted the right of collecting Chauthai from Rohilkhand to the Marathas and also ceded parts of some of the Mughal provinces. In 1757, Abdali again attacked for the third time. He returned to Afghanistan after ransacking the region around Delhi and Mathura. This time the Maratha army marched from Pune under the leadership of Raghunathrao Peshwa but before they could reach Delhi, Abdali had already gone back. Marathas took charge of Delhi and normalised the situation there. Marathas and Sikhs together planned a campaign to get back Punjab which was held by Abdali. They conquered Sirhind province and then Lahore. From there the Maratha army reached Attock.

In 1759, Abdali marched back for the fourth time. Dattaji and Janakoji Shinde, the Maratha nobles resisted his advance. However, Abdali marched with great speed and strength and conquered Punjab in no time. Dattaji Shinde fell on the battlefield. Abdali took complete hold of Delhi. With an intention to oust the Afghans permanently,

the Maratha army marched out from Pune under the leadership of Sadashivraobhau Peshwa and Vishwasrao Peshwa. On 14th January 1761, the Maratha army and Abdali confronted each other at Panipat on the banks of river Yamuna. The war between them is known as the ‘Third Battle of Panipat’. Both Peshwas were killed in this war. A message in code language was sent to Pune announcing the loss. It was as follows : “Two precious pearls fell, twenty seven gold coins were lost and there is no count to the loss of silver and copper coins”. Indeed, the Marathas on the battleground of Panipat fought with an unwavering conviction, which can be

described as ‘India for the Indians’. It was not an easy task for Abdali to rule Delhi and he soon returned home. The Maratha opposition was so fierce that neither Abdali, nor his successors ever returned to India.

The British could establish absolute supremacy in India, once the Maratha rule declined in the 19th century. However, the Indians fought against the British supremacy. Besides, they also had to fight against many internal evil practices and customs that were prevalent in the Indian society.

In the next lesson, we will be learning about the social and religious reforms in India.

Exercise

Q.1 (A) Choose the correct alternative and rewrite the statement.

- Marathas defeated the Portuguese during the siege of
(a) Vengurla (b) Phonda
(c) Surat (d) Rajapur
- The political relations between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and the British began due to the episode.
(a) Kudal campaign (b) Afzal Khan
(c) Fazal Khan (d) Coronation
- The younger brother of Bajirao Peshwa I defeated the at Vasai.
(a) British (b) French
(c) Dutch (d) Portuguese
- The ‘Third Battle of Panipat’ was fought between Marathas and the
(a) British (b) Abdali
(c) Ahmad Khan Bangash
(d) Najib Khan

(B) Find the incorrect pair from group ‘B’, and write the corrected one.

Group ‘A’ Group ‘B’

- Cosme da Guarda Portuguese historian
- Gonsalo Martez Portuguese emissary

- Francois Martin Chief of Dutch factory
- Henry Revington British Officer

Q.2 (A) Write names of historical places/ persons/events.

- The first Europeans to arrive in India –
- The place where the Portuguese stored ammunition –
- They honoured Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj with tributes for ensuring the safety of their factories and issuing trading permits –
- The British agent at Jaitapur –

(B) Choose the right reason and complete the sentence.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj levied octroi on the salt trade to –

- oppose the Portuguese
- stop the British trade of salt
- raise funds for Swarajya
- oppose the colonialists

Q.3 State your opinion.

- Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj built naval force.
- Maratha policies were anti colonial.

Q.4 Answer the following questions in detail.

1. Write about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's policies regarding the European traders as seen in his Adnyapatra.
2. Explain Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's resolute policy of safeguarding Maratha sovereignty.
3. Why did the strongest Maratha rule in India come to an end?

Q.5 Observe the map on Page 29 and answer the questions based on it.

1. Where were the Dutch colonies located on the west coast of India?
2. Where did the French establish their colonies on the east coast of India?
3. Whose factories were established in Agra and Allahabad?

Project

Collect information about the colonies established by the European colonialists in various countries, with the help of internet.



The Memorial of the First Anglo-Maratha war - Vadgaon Mawal