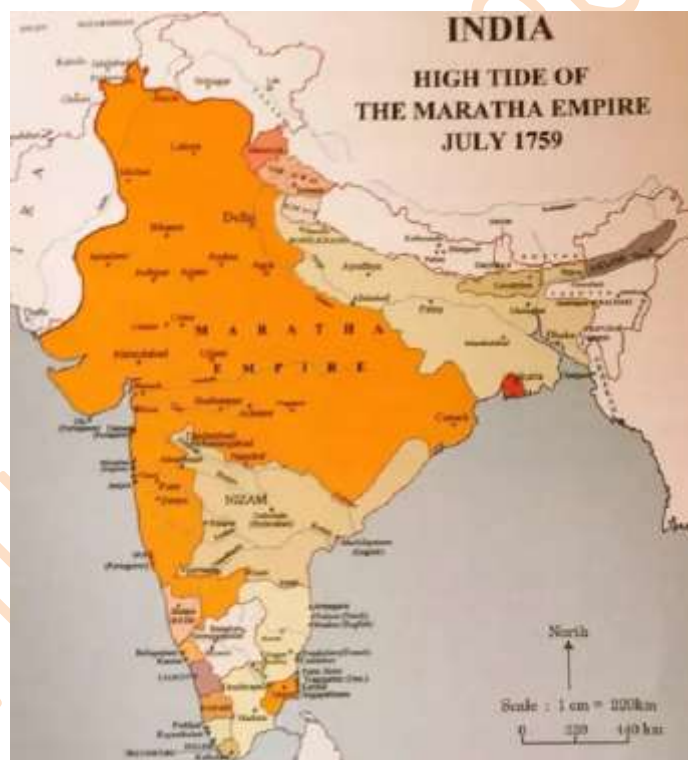


## Maratha Empire

Formally, the Maratha empire existed from 1674 with the coronation of Shivaji as the Chhatrapati. In 1818, the empire ended with the defeat of Peshwa Bajirao II by the Britishers. Marathas were a Marathi-speaking warrior group hailing from the western Deccan Plateau; the region is present-day Maharashtra. Marathas established a Hindavi Swarajya, i.e., 'self-rule of Native Hindu/Indian people; with this, Marathas rose to prominence. A large extent for ending Mughal rule is credited to Marathas over the most of Indian subcontinent.

Chhatrapati Shivaji, famously known as Shivaji Maharaj, revolted against the Adil Shahi dynasty in the 17th century. He succeeded in carving out a kingdom, Raigarh, as its capital. Prior to this, Thanjavur Maratha Kingdom was established by his father Shahji, which was later inherited by Shivaji's half-brother, Venkoji Rao (also known as Ekoji).

Marathas were known for their mobility, and they were able to consolidate their territory during the Mughal-Maratha Wars. This is the prime reason they could succeed in expanding the Maratha Empire and controlling a large part of the Indian subcontinent.



### Maratha Empire under Chhatrapati Shivaji's regime

- Chhatrapati Shivaji was born in the Bhonsle clan around the 1630s (the year is not certain) and is considered the founder of the modern Maratha empire.
- Shivaji's policies were instrumental in forging a distinct identity for the Marathi people.
- The genesis of the Maratha empire and prominence is recorded from the time Shivaji carved out an enclave from the declining Adilshahi Sultanate of Bijapur.

- In 1674 he was crowned as the Chhatrapati, i.e., monarch or the ruler of the newly carved territory with Raigarh as its capital; the Raigarh fort is the hallmark of his regime.

Note: To keep his realm at Raigad fort, he not only had to fight the Mughals and the Adilshahi but also many Maratha Watandars.

Why did Watandars oppose his reign?

- The Watandars considered their watan a source of economic power and pride and were reluctant to part with it. The economic interest was the prime reason they opposed the emergence of Shivaji.
- Shivaji was an able administrator and established an effective civil and military administration.
- He established a government that included such modern concepts:

- cabinet (*ashtapradhana mandala*)

- foreign affairs (*dabir*)

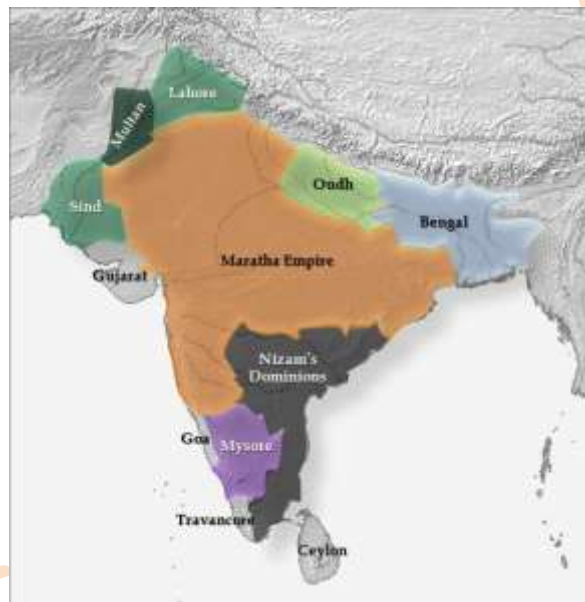
- internal intelligence

- He also built a powerful navy and erected new forts (e.g., Sindhudurg Fort) and strengthened old ones (e.g., Vijayadurg Fort) on the west coast of Maharashtra.
- Maratha Navy: A potent naval force was established during Shivaji's rule and dominated the territorial waters of the western coast of India from Bilimora, Gujarat, to Savantwadi.
- Note: The Maratha Navy attacked British, Portuguese, Dutch and Siddi. Until the 1730s, the Maratha Navy was dominant in the area. It started declining by the 1770s and ceased to exist by 1818.
- During Shivaji's reign, one of the tools of the empire was a collection of Chauth or 25% of the revenue from states that were submitted to Maratha power.
- Note: The revenue system was so elaborate and well-framed that it was also retained by the Britishers when they gained control of Maratha territory.
- Shivaji died around April 03, 1680, of health issues.
- After the death of Shivaji, Mughal emperor Aurangzeb launched an attack, leading to a war that continued for 27 years.
- With Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the war ended and initiated the decline of the Mughal Empire.

### Maratha Regime post-Shivaji

- In the 18th century, during the reign of the Peshwas, the Maratha Empire reached its zenith. In 1760, Marathas dominated most of the Indian subcontinent.
- The Peshwas, Deshmukh's Marathi Chitpavan Brahmin family, controlled the Maratha family and subsequently became the hereditary heads of the Maratha empire from 1749-1818.
- Bajirao I became a prominent Peshwa, the General.
- He was only 20 when appointed Peshwa and led many campaigns in North India.
- He promoted young leaders of his own age, such as Ranoji Shinde, the Puar brothers, Mal Malharrao Holkar, and Pilaji Gaekwad, to engage in such campaigns.
- **Note:** All these leaders also did not come from the traditional aristocratic families of Maharashtra.

- All the young leaders are chosen by Bajirao I, or their descendants later became rulers during the Maratha Confederacy era.
- Raghoji Bhonsle expanded the Maratha rule in central and East India. He also took control of the Nagpur Kingdom.
- In the Battle of Delhi, 1737, the Marathas defeated a Mughal army in their capital.
- The Marathas continued their military campaigns against Nizams, Mughals, Nawab of Bengal and the Durrani Empire to further extend their boundaries.
- In 1760, the reign of the Marathas stretched across most of the Indian subcontinent.
- At its zenith, the Maratha empire stretched from Tamil Nadu in the south to Peshawar (modern-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, presently in Pakistan) in the north, and in the east, it was extended up to Bengal.
- After the Battle of Panipat (1761), the North-western expansion of the Marathas was stopped. It took a decade to re-establish Maratha authority in the north, and it could be achieved under the regime of Peshwa Madhavrao I.
- Peshwa Madhavrao I granted semi-autonomy to the strongest knights. In this manner creation of Maratha states led by the Gaekwads of Baroda, the Scindias of Gwalior and Ujjain, the Holkars of Indore and Malwa, the Bhonsales of Nagpur and the Puras of Dhar and Dewas.



### Intervention of British East India Company in Maratha regime

- In 1775, the East India Company intervened in a family succession struggle of Peshwas in Pune.
- This led to the First Anglo-Maratha War. In this war, Marathas were victorious.

To know more about the British intervention in the administrative and political affairs of the Maratha empire, stay tune.