

THE PLACE OF MARATHA PESHWAS IN INDIAN HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

In the present work a review of Indian History is made to look into the contributions of the Maratha peshwas. The study starts at the earliest empire by Ashoka and then continues to the present time. It looks into the empires of Moghuls, and the British also. It is found that the peshwas expanded their rule the fastest. Amongst the peshwas, Baji Rao I had an impeccable record where he fought numerous battles but never lost one and many consider him as the Napoleon of India although Napoleon lost in the end.

1. INTRODUCTION

India's history starts with the Indus Valley Civilization going back to 4000 BC. This civilization extended over area much bigger than any other ancient civilizations. All through the history, people have migrated from one place to another. So, Indian civilization shows a history of mixing of people with various religions. Many came and got assimilated with local people with the result that not much strain existed within the society in ancient times based on religion.

The strain gets created when there is differentiation and discrimination and acts negatively on the structure of the society. India was ruled by different groups of people and their empires stretched over different areas.

The objective of this study is look into the Maratha Empire which to-day – is not well understood in areas other than Maharashtra where it originated. Fig. 5 shows the map of India where Maharashtra is also shown.

2. THE MARATHA EMPIRE

2.1 BALAJI VISHWANATH

The Maratha Empire lasted between 1674 to 1818 [1]. It was started by Chhatrapati Shivajee who rebelled against the Moghul Empire (1526 to 1857). Shivajee established his capital at Raigadh in Maharashtra in 1674. The descendants of Shivajee later split among themselves and had their capitals at Satara and Kolhapur in Maharashtra (Fig. 6). Shahujee, during his rule, appointed Balaji Vishwanath (Fig. 1), and later, his descendants, as the peshwas or prime ministers of the kingdom. The names of various peshwas are shown in Table 1.

Shahujee's kingdom was small to start with and his rule was not very significant at the time of appointment of peshwa Balaji Vishwanath. But this peshwa quickly expanded his influence and was successful in installing Moghul King Farrukhsiyar on the throne at Delhi, the seat of Moghul Empire at that time though earlier Moghuls ruled from Agra. The names of Moghul Kings are shown in Table 3 The political situation was very fluid at that time of the peshwas. There were lot of uncertainties about the rulers and their influence in different regions. Among the Moghuls, no one could rule for longer period of time due to the interference of two brothers called Saiyid Brothers, who made and deposed the rulers at their whim [2-4].

2.2 BAJIRAO I

Bajirao I (1700 –1740) was a general of the Maratha Empire in India (Fig. 2). He is also known by the names Bajirao Ballal and Thorale (Marathi for Elder) Bajirao.

Important events in his time are listed in Table 2.

Bajirao is credited with expanding the Maratha Empire, especially in the north (Fig. 2), which contributed to its reaching a peak during his son's reign twenty years after his death (Fig. 8). Bajirao is generally regarded as the most influential of the nine peshwas. He also married the daughter of Rajput King Chhatrasal of Bundelkhand. The name of the daughter was Mastani whose mother was a Muslim. Since Bajirao came from a conservative Brahmin family, his family did not honor Mastani in their family even though she was loyal to the Marathas. They had two children, one of the two was Shamsher Bahadur who fought with the Marathas in the Battle at Panipat in 1761 and died in the battle.

2.2.1 SAWAI JAY SINGH AND THE MARATHAS

Sawai Jai Singh was born in the year 1688. He succeeded his father to the throne in the year 1700 at age of 12 due to the untimely death of his father. Aurangzeb was the ruler at Delhi at that time and was fighting with the Marathas in south India. Sawai Jai Singh was sent to Deccan in the year 1701 under Bidar Bakht, son of Prince Azam who was the second of the three sons of Aurangzeb. Sawai Jai Singh showed exemplary bravery during Moghul's win over the Khelna fort from the Marathas.

In the year 1713, Farrukhsiyar ascended the throne at Delhi. He appointed Sawai Jai Singh as the viceroy of Malwa in October, 1713 to keep Malwa from falling into the hands of Marathas. He arrived at Ujjain in February, 1714. There, he was also facing problems from Afghan soldiers. At Malwa, he performed excellent service to the Moghul ruler and kept the Marathas and Afghans in check. But, from 1715 to 1717, he was called by the Emperor for various other duties away from Malwa because the Emperor was facing problems from Saiyid Brothers at Delhi and Jats near Agra. His father had also fought against Jats, and Sawai Jai Singh had gone along with his father in those battles. In November 1717, he finished with Malwa and was replaced by Mohammad Amin Khan.

However, Sawai Jay Singh kept very friendly relations with Marathas and even assisted Bajirao I in sending his mother for pilgrimage in the Moghul territory. They (Bajirao's mother and Jay Singh) exchanged gifts also). As we will see later that pilgrimage in unfriendly territory proved costly later on in Panipat III battle in 1761.

After 1737 when he (Jay Singh) was relieved of his job at Malwa, he came back to his capital Jaipur, where he spent his remaining years of life until 1743, when he died.

Jay Singh and Bajirao I were alive and away from Delhi when Nadir Shah from Iran ransacked Delhi in the year 1739.

Fig. 7 shows the Maratha territory in the year 1740 when Bajirao I died.

2.3 BALAJI BAJIRAO

Balaji Baji Rao was born in 1720 (Fig. 3). After Baji Rao I died in April 1740, Chhatrapati Shahu appointed 19-year old Balaji as the peshwa in 1740, He expanded the Maratha territory very rapidly in just 20 years as can be seen in Fig. 8 where it stretched from Tamil Nadu in the south, to Peshawar in modern-day Pakistan in the

north, and Bengal and Andaman Islands in the east. However, even though very successful in expansion, he lost the Battle of Panipat III in 1761 to Ahmad Shah Durrani of the Afghan Durrani Empire.

There have been many reasons given by many historians for this defeat [4]:

1. The Marathas were fighting this battle in unfriendly territory where supplies were difficult to get.
2. Many Hindu kings differed with Sadashiv Rao's decision to take families for pilgrimage to the battlefield in north India. Some of them withdrew leaving the Marathas alone to fight
3. Durani had divided his forces in different groups which attacked Marathas from all sides.
4. On a single day on Jan 14, 1761, about 70,000 Marathas were slaughtered and another 30,000 were taken prisoner for ransom. Here, Sadashiv Rao had to come out (due to shortage of food and supplies in the Muslim territory) of entrenched position to attack Durani's well defended positions.

Balaji Baji Rao died soon in the year 1761 and was succeeded by Madhav Rao (Fig. 4)

Regarding Marathas naval strength, a large portion of the Maratha Empire was coastline, which had been well defended by a navy under commanders such as Kanhoji Angre. He was very successful at keeping the coast secure from invading foreign naval ships – those of the Portuguese and the British.

2.4 MADHAV RAO I

The loss at Panipat blunted the Maratha's magical advance which was unprecedented in the Indian History. Ten years after Panipat, Madhav Rao who was a capable peshwa had recovered the loss suffered by the Marathas earlier in 1761. Within 10 years, the young peshwa Madhav Rao I reinstated Maratha authority over North India (Fig.4).

Unfortunately, Madhav Rao I met with untimely death at the young age of 27. This death sealed the glory of Maratha Empire and subsequent peshwas did not prove match to the advancing British East India Company's strategies. They fought three battles with the British which were:

1. First Anglo-Maratha War (1775–1782)
2. Second Anglo-Maratha War (1803–1805)
3. Third Anglo-Maratha War, also known as the Pindari War (1817–1818)

.3. THE BRITISH RULE

The British Rule can be divided between two parts – the first one was the East India Company which was trading on behalf of the British merchants between 1757 to 1857, and the second was directly by the Royal King or Queen between 1857 to 1947. The Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 had caused this administrative change.

Like the Marathas, the British expanded their territory which for the first time covered entire India, Burma, and Sri Lanka. They tried to advance into Afghanistan to prevent the expansion of the Russian Empire but failed. The wars were:

First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–1842)

Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878–1880)

Third Anglo-Afghan War (1919)

Figs. 9 to 11 show the territories under Ashoka, Moghuls, and the British. The British territory covered entire India and Burma.

The period of British rule coincided with the advent of technological era in Europe [5]. Europe went through the Industrial Revolution where other Indians rulers had immense disadvantage as compared to the British. India saw introduction of factories, railways, telegraphy, telephony etc. The British successfully used telegraphy in communications when the Sepoy Mutiny broke out in 1857. They could plan and move their troops very easily where the mutineers severely lacked in communications within themselves for proper co-ordination. Nana Saheb III, the last peshwa, who was not given a pension by the British. He was the adopted son of the exiled Maratha Peshwa Bajji Rao II, he was entitled to a pension from the English East India Company. The Company's refused to continue the pension after his father's death because he was the adopted son. This new policy of refusal came into force within a year or so earlier.,

Over million Indians fought with the British in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War, and the First and Second World Wars. This fact was hardly acknowledged by

Britain and its allies when they wrote articles, books or showed movies about these events.

4. THE SUBJECT OF HISTORY IN POST INDEPENDENT INDIA

India attained its independence unlike any other country in the world by non – violent means. However, towards the end of the British rule there was infighting amongst the Indians based on religion where separate country for Muslim majority areas was created as Pakistan. There was mass movement of people from one country to another and mass killings took place in this process which the leaders of both of these countries had not anticipated and all of them regretted about such killings.

The religious differences have had other ramifications in India. One of these is the study of authentic history of India. The subject has been politicized based on religion and caste. The role of caste has had damaging effect on the Indian society since the elections now are held based on caste where a combination of votes of different castes, and religion has become a deciding factor in the election of the ruling party. Many times the parties are based essentially on castes rather than ideologies.

India, historically had very divided society which enabled foreigners to very easily win in the battles starting from Mahammad Ghazni in 1000 AD approximately. He invaded 17 times and won all the times. Since then until 1947, it was ruled by foreigners until 1947.

The peshwas who made spectacular effort of freeing the masses of oppressed where the Hindus who were paying extra tax called the Jazia tax for their faith in a religion. The peshwas are hardly remembered now due to the regionalization of politics. The subject of history itself has been regionalized with the result that most of the present day Indians hardly study history of other parts of the country.

To build a modern country, the decisions have to be made without any differentiation of castes and religion as is the case in modern society such as USA.

When India was getting independence, the eminent people framed its constitution where reservation in jobs - based on disadvantaged caste but not income of an individual - at the time of independence got enshrined for certain number of years. After the independence this period of reservation kept on being extended with the result that the country has become a victim of such reservations. The caste of all the rulers who held Indian Empires as shown in Table 4 – have got reservation now. People with merit cannot get jobs or admission in schools, colleges, and universities due to

reservations. The reservation for jobs and in admission into educational institution is dividing the country.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this work, a study was made of different eras and the extent area-wise to which various rulers could rule. It was found that Ashoka ruled over India and Afghanistan whereas the British ruled over India and Burma and Sri Lanka. The Moghuls also ruled over vast areas of India and Afghanistan.

The rule of peshwas was also over vast area but their area was less than the others mentioned above. However, the peshwas expanded their rule within the shortest span of time.

Among the peshwas, Bajirao I had impeccable record where he fought numerous battles without losing any. His son, Balaji Baji Rao , expanded his rule at a much faster rate but unfortunately lost the Battle of Panipat III in 1761.

Madhav Rao was quite capable but died very young at the age of 27.

In the modern India, the reservations in jobs and admission into educational institutions have 27% quota for economically backward castes. However, this reservation also includes for those castes which ruled India in ancient times such as those shown in Table 4.

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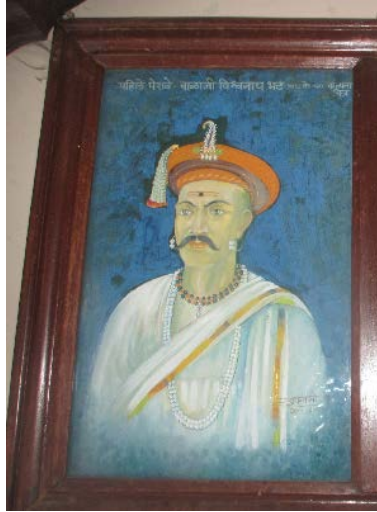


FIG 1 BALAJEE VISHWANATH [COURTESY PRATIBHA VAZE]



FIG. 2 BAJIRAO I [COURTESY PRATIBHA VAZE]

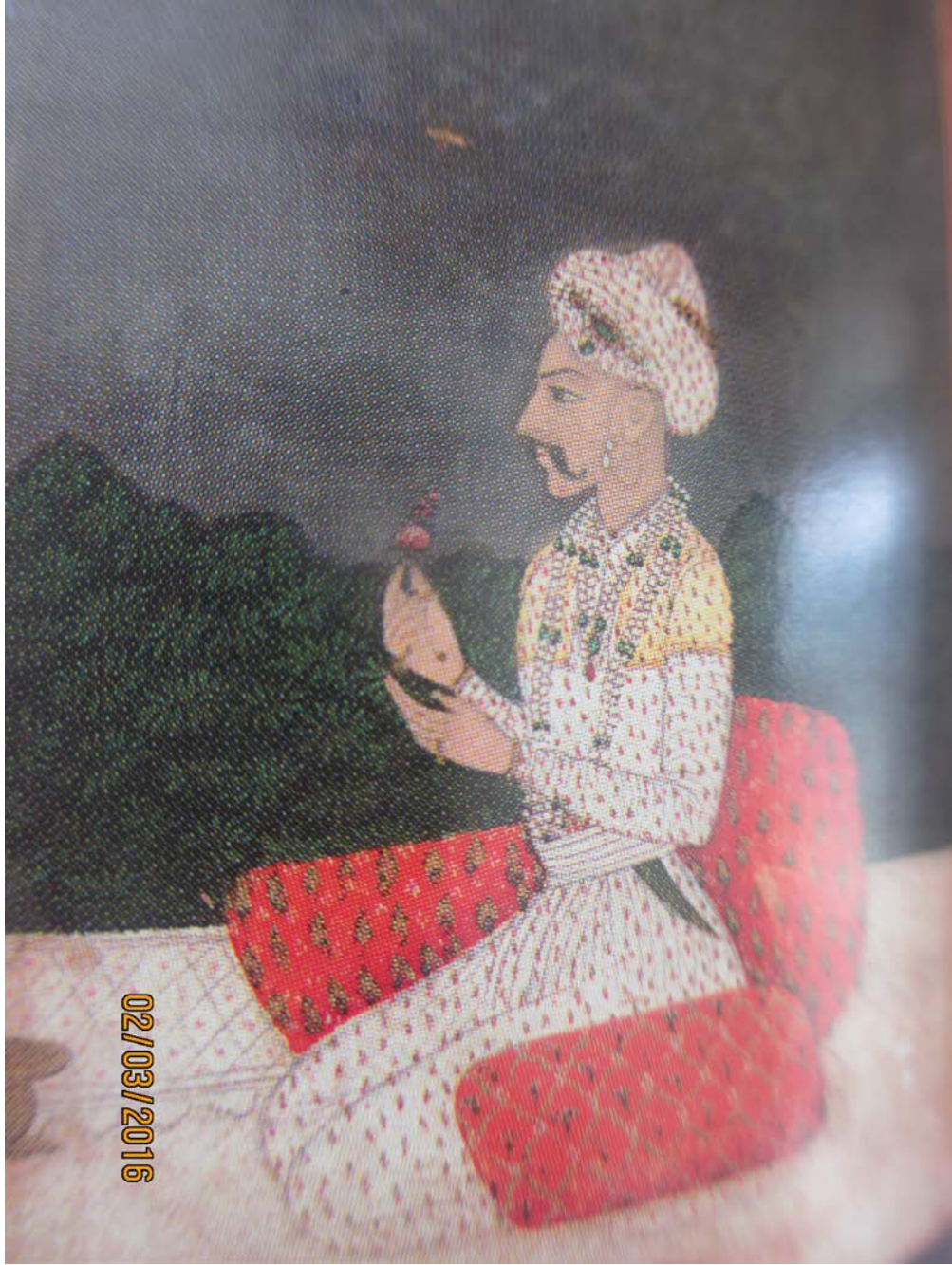


FIG. 3 BALAJEE BAJIRAO [COURTESY PRATIBHA VAZE]



FIG. 4 COURT OF MADHAV RAO [COURTESY PRATIBHA VAZE]



FIG 5 MAP OF INDIA



FIG. 6 MAP OF MAHARASHTRA



FIG. 7 MARATHA EMPIRE IN INDIA IN 1740



FIG. 8 MARATHA EMPIRE IN 1760

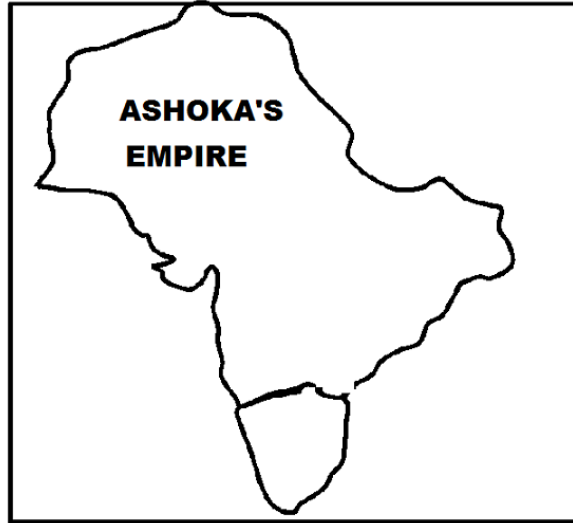


FIG. 9 ASHOKA'S EMPIRE IN INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN (268-232 BC)

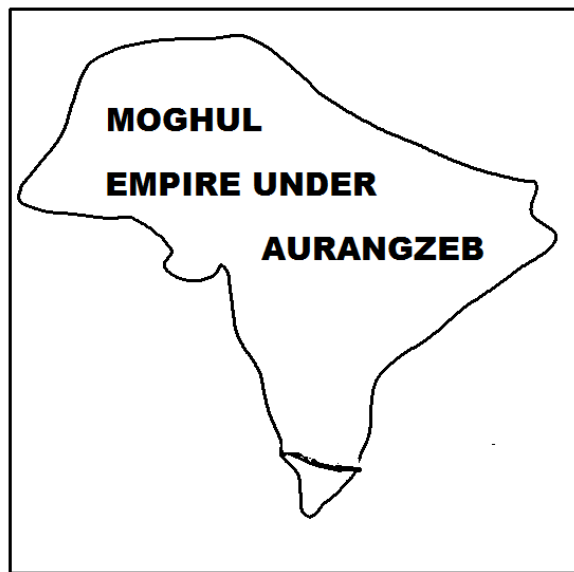


FIG. 10 INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN UNDER AURANGZEB

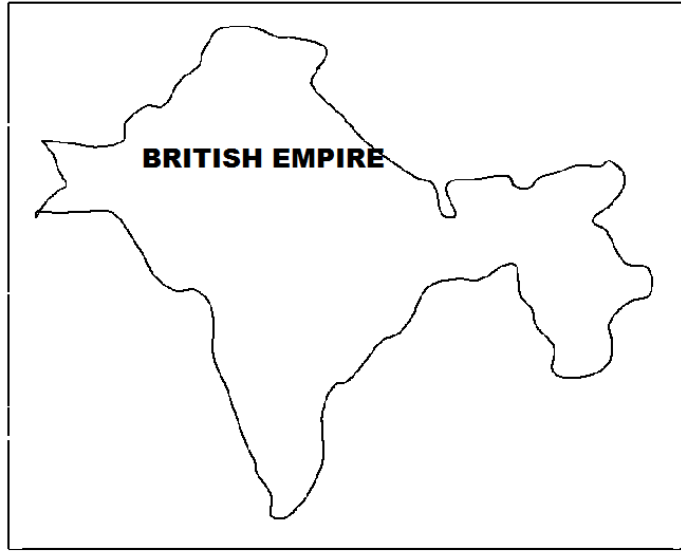


FIG. 11 BRITISH EMPIRE IN INDIA AND BURMA IN 1909

TABLE 1 PESHWAS OF MARATHA EMPIRE

NUMBER	NAME
1	Moropant Trimbak Pingle (1657–1683)
2	Bahiroji Pingale (1708–1711)
3	Balaji Vishwanath (1713–1720)
4	Peshwa Bajirao I (1720–1740)
5	Balaji Bajirao (4 Jul.1740-23 Jun.1761) (b. 8 Dec. 1721, d. 23 Jun.1761)
6	Madhavrao Peshwa (1761-18 Nov.1772) (b. 16 Feb 1745, d. 18 Nov 1772)
7	Narayanrao Bajirao (13 Dec. 1772-30 Aug.1773) (b. 10 Aug.1755, d. 30 Aug.1773)
8	Raghunathrao (5 Dec. 1773–1774) (b. 18 Aug.1734, d. 11 Dec. 1783)
9	Sawai Madhava Rao II Narayan (1774-27 Oct.1795) (b. 18 Apr.1774, d. 27 Oct.1795)
10	Baji Rao II (6 Dec. 1796 – 3 Jun.1818) (d. 28 Jan.1851)

TABLE 2 : EVENTS DURING BAJIRAO'S TIME [1]

NUMBER	EVENTS	OUTCOME
1	Campaign against the Nizam	After initial reverses, Bajirao defeated the Nizam in 1727.
2	Pune as capital	Bajirao started construction of Shaniwar Wada in 1728
3	Malwa campaign	In 1728, he dispatched a huge army commanded by his younger brother Chimnaji Appa who defeated the Moghals at the Battle of Amjhera.
4	Bundelkhand Campaign	In 1729, the Peshwa responded to Chhatrasal's ,who was imprisoned along with his family by Bangash (Moghul king's warrior) request, and marched towards Bundelkhand. Chhatrasal escaped from captivity and joined the Maratha force. Bangash was forced to leave Bundelkhand. Chhatrasal's position as the ruler of Bundelkhand was restored. Chhtrasal assigned a large jagir to Bajirao, and also married his daughter Mastani to him. Before his death in December 1731, he ceded some of his territories to the Marathas.
5	Gujarat campaign	In 1730, he sent a Maratha force under Chimnaji Appa to Gujarat. The Moghul Governor of the province, accepted the defeat to Marathas,
6	Campaign against Siddis	In 1736, Chimnaji launched an attack on a Siddi camp near Rewas, killing around 1,500 of them, including their leader Siddi Sat. On 25 September, the Siddis signed a peace treaty
7	March to Delhi	The Marathas defeated this Moghul force in the Battle of Delhi on 28 March 1737. Again, in 1737 , The two armies met mid-way at Bhopal, where the Marathas defeated the Moghals in the Battle of Bhopal.
8	Against the Portuguese	After initial success, the Marathas had to turn their attention away from the Portuguese due to Nader Shah's invasion of the Mughal Empire in the north.

TABLE 3 MOGHUL RULERS OF DELHI

NUMBER	RULER	YEARS
1	Babur	1526 – 1530
2	Humayun	1530 – 1540
		1555 – 1556
3	Akbar	1556 – 1605
4	Jahangir	1605 – 1627
5	Shahryar (de facto)	1627 – 1628
6	Shah Jahan	1628 – 1658
7	Aurangzeb	1658 – 1707
8	Muhammad Azam Shah (titular)	1707
9	Bahadur Shah I	1707 – 1712
10	Jahandar Shah	1712 – 1713
11	Farrukhsiyar	1713 – 1719
12	Rafi ud-Darajat	1719
13	Shah Jahan II	1719
14	Muhammad Shah	1719 – 1748
15	Ahmad Shah Bahadur	1748 – 1754
16	Alamgir II	1754 – 1759
17	Shah Jahan III (titular)	1759 – 1760
18	Shah Alam II	1760 – 1806
19	Jahan Shah IV (titular)	1788
20	Akbar II	1806 – 1837
21	Bahadur Shah II	1837 – 1857

TABLE 4 VARIOUS ANCIENT INDIAN EMPIRE

EMPIRE	PERIOD
Nanda	345 -321 BC
Maurya	321 to 185 BC
Gupta	240 –550 AD
Harshvardhan	606 -647 AD