



9. The Maratha War of Independence

After the death of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the Marathas fought with great valour with the Mughals under the leadership of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj and Maharani Tarabai to protect the *Swaraj*. This long war that lasted for twenty seven years is called the ‘Maratha War of Independence’. In 1682 CE Emperor Aurangzeb himself led the invasion of South. Even then, despite enormous difficulties, the Marathas emerged victorious in this struggle. This war is an exciting and glorious period in the history of India. In this chapter, we shall learn about this war of independence.

The word ‘Maratha’ used here means the ‘people who speak Marathi’ or ‘Maharashtrian people’.



Do this.

Sambhajiraje speaking... Present a role play.



Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj

Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj:

Sambhaji Maharaj was the eldest son of

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. He was born on 14 May 1657 on the Purandar Fort. After Shivaji Maharaj, he became the Chhatrapati. At this time, the Marathas were battling against the Mughals. During the same period, Emperor Aurangzeb's son Shahajada Akbar rebelled against his father. The Emperor crushed his rebellion. Then Akbar came to the Deccan to take shelter with Sambhaji Maharaj. Then the Emperor himself descended on the South in 1682 CE to vanquish Akbar. He had with him a huge army and a powerful artillery. He asked the Siddi of Janjira to undertake an expedition against the Marathas. He also won over the Portuguese to his side. Consequently, Sambhaji Maharaj had to face many adversaries at one and the same time.

The reign of Sambhaji Maharaj marks the first chapter of the Maratha War of Independence after Shivaji Maharaj. Shivaji Maharaj had given him excellent education in civil administration and military campaigns. Sambhaji Maharaj had begun to take interest in the administration of the State and the command of the army from the age of fourteen years. While he was still a prince, he had led attacks on many territories of the Mughals and the Adilshah. Then French traveller Abbe Carrey says about his battle skills, “Even though the prince is young, he is courageous and brave like his father was famous for....”

When Sambhaji Maharaj became Chhatrapati, the war with the Mughals became fiercer. Aurangzeb wanted to occupy regions from Kabul to Kanyakumari and create a grand unified Mughal empire. His dream was to destroy the Maratha State completely using his

military and financial prowess. But Sambhaji Maharaj shattered his dreams with his bravery and military skills. Troops of the Maratha army attacked many of the Mughal territories. Though the Emperor's generals tried very hard for a long time, they couldn't win the Maratha fort of Ramsej near Nashik. Thus, Sambhaji Maharaj's valour brought Aurangzeb to his knees. Once he removed his turban in frustration and threw it on the floor. He made a vow that until he had vanquished Sambhaji, he would not wear his turban. Sambhaji Maharaj had rendered Aurangzeb helpless to this extent.



Do you know ?

Aurangzeb thought that once the Maratha forts were captured, their rule too, would come to an end. So he put a siege around Ramsej fort near Nashik. Aurangzeb's army was huge. The Maratha army was small. But they fought with perseverance. The siege continued for the next five years. This bravery of a handful Maratha soldiers was unparalleled. This resistance offered by the Marathas made Aurangzeb realise the difficulty of fighting with them.

Campaign against the Siddi : The Siddi of Janjira used to harass the people in the Maratha territory. He used to raid, burn, and loot the Maratha territory and commit atrocities. Sabhasada has described him as a rat in the house. Sambhaji Maharaj started a campaign against him in 1682 CE. His army laid a siege to Siddi's Dandarajpuri fort, and battered the fort of Janjira with the artillery. But at the same time, the Mughal army invaded *Swaraj*. Sambhaji Maharaj had to abandon the Janjira campaign and turn back.

Campaign against the Portuguese :

The Portuguese of Goa joined hands with the Emperor against Sambhaji Maharaj. So, Sambhaji Maharaj decided to teach a lesson to the Portuguese. He attacked the Revdanda fort of the Portuguese in 1683 CE. To counter this, the Portuguese laid a siege to the Fonda fort of the Marathas on the Goa border. The Marathas broke through the siege and attacked Goa. In this battle, Yesaji Kank showed great valour. The Portuguese Governor got wounded and retreated. Sambhaji Maharaj followed him. The Portuguese were in deep trouble. At this time, Sambhaji Maharaj got the news that the Mughals had attacked South Konkan. Therefore, he had to abandon the winning campaign of Goa and return to fight with the Mughals.

The end of Adilshahi and Qutubshahi : Aurangzeb did not succeed in his campaign against the Marathas. Therefore, he suspended that campaign. Then he turned towards the kingdoms of Adilshah and Qutubshah and conquered them.

The wealth and army of both the kingdoms was now acquired by the Mughals and it made Aurangzeb even stronger. Then he concentrated all his might on defeating the Marathas. He attacked their territory from all sides. The Maratha army General Hambirrao Mohite got killed during an encounter with the Mughal army. Due to this blow the military strength of Sambhaji Maharaj was weakened.

Administration of Sambhaji Maharaj : Even though Sambhaji Maharaj was busy fighting on various battle fronts, he did not ignore his administrative responsibilities. He continued the prompt justice and revenue system, which was a characteristic of Chhatrapati Shivaji

Maharaj's era. He severely punished the landlords who harassed common people and who rebelled against the *Swaraj*. He gave administrative powers to Maharani Yesubai. He gave her, her own stamp. He continued the legacy of Shivaji Maharaj's welfare policies.

Sambhaji Maharaj knew Sanskrit and many other languages well. He studied many ancient books on polity and wrote their gist in a book called 'Budhbhushanam'.



Do you know ?

Sambhaji Maharaj composed 'Budhbhushanam' in the Sanskrit language. The second chapter of this book discusses polity. It includes information about the virtues of a king, prime minister, princes and their education and functions, the advisers to the king, forts and the goods and materials needed on a fort, the army, the duties of a king, espionage, etc.

Death of Sambhaji Maharaj :

Aurangzeb was trying very hard to defeat Sambhaji Maharaj. He had placed Mukarrabkhan in charge of the Kolhapur province. Mukarrabkhan learnt that Sambhaji Maharaj was at Sangameshwar in Konkan. He raided the place and captured Sambhaji Maharaj. When Sambhaji Maharaj was taken to the Emperor, he faced him fearlessly. By the Emperor's orders, he was brutally put to death on 11 March 1689. This Maratha Chhatrapati did not compromise his self respect and faced his death nobly and bravely. The Marathas took inspiration from his sacrifice and intensified their fight against the Mughals.

Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj :

Rajaram Maharaj was the second son of

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. He was born on 24 February 1670 on Raigad. He became Chhatrapati after the death of Sambhaji Maharaj. Now Aurangzeb thought that his



Chhatrapati
Rajaram Maharaj

dream of winning the Maratha kingdom would be realised. He sent Zulfikarkhan to put Raigad under siege. That time Rajaram Maharaj and his wife Maharani Tarabai and Sambhaji Maharaj's wife

Maharani Yesubai and his son Shahu were on Raigad. It was risky for all members of the royal family to stay at one place. Maharani Yesubai tackled this unprecedented calamity very bravely. Resolving that, she would not surrender to the Mughals under any conditions, she took many important political decisions on Raigad. It was decided that Rajaram Maharaj should escape from Raigad and if necessary, go to a far off place like Jinji. It was decided that the fight to defend Raigad would continue under the leadership of Maharani Yesubai. Maharani Yesubai chose to make Rajaram Maharaj and not her own son the Chhatrapati. Her decision is a shining example of her love for *Swaraj* and her extreme selflessness. She kept the Maratha Chhatrapati secure without regard for her own life or that of her son.



Let's find out.

Find Jinji on a map of India.

Rajaram Maharaj leaves for Jinji :

On 5 April 1689 Rajaram Maharaj escaped from the besieged Raigad with a few of his associates. He decided to go

south to Jinji. The Jinji fort was invincible. It was not an easy task for the Mughals to capture this fort. Rajaram Maharaj took his faithful *Sardars* like Pralhad Niraji, Khando Ballal, Rupaji Bhosale and managed to reach Jinji.

The Movements of the Marathas :

It was difficult to defend the Raigad fort against the might of the Mughals. The Mughals captured Raigad in November 1689 and arrested Maharani Yesubai and Shahu. While going to Jinji, Rajaram Maharaj had assigned the duty to fight against the Mughals to Ramchandrapant Amatya, Shankaraji Narayan Sachiv, Santaji Ghorpade and Dhanaji Jadhav.

From the Maratha point of view, the situation was critical. Aurangzeb had enticed many Maratha *Sardars* to his side by giving them *watans* and *jagirs*. Rajaram Maharaj also used the same tactics to thwart the Mughal plans. It was promised that if a Maratha *Sardar* captured Mughal territory it would be given to him as a *jagir*. Due to this promise, many capable Maratha *Sardars* came forward. They started invading the Mughal territory with vigour and defeated Mughal Generals. Santaji and Dhanaji were at the forefront in these actions. Against their surprise attacks and guerrilla tactics, the enormous amount of war material and heavy artillery of the Mughals were of little use. The Mughal forces were at their wits' end. On one occasion, Santaji Ghorpade and Vithoji Chavan even cut and carried away the golden pinnacle of the Emperor's own tent in a surprise attack.

Siege of Jinji : Once Raigad was captured, the Emperor sent Zulfikarkhan to the South on the campaign of Jinji. He laid siege to the fort of Jinji. The



Do you know ?

The Mughal soldiers were so scared of Dhanaji that when their horse baulked while drinking water, they would say: "Why, do you see Dhanaji in the water?"

Marathas defended the fort bravely for nearly eight years. The Mughal forces engaged in the siege were fiercely attacked from outside by Santaji and Dhanaji. Rajaram Maharaj escaped through the siege, and returned to Maharashtra. Later Zulfikarkhan captured the fort of Jinji.

The return of Rajaram Maharaj to Maharashtra gave a boost to the Maratha activity. The Marathas attacked the Mughal territories of Khandesh, Varhad and Baglan. Rajaram Maharaj inspired hundreds of brave Maratha warriors like Santaji and Dhanaji with his understanding nature and statesmanship. He motivated them to protect the *Swaraj* and thus performed a very valuable task. But even as all this was taking place, Rajaram Maharaj died on 2 March 1700 on Sinhgad after a short period of illness.

Rajaram Maharaj was thoughtful and kind-hearted. He brought together all the capable people in the Maratha empire. He united them created a new enthusiasm amongst them. After the death of Sambhaji Maharaj, he fought against Aurangzeb for 11 years with great courage and tenacity. Rajaram Maharaj's greatest achievement is that he protected *Swaraj* in those extremely difficult times. While describing Rajaram Maharaj, noted historian Riyasatkar G. S. Sardesai has used the adjective 'Sthirbuddhi' (Level Headed). He cannot be described in better words than these.





Do this.

- Interview the women in your neighbourhood who have made great achievements in various fields.

Maharani Tarabai : After the death of Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj, Aurangzeb thought that he had won the war against the Marathas. But it was not so. Aurangzeb was winning battle after battle, but he could not win the war. Maharani Tarabai, the capable wife of Rajaram Maharaj, came forward to lead the *Swaraj* movement in the extremely unfavourable circumstances.



Maharani Tarabai

Contemporary Mughal historian Khafikhan describes Maharani Tarabai as an intelligent and knowledgeable woman. Her management of the army and administration had won renown even during the rule of her husband.

After the death of Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj, Maharani Tarabai continued the

Swaraj struggle bravely with the help of her *Sardars*. Aurangzeb captured Satara and Panhala from the Maratha territory, but at the same time the Marathas dashed up to the Mughal areas of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Tarabai expanded the war areas further. *Sardars* like Krishnaji Sawant, Khanderao Dabhade, Dhanaji Jadhav and Nemaji Shinde opened battles against Mughals on various fronts outside Maharashtra. This was a sign of change in the outcome of the war.

Maharani Tarabai fought for seven years. She kept the Maratha kingdom strong. She took charge of the administration singlehandedly and encouraged the *Sardars* to participate in the mission of *Swaraj*. Maratha *Sardars* fought against the Mughals up to Sironje, Mandsaur and Malwa. Khafikhan has recorded that Rajaram's wife Tarabai achieved great things and displayed the



Do you know ?

Maharani Tarabai used the Guerrilla technique very effectively. Marathas were comparatively weaker than Aurangzeb in army power. Aurangzeb used his army to put siege to the forts to capture them. Marathas used to fight for the fort as long as they could. But when the rainy season approached, *Killedar* of the fort pretended to side with Aurangzeb. A bribe was accepted from Aurangzeb and the fort was handed over to him. The *Killedar* used to deposit this bribe amount in the Maratha treasury. When Aurangzeb depleted the wealth, grains and ammunition on the fort, Tarabai used to capture that fort again. This strategy of Tarabai is described as 'Safe deposit locker system'.

qualities of leadership of the army and management of campaigns. It added force to the Maratha campaigns.



Do you know ?

While describing Tarabai's great achievements, Poet Devdatta (who was the son of Paramanand, the author of Shivbharat) says,

ताराबाई रामराणी । भद्रकाली कोपली ।
दिल्ली झाली दीनवाणी । दिल्लीशाचे गेले पाणी ।
रामराणी भद्रकाली । रणरंगी क्रुद्ध झाली ।
प्रयत्नाची वेळ आली । मुगल हो सांभाळा ॥

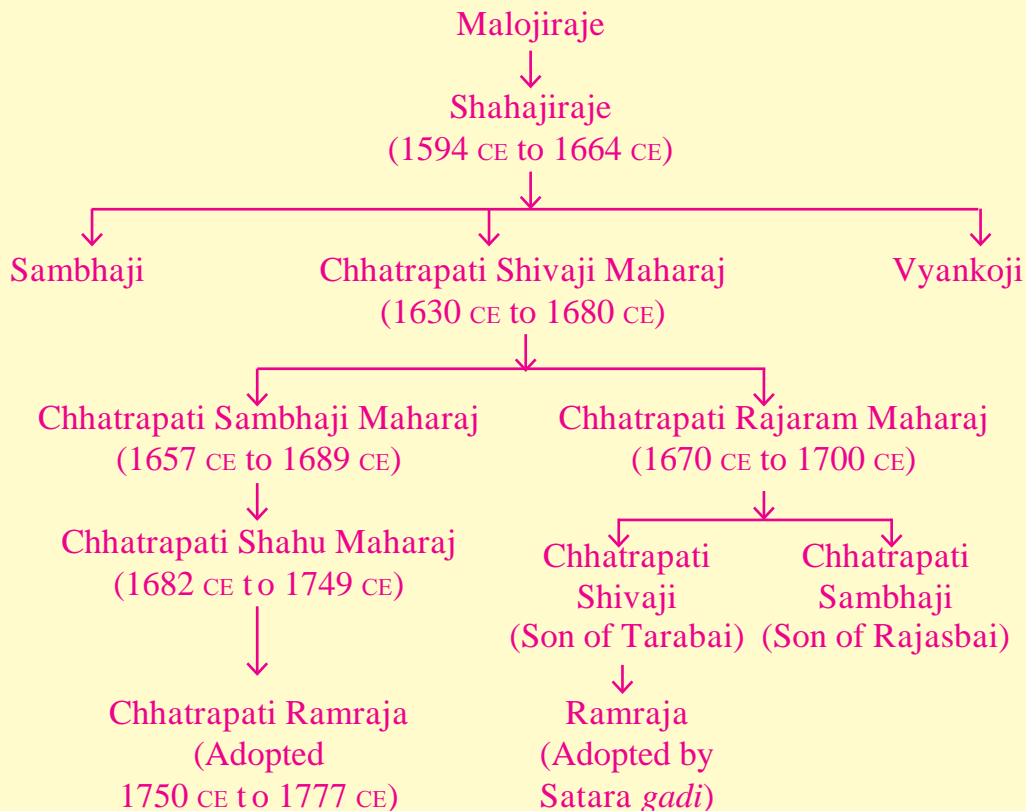
Thus, Maharani Tarabai kept up the legacy of valour inherited from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Due to the forceful campaigns of the Marathas, Aurangzeb was frustrated. The

Mughal-Maratha fight had continued for 25 years. Still the Mughals could not defeat the Marathas. In these circumstances, Emperor Aurangzeb died in 1707 CE at Ahmednagar. The Maratha War of Independence ended with his death.

This Maratha war for independence was the fight between the Mughal Emperor's greed to expand his empire and the spirit of independence of the Marathas. The Marathas emerged victorious in it. After the death of Aurangzeb, they led others in filling the vacuum in the political arena. They controlled the throne of Delhi, ran the affairs of almost all parts of Hindustan and protected it. Therefore, the 18th century is known as the century of the Marathas. In the next chapters, we will see the achievements of the Marathas in that century.

THE FAMILY TREE OF THE BHONSALES





Exercise

1. Choose the correct option.

- (1) Aurangzeb was frustrated by his bravery.
 - (a) Shahajada Akbar
 - (b) Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj
 - (c) Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj
- (2) They cut the golden pinnacles the Emperor's tent.
 - (a) Santaji and Dhanaji
 - (b) Santaji Ghorpade and Vithoji Chavan
 - (c) Khando Ballal and Rupaji Bhosale
- (3) He fought bravely in the Goa battle.
 - (a) Yesaji Kank
 - (b) Nemaji Shinde
 - (c) Pralhad Niraji

2. Find in the text in the lesson and write answers.

- (1) Why did Sambhaji Maharaj return halfway from the Janjira Campaign?
- (2) Why did Sambhaji Maharaj decide to teach a lesson to the Portuguese?

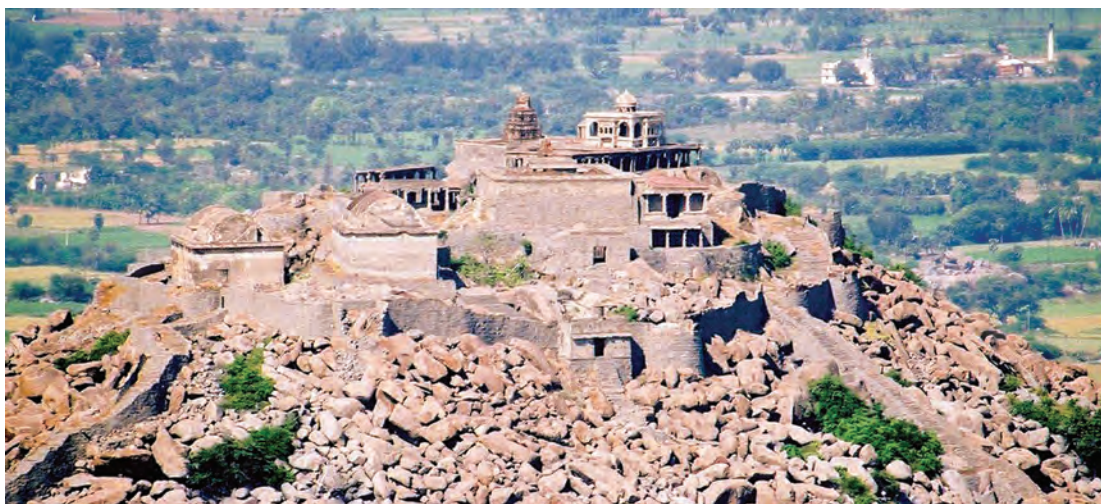
- (3) To whom did Rajaram Maharaj entrust the responsibility of protecting the *Swaraj* when he went to Jinji.
- (4) Devdatta has described Maharani Tarabai's valour in these words.

3. Give reasons.

- (1) Aurangzeb turned his attention towards Adilshahi and Qutubshahi kingdoms.
- (2) After the death of Sambhaji Maharaj, the Marathas intensified their war with the Mughals.
- (3) It was decided that the Raigad fort should be fought under the leadership of Maharani Yesubai.

Activity

Show Goa, Bijapur, Golconda, Jinji, Ahmadabad and Ahmednagar on a map of India.



Fort Jinji