Maharana Pratap


Maharana Pratap, the eldest son of the founder of Udaipur Maharana Udai Singh was born to Sonagari Queen Jayawanti on Jyestha Sudi third day of Vikram Era 1597 (i.e. May 9, 1540) Sunday at 47 Ghati 13 Pal past sunrise. Born is Ardra Naksatra, his birth was considered not only auspicious but the astrologers also made the prediction that the child will bring shining glory to the name of the clan.

He was initiated into education and leasing worthy of a prince and, when adult, he mastered the skills in the use of arms and weapons including horse riding. But owing to mutual jealousy among the queens of Udai Singh, he was deprived of his father’s have and affection, and was forced live in a village below the ridge of Chittorgarh. His maternal grand father Akheraj Sonagar (pali) had died in the battle of Sumel Girari in 1600 Vikram Era. Thus, neither he received the from his father nor did he get maternal grand father’s care for long.

First Marriage of Pratap and Founding of Udaipur
At around age of 17 years Pratap was married to Ajabade, the daughter of Rao Ram Rakh Panwar. Amar Singh was born to her in the month of Chaitra Sudi 7, Thursday of Vikram Era 1613 (i.e. 16 March, 1559). At this time Maharana Udai Singh had gone to Ekaling Ji for Darshana (holy Vision of the lord) and from there he moved towards village Ahar in the cause of hunting. After consultations and discussions with his chieftains and advisers he started construction of a palace and establishment of a city towards the north of present day Udaipur the ruins of which exist to-day, known as Moti Mahal

Hero of the Age – Maharana Pratap
The Third Saka (Supreme Sacrifice) of Chittor and Pratap
When emperor Akabar evivaded Chittor in 1967, Maharana Udai Singh abandoned Chittorgarh following the advice of his chief cans and Generals. Though Pratap desired to stay back and protect the fort but the chief fans and Generals did not agree to expose the future king of Mewar to the jows of death and sent him to mountains alongwith his father on the night of 23 febuary 1568 the last Jauhar (a ritualistic self emulation by the women in order to protect their chastity and honour before their warrior husbands march for the final and last assault) was organized and in the morning of the following day the warriors threw open the Fort gates and wade the supreme sacrifice (the Saka, in popular lane). With the fort fell to the hands of Akabar. Akabar not only ordered the killing of innocent residents women and children but also offended sentiments of Hindus by destroying and desecrating the temples and idols in the fort.

This incident of Jauhar and Saka at Chittor made a deep impression on the heart of Pratap. He was full of hatred for Akabar who indulged in this merciless killing. The Supreme Sacrifice made by the women and the warriors for upholding the honour and respect of their nation family, clan and religion because the source of expiration for Pratap to resolve for a struggle ful life
Repression of the Vagadiya Chauhans
Pratap first demonstrated his bravery by attacking the Vagadiya Chauhans. In the battle at the banks of Som river Karansi the cousin of Rana Sanwaldas was killed. Being defeated the Vagadiya Chauhans Conceded a large part of Vagad lard to Mewar. This enhanced the fame of Pratap and the attention of the common masses and feudal heads started centering towards the browsing of Pratap.

Coronation of Pratap
Living for a while in the difficult mountain terrains at Kumbhaner alongwith his father, Pratap made his residence at Gogunda where Maharana Udai Singh died on 28 Feb.,1572. In accordance with the desire of Bhatiyani queen Dheer bai, Maharana Udai Singh had declared his son Jagamal as his heir apparent but despite strong desires of the queen and the Maharana, Jagamal could not realize his dreams. After the death of the Maharana Jagamal occupied the Royal Throne but he did not participate in the funeral rites the former ruler of Gwalior Ram Singh Tanwar enquired about Jagamal after which the noble heads came to know about Jagamal having been made the heir-apparent. At this point Man Singh Sonagare, the maternal uncle of Pratap raised objection and said to Rawat Sanga ( the predecenor of Devagarh nobles) – you Belong to the clan of Chunda therefore, this ought to have been decided after consultation with you. Then, Rawat Krishna das and Rawat Sanga said – “pratap is the eldest son, and worthy also, hence, he will be the Maharana.” After completing the last rites, the noble chieftains made Pratap to occupy the Royal Throne and spoke to Jagamal – “In your capacity as the younger brother, your seat is in front of the Royal Throne”. Thus, on 28 feb, 1572- the day of Holi Pratap’s coronation was performed at Gogunda Afterward, the coronation ceremony was celebrated at Kumbhalwer which was attended by Rao Chandra Sen (Jodhpur) the brother-in-low (Sister’s husband) of Pratap as Nell.

Making Kumbhalmer and Gogunda as centres, Pratap started ruling over Mewar. He conquered the CHHAPPAn area, defeating the rathors, then he ensured full protection of entire Godwad and the Arawali ranges. At that time, the territories lying to the North-east and South-east of Mewar had fallen to the hands of Akabar and almost all the kings of Rajasthan had accepted authority of Akabar, the only exception being Pratap who never bowed his head before the emperor. After Pratap’s coronation, Akabar kept sying over his activities for one year. Hoping that Pratap too will follow the path of other kings and will himself join the Royal service but this did not happen and Akabar decided to send emissaries to Pratap to prevail upon him

Akabar Sends three Emissaries to make Pratap accept his authority
First of all, at the orders of Akabar, Prince Man Singh Kachhawah came to Pratap lowing Gujarat in april 1573 and traveling via Eedar and Dungarpur, Pratap come to Udaipur from Gogunda and extended an affectionate wel-come to Man Singh near Udaipur. Though, Man Singh tried his best to prevail upon Pratap to come to the Royal court but Pratap did not agree. Tension developed between the two at the time of taking food and maan Singh left angrily and reported the mother to Akabar. On eruption of rebellion again in Gujarat, Akabar invaded Gujarat and suppressed the rebellion on 2 Sep. 1573 and from there ordered some army generals two under the leadership of King Bhagawan das (Amer) to go to the Rana.

Elderly bhagwan das , it was hoped, will succeed in prevailing upon Pratap to accept subjection Bhagwandas reached Eedar after first conguering the strong fort of Badanagar. The ruler of that place Narayan Das Rathore, who was Pratap’s father-in-low, accepted subjection under Akabar there after Bhagawan das went to Gogunda to meet Pratap. Although, Pratap welcomed Bhagawan das with due respects, he tactfully sefured the proposal to present him self in the court of Akabar. After two months itself, under orders from Akabar king Todarmal, while returning from Gujarat met Pratap, but had to return disappointed. This fully convinced Akabar to believe that Pratap can not be pressed down without using military might, he resolved to send Army on Pratap.

Pratap’s Reaction
Despite efforts having been made to prevail upon Pratap, he did not accept subjection of Akabar, rather remained firm on his earlier decision. What will be the consequences of all this? Pratap know this very well. Therefore, he quickened his campaign of organizing the soldiers. He stored food- items in Forts like Kumbhalmer and established many posts to protect Gogunda his main centre.

The Battle of Haldighati

Prince Mana Singh left Ajmer on 2 April, 1576 and reached Mandalgarh to launch attack on maharana Pratap. Staying there fore two months he organized the Royal Army and then moved his army towards Gogunda. On the way , he encamped at Mohi and Molela – the two villages. Onreceiving this information Pratap came to lohsing from Gogunda. This place is 9 miles away to the south-west of Haldighati From here to Haldighati the path is so narrow that not more than two men could walk together on this at a time.

It Pratap had preferred to stay here and wait for the arrival of the Royal Army, they would have had no other option but to move through this narrow path and would have been killed in the narrow valley. But Pratap and his soldiers were very eager and deprecate to fight in the open area. So, Pratap alongwith his soldiers reached khamnor though the inaccessible path. The battle was fought in the morning of 18 June, 1576 in the wide open area between Haldighati and village Khamanor. In Man Prakash, written in the praise of Man Singh it is stated – Pratap said to Madhav Singh – the younger brother of Man Singh Kachhawah, don’t feel happy in this battle field, I am soon going to end your happiness with alongwith king Man Singh in a moment. I say this under oath in the name of lord vishnu that you can not cherish the thought of Victory, so leery as I am alive.” And for the first time launched such a severe attack that the Mughal army ran miles away, but soon the scenario changed. Fighting from Pratap’s side many warriors in cluding Ramdas Medaliya, Tanwar Ram Shah of Gwalior alongwith his three sons, Jhala Beeda Jhala Mansingh, Man Singh Sonagara, Dodiya Bheem Shankar das Rathore, Rawat Naitsee, charam Jaisa and many others sacrificed their lives fighting fiercely. At last Pratap and his remaining soldiers had to abandon the battle field. Although the Royal army won, but the purpose, for which the bottle was fought- was not achieved, neither Pratap could be captioned nor did his attitude charge.

Post Battle Activities
The Royal army moved forward after the battle of Haldighati captured Gogunda the place of Pratap there they dug around a moat as they were afraid of the Mewar army. Pratap now made his stay in the strong fort of Kumbhalmer. After a short while Pratap reached Gogunda via village Kolyari, re-captured Gounda after forcing the Mughals to flee from there and placed Mandana Kumpawat there for its protection. He had good neighborly relations with the rulers to Sirohi, Jalore and Eedar. So to weaken the friendly ties the Royal army attacked them and brought Taj Khan of Jalore and Surtan of Sirohi under subjection – still, they continued supporting Pratap and they did not become averse to Pratap.
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Attack by Akabar
In Oct., 1576 Akabar himself resolved to invade Mewar. He was confident of accomplishing the task which his generals could not do. So Akabar left Ajmer on 13 oct., 1576 with a huge army. King Bhagawan das and prince Man Singh were sent to Gogunda under the command of Kutubuddin Khan. When Pratap got this information, he left Gogunda and went into the mountains. The Royal army went searching for Pratap in the caves of mountains but he could not be traced. Staying at village Mohi, Akbar made several efforts to capture Pratap but he did not succeed. Army generals were placed in the areas of Mohi and Madariya, and the campaign to search Pratap was given impetus. But all efforts failed. About Fazal writes while attempting to hide the failures of army generals – “They went into the territory of the Rama, but finding no clue to trace him returned back. Akabar got angry with them and suspended them from royal duties, and re-instated them when the begged for pardon. Hararred as he left, aKabar finally left Udaipur on 27 Nov, 1576 and went to Mahawa via Banswara. Thus, staying in Mewar for about a month and a half Akabar put all his might and skills in actions to suppress Pratap, but he did not get success. Rawal Pratap Singh of Banswara and Rawal Aasakaran of Dungarpur accepted subjection lender Akabar but Pratap Continued to give thorny pricks to the heart of Akabar. Soon after Akabar left, Pratap not only re-captured the Royal posts, but also closed all important exit points of Mewar people under the Mughal areas stopped cultivating lands with the reruls that Royal army stanted failing grant hardships due to non-supply of rations and restrictions of movements. Akabar sent his huge army those and came himself as well, to suppress Pratap but failures did not part campany with him.

Pratap was annoyed with the rulers of Dungarpur and Banswara because they did not support and stand by him ceramal the son of Dungarpur ruler Aasakaran aligned with Pratap and persuaded Pratap to send his army on Aasakaran and promised to pay Pratap 4000 Memudi for this favour Pratap at that time, was in dire need of money and he saw in this offer an opportunity to suppress his opponent therefore Pratap immediately sent his army to invade Dungarpur. When the army besieged the fort, Parvati, the wife of Dungarpur Rawal Aaskaran infomed her brother Rao Chandrasen of Jodhpur about this envision. At this Rao Chandra sen came to Dungarpur with his prominent warriors and entered the fort through the back-gate of thefoot when sesamal informed Pratap of this development, Pratap ordered his army not to take any action against Rao Chandra sen and removed his army from Dungarpur. Rao Chandrasen called Aaskaram in and handed him over the fort when Akabar invaded Dungar, Chandrasen went to Banswara, then came to village Kotara and lived there, Pratap met him there.
Invasions by Shahabag Khan against Pratap
On 15 oct., 1577 army was again sent to attack Pratap under the command of Shahbag Khan and Mir Baksi, king Bhagwandas and prince Man singh were also with them. The army, this time, intended to occupy the strong fort of Kumbhalmer. Shahbag first captive Kelwara, situated at the ridges of Khumbhalmer and then laid siege of khumbhalmer. Facing shortage of food items Pratap left the fort in the night and assigned to task of Protecting the fort to his maternal uncle Bham Sonagae. The ammunition got destroyed by the fire from a big cannon that cracked. Bham and other Rajput worriers came out opening the Fort Gate and made the supreme sacrifice while fighting on 3 April, 1578. Kumbhalmer was captured but Pratap was not caught therefore, instead of dying stationed in the fort, Pratap thought it better to abandon the fort and continue with the struggle in the style of his fathers paticies.

Pratap left kumbhalmer and went to Ranapur and then stayed for quite long in village choolye under the state of Eedar. Bhamashah and Tarachard went to Rampura and took shelter. After shahabag khan left mewar, bhamashah returned from rampura and after plundering villages of malwa and mewar, offered good amount of wealth to Maharana Pratap. For this favour Bhamashah was made Prime Minister replacing Rana Mahan see. After returning from chooliya, Pratap spent his time in mountain terrains around Kamalnath and Awargarh. After about 8 months, Akabar again ordered Shahabag Khan to invade Mewar with the warning that if you will not bring Maharana under subjection, you will be beheaded. So, he left fatehpur sikari on 15 Dec. 1578 for Mewar. Despite the exhaustive efforts for three months, no where about of Pratap could be known Tarachand fell down from horse while fighting with shahabag Khan but Devara Saindas of Runija sawed his life.

Third attack by Shahabag Khan and Pratap leaves for Godawad
On 11 Nov., 1579 Shahabag Khan moved from sambhar to launch third attack on Pratap this time many Rajputs were killed fighting with shahabagkhan. Royal posts were established at many important places and strict vigil was enforced to moniter movements of Pratap, Pratap went to the mountains of Soondha in Godawad where Dewal Padihars were ruling. Thkur Raydhawal Dewal of loyana extended warn welcome to pratap and gave his daughter to Pratap in marriage. Pratap got dug a well (Bavadi) and stabled a garden at Soondha, Decorated Raydhawal with the title of Rana. When in May 1580 Shahabag Marched to Bengal, Pratap came back to Mewar and lived at village Dholan (sayara area).

Shahabag Khan had stabled authority over Jawar Chhappan and Vagad in addition to kumbhalmer and established Royal posts there. Pratap suspended action against the mughals for some time due to fall in military strength. He territories under his control and increasing the strength of his army. After three years he chalked out plans to attack the Royal posts making Dholan as his main centre of activities

The Battle of Dever and Victory of Pratap
Pratap launched an attack on the Royal Post at Dever a village situated in Dever valley of Arawali ranges north east of kumbhalmer. The post commander Sulteen Khan lead the Royal off the legs of the elephant with blows of swards and the elephant fell down. Then sultan khan fought riding a horse. Prince Amar Singh demonstrated great bravery in this battle the Amar Kavya states – He pierced his spear through Sulteen Khan and the house together. Other soldiers ran away and Pratap got victory. Pratap got the triumphing victory in this battle. James To & describes Dever as the marathon of Mewar. Marathon is a place in Greece where the Greeks foxed the inamains to flee away from the war

Demise of Pratap
In January 1597, while pulling the sting of bow to hunt a tiger he developed pain in his intenstine and fell sick. Seeing him grim faced, the Rawat of Salumber asked him for the reason, I am worried and doubtful at the prospects as to weather my son Amar Singh, who, I know, is prone to a comfortable life-style will be able to up hold the glory of Mewar and the tradition of my family and clan. It you nobles make a promise to protect the glory of the kingdom of Mewar, I may die in peace, All the chieftains of Mewar, present there at that time, when took the oath in the name of the throne of Bappa Rawal, then Pratap breathed his last on 19 January 1597 and thus came the end to a golden era of struggle for freedom.

**Chetak - The Royal Horse**
Chetak was the famous horse of Rana Pratap, whom Pratap rode during the gruesome Battle of Haldighati (June 21, 1576). Chetak died in this battle and since then has been immortalized in the ballads of Rajasthan. This famous warhorse was of Kathiawari breed. Folklore has it that Chetak's coat had a blue tinge. That is why Rana Pratap is sometime referred as the "Rider of the Blue Horse" in ballads.

No story of this famous battle can be complete without mentioning the exploits of Chetak in this battle. It was while mounted on Chetak that Pratap made that daring attempt on the life of Imperial Mughal Commander Man Singh. Again it was Chetak who carried away Pratap to safety from the lost battle even though being grievously wounded himself.

During the course of the battle When Pratap saw that the battle's tide was turning against him, he decided to settle the issue one way or other in a spectacular and quintessentially Rajput manner. Imperial commander Man Singh was directing the battle seated on an elephant. Pratap charged frontally at the Imperial army, hacked his way through the massed ranks of enemy combatants and reached in front of Man Singh's elephant. Once there, Chetak reared high in the air and planted his hooves on the forehead of Man Singh's elephant. Pratap threw his lance at Man Singh, who had the necessary quick reflexes to duck in time. The blow fell on the mahout (elephant driver) instead, who was killed instantly. In the general melee that followed, Chetak received a fatal wound on one of his legs. This was the turning point of the battle. Mewar's bold gamble to siege the battle in its favor had failed. As Man Singh was whisked away to safety, Pratap found himself surrounded by enemy soldiers.

This was the moment of decision for Pratap, whether to seek personal glory by embracing martyrdom on the battlefield, or to live and keep the flame of resistance burning. If he lived, Mewar stood another chance. In fact every rebel anywhere in India against the Mughal empire would have a rallying figure. But with him gone, the sun would set on Indian aspirations forever. Mewar own fate would be sealed.

Maharana was loath to leave a battle in between, but was prevailed upon by his faithful followers. By some accounts one of the Jhala sardar literally snatched the Royal Insignia from Maharana's person and wore them himself, thus making him a target for the Mughal Army.

As Mughal army fell upon the Jhala sardar mistaking him for Maharana, Maharana left the battlefield with some of his loyal followers. Chetak was exhausted and seriously wounded, but labored on carrying his master. About 2 miles from the site of the battle he came across a small stream. It was here while trying to leap across the stream Chetak collapsed.

Maharana erected a small and beautiful monument for his beloved companion at the place where Chetak fell. This cenotaph still exists near the village of Jharol in in Rajsamand District. Chetak lives on in poetic traditions as the epitome of loyalty.

**Bhama Shah - The Loyal Lieutenant of Rana**

Bhama Shah ––– The Saviour Minister
Bhama Shah, the son of Bharmal –– Kiledar of Ranthambhore, came of the Oswal family of Chitor and was born on the 25th June, 1547 A.D. By dint of merit and ability, he won the favour of his young master and rose by degrees to higher position and ranks. He under the leadership of Pratap, fought gallantly at the fierce and famous battles of Haldighati (1576 A.D.) and made several desperate attacks upon the divisions of the Mughal army at Nadol, Diver, Ranakpur, etc., being impressed with his valourous actions and rare ability of civil and military acumen, Pratap entrusted the management of Finances and the State forces to him. He well stood to the task. He not only consolidated Pratap’s authority in Mewar but also overran nearly the whole of Malwa. In this exploit he exacted tribute amounting to 25 lakhs of rupees and 20 thousand Asharfis and presented the entire collection to the Rana at the village of Chulia. Besides this huge amount he was providing countless concealed hordes of silver, gold and jewels, of which he maintained confidential notes with him, time and again, to lessen the financial stringency of the State, occasioned by frequent wars and aiding in Pratap’s scheme of the consolidating programmes of his new capital –– Chawand. For all this Bhama is remembered with esteem as a brave and benevolent ‘Saviour’ Minister of the State.

After Bhama Shah’s death on the 16th January, 1600, his son and grandson also served the State as ministers in three successive reigns of Pratap, Amar and Karan Singh, with efficiency and honesty. The loyalty, fidelity and rare status enjoyed by Bhama Shah and his successors was duly recognized by the State by allowing the main head of the progeny of Bhama to be honoured by Tika mark on the occasions of the community dinners of the Oswals. This practice continued to our own days, in one form or the other. By virtue of his conspicuous ability, and successful military operations, he earned the name of an unrivalled minister of Mewar.

Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj



**Chatrapati Shivaji - The chastiser of the Mughals**

Shivaji Bhosle, also known as Chhatrapati Shivaji Raje Bhosle ([Marathi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marathi): छत्रपती शिवाजीराजे भोसले) (Born:[February 19](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/February_19), [1627](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1627), Died: [March 4](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/March_4), [1680](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1680)) was the founder of[Maratha empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maratha_empire) in western [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) in [1674](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1674).

He raised a strong army and navy, constructed and repaired forts, used guerilla warfare tactics, developed a strong intelligence network, gave equal treatment to the people from all religions and castes based on merit, and functioned like a seasoned Statesman and General. He appointed ministers with specific functions such as Internal security, Foreign affairs, Finance, Law and Justice, Religious matters, Defense etc. He introduced systems in revenue collection and warned the officials against harassment of subjects. He thought ahead of times and was a true visionary. In his private life, his moral virtues were exceptionally high. His thoughts and deeds were inspired by the teachings of his mother Jijabai, teacher Dadaji Konddev, great saints like Dnyaneshwar & Tukaram and the valiancy and ideals of the Lords Rama and Krishna

**The Marathas - Samurais from Western India**
The Marathas are a proud and hardy race who are a sub-set of the wider Hindu Community. They are first mentioned in Indian history as the stout fighters in the army of the Chalukya King Pulikeshin who resisted the Southward march of Emperor Harsha in the 7th century C.E

The Maratha dynasties of the ancient (pre-Muslim) period are the [Chalukyas](http://www.hindubooks.org/sudheer_birodkar/hindu_history/landrajnamavali.html) (500 C.E. to 750C.E.), the Rastrakutas (750 C.E. to 978 C.E. and the Yadavas or Jadhavs (1175 C.E. to 1318 C.E.).

The Marathas were the first who crossed Malik Kafur's path, when he invaded the deccan in 1314 C.E. They were then led by the last scion of the Yadava dynasty - Ramdev Rai Yadava who ruled from Devagiri (today's Daulatabad). In their first clash with the Muslims; the Marathas lost to the invaders and accepted the status of being vassals and mercenaries of their [Muslim overlords](http://www.hindubooks.org/sudheer_birodkar/hindu_history/landalienrule.html).

The Marathas before Shivaji were Mercenaries and revenue Collectors for the Muslim Rulers
In keeping with the feudal tradition, the Maratha Sardars (Generals), before Shivaji kept shifting their loyalties from one Muslim ruler to another. And there were many Muslim rulers like the Adilshahis at Bijapur, the Nizamshahis at Ahmednagar (Berar), the Qutubshahis at Golkonda (Hyderabad), etc.

Shahji Bhosale, who was Shivaji's father typified this practice of shifting loyalties from one Muslim overlord to another. He was from time-to-time in the service of the Mughals, the Adilshahis and the Nizamshahis. The thought of establishing an independent Maratha-Hindu kingdom, does seem to have crossed his mind, but he never really got about to doing it successfully. The germ of this idea however seems to have got rubbed into Shivaji - his son by Jijabai.

**Shivaji Maharaj - the Visionary Saint-Soldier**Shivaji was born in the year 1627 at the Fort of Shivneri in Maharashtra in Western India. Shivaji's mother, Jijabai was a direct descendant of the erstwhile Yadav royal family of Devagiri. She seems to have nursed deep within her mind the idea of recovering independence from Muslim rule which her Yadav forebears had lost in the year 1318. Shivaji grew up with these ideas embedded into him. His childhood stories are those of playing games in which he and his friends attacked and captured forts held by the enemy.
The Oath of Independence - at Raireshwar

When Shivaji was seventeen, he decided to transform what were till then simply games to a reality. He and his friends encouraged by Jijabai and his Guru Dadoji Kondeo; decided to take a formal oath to free the country from the shackles of Muslim tyranny. This was done in the year 1645 in a dark cavern housing a small temple to the Hindu God Shiva (locally called Raireshwar).


Here Shivaji and his select band of teenaged Maratha friends slit their thumbs and poured the blood oozing from it on the Shiva-linga (Phallus representing the Lord Shiva). By this act they declared a blood-feud against Mughal tyranny. This was the beginning of a long and arduous Maratha-Mughal struggle that went on for the next century and a half to culminate in the defeat of the Mughals and their replacement by the Marathas as the dominant power in India


**Shivaji's encounter with Afzal Khan**

When Shivaji started his military career by capturing the fortress of Torana, it sent shockwaves in the Adilshshi court at Bijapur. Here was a local Hindu chieftain, daring to challenge the might of a Muslim ruler. The retribution was swift and Adil Shah sent in his most fearsome general named Afzal Khan to bring back Shivaji dead or alive to Bijapur. Afzal Khan who was reputed to be more than six feet tall and of a real massive built, set on his mission and in order to lure Shivaji down into the plains, he destroyed the Hindu temples at Tuljapur, Pandharpur and Shikhar Shenganapur.
 **Afzal Goes Up to Pratapgad**

This ploy failed to work and Shivaji stuck to his Hill fastness in the Sahyadris. Shivaji even sent a letter to Afzal Khan praising the legendary strength of Afzal Khan's powerful arms and his reputed fearlessness. Shivaji addressed him as his uncle and said that he was afraid to come down to meet Afzal Khan. Shivaji asked him to come up into the hills to meet him and on condition that Afzal Khan came with not more than few select soldiers. The proud Khan felt that the Dekkhan-Ka-Chuha (Rat of the Deccan as the Muslims scornfully addressed Shivaji) had really chickened out.

 **Afzal Meets his Nemesis in Shivaji**

Khan-Saheb agreed to go up the hills at Pratapgad to meet his nemesis. When the meeting took place, Afzal Khan embraced Shivaji and with his diminutive enemy (Shivaji was less than five feet in height) in his grip, Afzal suddenly pulled out his dagger and tried to stab Shivaji. When Afzal's dagger could not plunge into Shivaji Maharaj due to the protective armour which Shivaji was wearing, Afzal tried to throttle him. But the wily Maratha was more than prepared for this as he had come down not only with full armour that was hidden by his thick satin robes, but he also had with him the 'Wagh Nakh' - a sharp weapon resembling tiger claws that could be hidden in the grip of one's fist. In addition, he had the Bichhwa - curved dagger hidden in the pocket of his waistcoat.

**Jiwa Mahalaya**

On sensing that the Khan meant to throttle him, Shivaji pierced the tiger claws deep into Khan's belly and pulled out his intestines. After which Shivaji repeatedly stabbed him with the bichhwa. The Khan bellowed "Daga" "Daga" and yelled for Syed Banda, his bodyguard to come to his rescue. When Syed Banda, also a burly Muslim was about to strike Shivaji with his sword, Shivaji's bodyguard Jiva Mahalya struck off Banda's upraised arm in the air itself.

**Santaji Kawji**

After this commotion, the bleeding Khan tried to make good his escape and rushed into his palanquin. As the palanquin bearers set off with the fleeing Khan, Santaji Kawji, another of Shivaji's select warriors cut-off the feet of the bearers and Khans' palanquin, with its load of Khansaab fell to the ground. Santaji Kawji, then finished off the task of sending Khan to his final resting place. Khan's army which was waiting in the valley was ruthlessly massacred by the Marathas who were hiding behind every crevice and bush in the densely wooded jungles around the Pratapgad fort. At the place where this encounter took place on 10th November 1659 between Shivaji Maharaj and the Khan, there stands today a Kabar (grave) erected by Shivaji for the departed Khan's soul to rest in peace.

**Bijapur Stymied**

The result of this dramatic encounter was that the Bijapur ruler panicked and after that never posed a serious threat to the growing Maratha power. The next Muslim power which Shivaji turned to was that of the Mughals. Here was the real challenge for Shivaji. The Bijapur rulers were a provincial power, while the Mughals were an power of imperial dimensions whose writ ran almost all over Northern India.

**The Siege of Panhalgad**

Despite this defeat, Bijapur's Adil Shah made one last attempt to check Shivaji by sending another general named Siddhi Jouhar against him. Siddhi besiged Panhalgad where Shivaji was camping. The seige went on for some months, from summer till the monsoons. But Shivaji Maharaj slipped out of Panhalgad and reached safely at Vishalgad.

**The Brave Deed of Baji Prabhu Deshpande**

It is during this escape that Baji Prabhu Deshpande held the pursuing enemy troops at a narrow pass called Ghod Khind. Baji Prabhu immortalized himself by laying down his life but ensured that his Master reached safely at Vishalgad. This narrow pass is today known as Pawan Khind i.e. a Holy Pass. Made holy by Baji Prabhu's memorably brave deed.

**Encounter with Shaista Khan - Aurangzeb's Uncle**

The next Khan to come down 'literally' before Shivaji was Shaista Khan. On hearing Shivaji's depredations, Aurangzeb was furious and wanted to desperately crush this infidel upstart. He sent his uncle maternal Shaista Khan with a large and powerful army to checkmate Shivaji.

But even this time the wily Maratha proved that brain was stronger than the brawn.

Shaista Khan came into Maharashtra and started devstating towns, villages fields, temples, forts and everything that came in his path.

Shaista Establishes his Harem in Shivaji's Devghar (Prayer Room)

To provoke Shivaji, Shaista Khan established his camp in Shivaji's home in Pune called Lal-Mahal. And to top it up, he put up his Harem in Shivaji's Devghar (prayer room).
**Shaista is Lucky - He Only Loses His Fingers**

Shivaji bided his time for many months and one on fine day (night), he with a select band of Maratha Samurais, sneaked into Pune and into the Lal-Mahal. He tracked down the sleeping Khan to his bed. The Khan sensing that his time was up tried jumping out of the window. At that point Shivaji cut off the Khan's fingers with which he was holding on to the window sill.

On the Khan's wife's pleading before Shivaji to spare her husband's life as she considered Shivaji to be her brother. And so killing her husband would mean making her a widow, Shivaji spared the Khan's life. This was a mistake for which Shivaji was to pay dearly later. Shivaji made good his escape from the Khan's lair, but not before the treacherous Khan ordered his troops to give chase and try to capture the fleeing Shivaji.

**Shaista's Retreat from Maharashtra**
The Khan however, decided that enough was enough and returned to Delhi - without his fingers. This happened in April 1663

The failure of his uncle peeved Aurang to no end and he now sent another general to subjugate Shivaji. This was Mirza Raja Jai Singh, Aurangzeb's Hindu general who was also the scion of the house of the Suryavanshi Kachhawaha's who we saw earlier had ingratiated themselves to the Mughal rulers by giving away their daughters in marriage to the Mughal Padishah. (The Moghuls incidentally never returned the favour by giving, or even offerring, their daughters to the Rajputs!). This Mirza Raja Jaisingh who came with a powerful force was smarter than Shaista Khan sent earlier by Aurangzeb. Mirzaji laid siege to Purandar alongwith a systematic loot and destruction of rural Maharashtra.

**The Brave Deed of Murar Baji**
When Raja Jai Singh and his general Diler Khan laid siege to the Fort of Purandar. Murar Baji was the Maratha Fort Commandant at Purandar. To break the morale of the Maratha troops, Diler Khan launched a viscious attack on the fort and laid waste the surrounding countryside. The Mughals succeeded in forcing their way into the outer defenses of Purandar.

But the Marathas were not easily intimidated, they withdrew to the inner fort (bali-killa) and kept on their attack on the besieging Mughals. One day, Murar Baji decided to rain hell on the enemy and the Marathas stormed out of the fort and fell upon the Mughals who were occupying the outer fort. In face of the Maratha attack, the Mughals broke ranks and fled to their main camp in the plains below, where Diler Khan was camping.

Seeing the ferocity of the Maratha attack, Diler Khan, decided to tempt Murar Baji with an offer of making him a general in the Mughal army if he betrayed Shivaji. When news of this offer reached Murar Baji, in the midst of the battle, his rage knew no bounds, and in a rash act he pushed into the ranks of the Mughal troops, hacking right, left and center towards Diler Khan and shouted at him that he would reply Diler's offer by cutting off his head and taking it to Shivaji Maharaj.

Murar Baji had left his own troops behind and was now surrounded by Mughal troops on all sides, but he could only see Diler, whose head he wanted. This act was brave but rash and cost Murar Baji his life. Their leader dead, the Marathas withdrew into the fort. The news of this battle and the passing away of Murar Baji and the long drawn siege along with the destruction of the countryside forced Shivaji to reach out for a compromise with Jai Singh in the interests of the sufferring population of Maharashtra.

**The Treaty of Purandar**
The treaty of Purandar signed between Mirza Raja Jai Singh and Shivaji Maharaj had among many conditions, one condition that Shivaji accompany Mirzaji to Agra. Shivaji decided to go to Agra in 1666.

**Shivaji's Visit to Aurangzeb at Agra**

At Agra, when Shivaji presented himself at the Moghul court, Aurangzeb deliberately insulted him by making him stand behind a lesser noble whom Shivaji has once defeated in battle. This was a calculated humiliation that Aurang had arranged for Shivaji. As a result Shivaji left the court in a huff. This gave Aurangzeb an excuse to declare Shivaji of having committed the offence of insulting the Mughal court.

**Imprisonment of Shivaji**

Aurangzeb detained Shivaji in Mirza Raja Jai Singh's house where Shivaji had put up. Shivaji seems to have read Aurangzeb's mind of having him put to death. Aurag had made plans to shift Shivaji into the proper Mughal dungeons.

**Shivaji's Escape from Aurang's Clutches**

Shivaji struck upon an idea and said that he wanted to make peace with God by sending fruit and sweetmeats to Brahmins and holy men. To this Aurangzeb consented. One fine day Shivaji and his son Sambhaji hid himself in two of the sizable baskets in which fruits and sweetmeats had been packed everyday and made good their escape from Aurnag's custody. In doing this Shivaji must have had in mind what had happened to his general Netaji Palkar who after being captured by the Mughals had been forced to embrace Islam and change his name to Quli Mohammed Khan. Netaji was forced to serve as a Mughal soldier in Afghanistan, till he too made good his escape and returned to Shivaji to reconvert to Hinduism and join the forces of Swaraja once again. Others were not so lucky, they were made to convert to Islam and some others were simly tortured to death - as was to happen later with Shivaji's son Shambhu Raje or Sambhaji, ater Shivaji's death.

**Coronation of Shivaji as Chattrapati**

After returning to the deccan, Shivaji again raised an army and recaptured all the forts that he had been made to surrender to the Mughals as per the treaty of Purandar. In this phase we see the exploits of his brave general Tanaji Malusare who perished while recapturing the invincible fort of Kondana from Uday Bhan - the renegade Rajput who was the Mughal commandant of the fort. After all the forts had been recaptured, Shivaji was pursuaded by Gaga Bhatt (a brahmin from Benaras) and his mother the ageing Jijabai to formally crown himself as the king of the Marathas. The coronation took place at Raigad on the 6th of June 1674.


Shivaji Maharaj's Seal. Shivaji Maharaj was the first Hindu King to ascend a throne after a long time. During the Dark Days of Muslim Tyranny, Shivaji Maharaj was one of the very few (along with the Ranas of Mewad), to issue his own coinage. Shivaji's coinage was in Sanskrit. The coins were in two main denominations, the Shivrai made of copper was a lower denomination coin and the Hon was a gold coin of a higher denomination. To erase the memory of Shivaji Maharaj, Aurangzeb issued an order after the passing away of Shivaji Maharaj that all Hons were to be imponded and melted. That Aurang did not succeed in erazing Shivaji Maharaj's illustruous personality from our memory is another matter

**A "Nazarana" - The Daughter-in-law of the Muslim Subahdar of Kalyan**

During the days after the coronation, many Maratha generals presented Nazaranas (tribute in kind) to the newly anointed King of Maharashtra. It was then a practice of the Muslims to abduct any fair maiden and to force her into the harem as a concubine. (A harem is a term for the living quarters of abducted women, nominally treated as wives.) On one such occasion, following the "illustrious" example set by the Muslim aggressors, a Maratha Sardar also (general) abducted a daughter-in-law of the Muslim Subahadar of Kalyan, near Mumbai (Kalyan was then under Mughal occupation).

This Sardar presented this "Nazarana" to Shivaji Maharaj, expecting to be patted on the back for such a "fair" tribute. Shivaji Maharaj's reaction at this occasion, gives us an insight into the mind of the person who lived 300 years before us. Shivaji not only chided the general, but warned him and all the other Maratha generals that such a heinous offence would henceforth attract a penalty of the offender's hands being chopped off. The dazed general was asked by Shivaji to return with full honours, the daughter-in-law of the Muslim Subahadar of Kalyan.

The Maratha ballads (Povadas) that describe this event say that on hearing Shivaji's dialogue in Marathi the teenaged girl is said to have exclaimed "Ya Allah, yeh aadmi nahin farishta hai. Ees farishtey pe kamyaabi bahal karna." ("O Lord, this is not an ordinary man but an angel. Bestow success on this angel.") The Maratha balladeers, while narrating this event say that "Asseech amuchi aai asatee,sundar roopavati; amhi hee sundar zhalo asato - vadaley Chattrapati" ("If my mother had been as beautiful, I too would have been as beautiful - exclaimed Chattrapati"). These dialogues might as well be a later romanticization of what actually happened. But it proves a point - Shivaji Maharaj had risen above the attitudes of religious bigotry, and beastly behaviour that had come to typify the Indian ruling class under Muslim rule.

**Karnataka and Tamil Nadu Campaigns of Shivaji**
After this Shivaji launched his campaign in Karnatak, which took him up to Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu. The period from 1674 up his passing away in 1680 was a relatively peaceful period, as the Mughal made no more attempts to molest the Marathas. Only after the passing away of Shivaji Maharaj did Aurang again dared to venture into Maharashtra, and then too he did not entrust the task to any general. He came himself in 1682 and stayed on in the deccan till his death in 1707.

**The Marathas After Shivaji Maharaj - Sambhaji**
After the passing away of their illustrious leader, the marathas fell into relative disarray. Shivaji's eldest son Sambhaji did not prove adequate to the responsibility of preserving the flame of independence to which his father had given the initial spark. Sambhaji was extremely fearless and brave. Maratha chronicles (Bakhars) refer to him as in fact more assertive and independent than his father. But in addition to all this Sambhaji also had vices like wine and women. In his eventful life, Shivaji Maharaj did not seem to have had enough time to groom his successor. Sambhaji's temper had a short fuse. During Shivaji's life-time itself, he had once quarreled with his father and had gone over to join the Mughals as one of their Mansabdars. Subsequently, he realized his folly and came back to his father and repented. But this act of his deeply hurt his father nad also displayed his chimerical nature for which he was to pay later with a painful death.

**Sambhaji's Assassination**

Sambhaji did not falter in battling the Mughals, as well as the Portuguese. In those days Aurnagzeb had come over to the Deccan. After subjugating the Bijapur and Golkonda kingdoms, he turned his attention on the Marathas. He carried on a ceaseless campaign against the Marathas. Sambhaji performed many daring acts in this guerrilla campaign especially in the Konkan region. But in spite of his bravery, his short temper and his vices went against him. One night, when he was passing thru Sangmeshwar with a small band of bodygaurds, he was waylaid by the Mughals and was brought in chains before Aurangzeb.

On being presented to Aurabgzeb, Sambhaji was asked to surrender all his forts, accept Islam and enter the service of the Mughal Emperor. To this affront, Sambhaji scronfully replied that he could consider this if Aurangzeb gave him his daughter in marriage and proclaimed him as the successor to the Mughal throne! On hearing this Aurang flew into a rage and decided to torture Sambhaji to death. Sambhaji's eyes were gouged, his tongue was cut off, followed by his arms and legs. Sambhaji died an inhuman death, but till the agonizing end he never recanted his faith.

**Rajaram, Tarabai and Shahu**
After Sambhaji's assassination, his step-brother Rajaram became the king. He was not especially brave and is said to have been physically weak. During his time Aurangzeb besieged and captured Raigad. Instead of fighting the enemy, Rajaram fled from Raigad when the fort was about to be besieged. Raigad fell into the hands of the Mughals in 1689 when a renegade Maratha called Suryaji Pisal betrayed the defences of the fort to the besieging Mughals. During the capture of Raigad, Sambhaji' wife Yesubai and his son Shahu were taken captive by the Mughals. Rajaram's life as Chattrapati was spent mostly in fleeing from the Mughal armies. Nevertheless during his times, the generals like Santaji Ghorpade and Dhanaji Jadhav carried out a whirlwind guerrilla campaign to harras the Mughal army and never let Aurangzeb rest in one place. Thus in spite of his presence in the Deccan for more than 25 years from 1680 to 1707, Aurang could not subsume the flame of independence lit by Shivaji Maharaj

**Aurang's Death in 1707**
When Aurang died in 1707, his son Azamshah who was with him at his deathbed, proclaimed himself the Mughal Emperor and prepared to battle his elder brother Muaazam, who was then in Kabul. To ensure that the Marathas came over to his side, Azamshah released Shahu who was till then held as a prisoner by the Mughals. Shahu had been a prisoner for 18 years from 1689 up to 1707. When Shahu staked his claim to the throne, Tarabi was ruling. A battle between the two was inevitable. This battle fought at Khed went in favour of Shahu and he became the Chattrapati. He was incidentally the last de facto Chattrapati of the Marathas.



The Spread of the Maratha Empire.
The Marathas rose to the status of Imperial Rulers of India. Their rise from freedom fighters for swarajya to the rulers of Marathi Daulat (Empire) took place from 1720 to 1761 and lasted till 1803 when they were supplanted by the British.

**The Peshwas - Baji Rao, Balaji Baji Rao, Madhav Rao**

As we saw above, after Shahu, the de facto executive power passed into the hands of the hereditary Prime Ministers the Peshwas. Balaji Viawanath Bhatt was succeeded by his son Baji Rao the first. Baji Rao was a very able and ambitious soldier and he was the one who consolidated Maratha power in North India.

history and the fissiparous tendencies he let loose ultimately let to the downfall of the Maratha empire.

His first mistake was to go back on the agreement between his grandfather Balaji Viswanath Bhatt and Kanhoji Angre according to which the Peshwa was to have no direct control over the Maratha Navy. He attacked the his own navy and weakened one arm of the Maratha might.

During his rule, North India was invaded by Ahmed Shah Abdali first in 1756. Balaji Baji Rao then sent his brother Raghunath Rao along with Malharrao Holkar to defeat Abdali. Raghunath rao not only defeated Abdali but chased him up to the Khyber pass till Attock in Paktoonistan. .

This success of Raghunath Rao aroused the jealousy of Balaji Baji Rao's wife Gopikabai, who started conspiring against Raghunath Rao to undermine his influence. This led to corresponding jealousy from Anandibai who was Ragunath Rao's wife. The unfortunate fallout of this court intrigue ws to end in the disastrous 3rd battle of Panipat in 1761.Let us see the event that led to this catastrophe at Panipat.

**The Persian Invasion of 1740 by Nadir Shah**

Some 80 years after Shivaji when the Mughal Empire had been weakened by repeated Maratha attacks, the Afghan raider Ahmed Shah Durrani (Abdali) invaded North India. As the Mughals were past their prime and were now living at the mercy of the Marathas, they did not dare oppose Ahmed Shah. The task of challenging him was left to the Marathas. The Marathas who then were on their ascendancy in North India had since the first Persian-Afghan invasion by Nadir Shah, the king of Persia in 1740, established themselves as a dominant power in Northern India. The 20 years from 1740 to 1760 saw a see-saw battle between the Afghans and the Marathas for the domination of North India.

With the defeat of Mohammed Shah, the Moghul Emperor in 1740 by Nadir Shah (in whose army Ahmed Shah Abdali was a general), the Mughal power steadily declined and its place was usurped by the Rohillas who were led by an ambitious and ruthless chieftain named Najib Khan. Najib's ambition was to supplant the Moghal Emperor and crown himself as the ruler of India by capturing Delhi.

The Marathas Liberate Punjab

But the growing power of the Marathas in their northward expansion, stood between Najib and his ambition. To overcome the Marathas, in 1755, Najib invited Ahmed Shah Abdali from Afghanistan to help him in defeating the Marathas and crown himself the ruler of India. In this, he was thwarted by the Marathas who decisively defeated the Rohillas and Afghans near Delhi in 1756. The defeat was so decisive that Najib Khan surrendered to the Marathas and became their prisoner. The Maratha forces were led by Shrimant Raghunath Rao and Malhar Rao Holkar.

After defeating the Afghan-Rohilla forces, the Marathas pursued the Afghans into the Punjab and beyond up to the Khyber pass. The last frontier of the Marathas was at Attock in today's NWFP (or Paktoonistan) on the Afghan border. (This campaign of the Marathas led by Shrimant Raghunath Rao is called as Raghu's Bharari - i.e. whirlwind campaign.

Thus after nearly 800 after the last Punjabi King Tirlochan Pal Shahi had been defeated by Mahmud of Ghazni in 1020 C.E. did that part of India come under Indian rule in 1756 due to the liberation of Punjab by the Marathas.
Meanwhile with machinations and trickery, Najib Khan won over Malhar Rao Holkar and secured his release. On his release Najib started to undermine the Marathas once again and treacherously killed Dattaji Shinde (eldest brother of Mahadji Shinde). Najib continued to battle the Shindes in 1757-58 and with his newly found confidence again invited Ahmed Shah Abdali to invade India.

**PANIPAT - A Result of Court Intrigues at Pune**

The court intrigues at Shaniwarwada in Pune between Gopikabai (Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao's wife) and Anandibai (Raghunath Rao's wife) led to the sidetracking of Raghunath Rao in favour of the Peshwas cousin, Sadashiv Rao Bhau (along with Viswas Rao the Peshwa's son and successor) as the Supreme commander of the Maratha forces that were to give battle to Abdali a second time. It was unfortunate for the Marathas, that due to rivalries, a successful commander like Raghunath Rao was bypassed in favour of another general.

**The 3rd Battle of Panipat**

When Abdali launched his second invasion in 1759 the Marathas who after their successes in 1756 had been hibernating in Maharashtra and Central India again woke up and in alliance with the Jat King Suraj Mal of Bharatpur formed an alliance. This alliance led by Shrimant Sadshiv Rao Bhau and Shrimant Vishwas Rao (the Peshwa Shrimant Balaji Baji Rao's son) won spectacular victories and captured Delhi and Kunjapura (where the Afghan treasury and armoury was located). Here the alliance developed cracks due to the Maratha insistence on not allowing the Jats to loot Delhi. This ultimately split the alliance and Suraj Mal withdrew from the alliance. The Marathas consequently marched upto Panipat, but instead of continuing their attacks to completely defeat the partly defeated Abdali and Najib Khan, they stayed put at Panipat, blocking the way of the Afghans back to Afghanistan. Seeing their way back to their homeland blocked, the Afghans now became restless. They in turn, decided to block the way of the Marathas back into the Deccan.

**Stand-off for one year**

This stand-off continued for one whole year from the 14th of January 1760 up to the 14th of January 1761. This led to the fall in the morale of the stranded Marathas and ultimatley led to their defeat at Panipat. The Marathi term "Sankrant Kosalali" meaing "Sankranth has befallen us" comes from this event. During this stand-off the Afghans cut-off all supplies to the huge Maratha army. The Afghans with Najib Khan meanwhile also recaptured Delhi and Kunjpura. On the decisive day of 14th January 1761 (Makar Sankranti), the Marathas decided to break-through the Afghan blockade and re-enter Deccan. The disastrous battle saw about one hundred thousand Maratha troops being slaughtered in a matter of eight hours. But the Afghans too suffered heavy losses and decided enough was enough and went back to Afghanistan never to return to India.

**The defeat of the Marathas and the withdrawal of the Afghans created a power vacuum in North India in the period 1761-1790. It was this vacuum that was filled up by the rising British power. But more of this later.**

Prithviraj Chauhan

**Prithviraj Chauhan**
Prithviraj Chauhan was born at Ajaymeru (Ajmer) in 1166 A.D. His father was Someshwar Chauhan and mother Karpuri Devi, a Kalachuri (Chedi) princess, daughter of Achalaraja of Tripuri.
Muhammad Ghori attacked India multiple times. First time he was routed in present day Gujarat by Rajputs. Mularaja-II was not even a teen yet and his mother organized the defences of Pattan. Battle was fought at Kayadara near Mount Abu, in 1178 A.D. and Ghori was resoundingly defeated. After this defeat he never entered India through Gujarat. In first battle of Taraori in 1191 Prithviraj Chauhan's cavalry charged and routed the Ghurid cavalry and captured Ghori. Ghori begged for his life. Prithviraj allowed him to go despite his generals asking him not to do so.

**Prithviraj Chauhan lived at Taragarh fort which was also known as Ajaymeru after which the town of Ajmer got its name.**

Following year Ghori came again. Prithviraj advanced with his army and sent a letter to Ghori. In this letter Ghori was asked to return as he had been defeated the previous year and was spared his life. Ghori replied that he was in India on the orders of his brother, Ghiasuddin, and that he could only retreat after he got a word from his brother. This letter was sent in the evening and after sending the letter Ghori moved his camp back a few kilometers to feign retreat. On receiving this letter and seeing Muhammad move his camp back Prithviraj assumed that Ghori was not interested in fighting. Ghori also knew that rajputs did not fight in the night and only started fighting after sun had come up. (This is an ancient Kshatriya practice e.g Mahabharata was also fought mostly in day time). Ghori treacherously attacked in the early morning hours when Prithviraj and his army were sleeping and was able to win this war

The founder of the Gahadwala line was Govindchandra Gahadwala. He was an astute ruler and ruled from Kannauj. Most of North India, including the university town of Nalanda was a part of his kingdom. He stoutly defended his kingdom from further Muslims incursions. He instituted a tax for this purpose which was called Turushka Danda (i.e. tax to fight the Turushkas or Turks). His grandson was Jaichandra Gahadwala (Rathod) who played a tragic role in Indian History.

**The Story of Prithviraj Chouhan and Mahmud Ghori**

In Jaichand's days, a rival Rajput clan had established itself in Delhi (Pithoragarh). The ruler there was Prithviraj Chouhan. Pritiviraj was a romantic, chivalrous and an extremely fearless person. After ceaseless military campaigns, Pritiviraj extended his original kingdom of Sambhar (Shakambara) to Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Eastern Punjab. He ruled from his twin capitals at Delhi and Ajmer. His fast rise caught the envy of the then powerful ruler Jaichandra Gahadwala and there was a lot of ill-feeling between the two.

**Prithiviraj's Love for Sanyogita - Jaichandra's Daughter**

The story of Prithviraj's bold exploits spread far and wide in the country and he was the center of much discussion in the circle of the nobility. Sanyogita, the daughter of Jaichandra Gahadwala fell secretly in love with Prithiviraj and she started a secret poetic correspondence with him. Her father the haughty Jaichandra got wind of this and he decided to teach his daughter and her upstart lover a lesson. So he arranged a Swayamwara (a ceremony where a bride can select her husband from the assembled princes. She had the right to garland any prince and she became his queen. This is an ancient Hindu custom among Royalty). Jaichandra invited all the big and small princes of the country to Kannauj for the royal Swayamwara. But he deliberately ignored Prithiviraj.

To add insult to injury, he even made a statue of Prithiviraj and kept him as a dwarpala (doorman).

**The Elopement of Sanyogita with Prithviraj**

Prithviraj got to know of this and he confided his plans to his lover.
On the said day, Sanyogita walked down the aisle where the royals had assembled and bypassed all of them only to reach the door and garland the statue of Pritiviraj as a doorman. The assemblage was stunned at this brash act of hers. But what stunned them and her father Jaichandra was the next thing that happened.

Prithiviraj who was hiding behind the statue, also in the garb of a doorman, whisked Sanyogita away and put her up on his steed to make a fast getaway to his capital at Delhi

**Chouhan-Rathod Warfare Leads to Weakening of both Rajput Kingdoms**

Jaichandra and his army gave earnest chase and in the resultant string of battles between the two kingdoms fought between 1189 and 1190, both of them sufferred heavily. While this drama was being enacted, another ruler also named Mahmud who was from Ghori in Afghanistan had grown powerful and had captured Ghazni and subsequently attacked the Ghaznavid Governor of Punjab and defeated him. The kingdom of Mahmud Ghori now stretched up to the domains of Prithiviraj Chouhan. A clash was inevitable

**The 1st Battle of Tarain 1191 C.E. - Victory of Prithiviraj Chouhan**

Mahmud Ghori threw the gauntlet by laying siege to the fortress of Bhatinda in East Punjab which was on the frontier of Prithiviraj's domains. Prithviraj's appeal for help from his father-in-law was scornfully rejected by the haughty Jaichandra. But undaunted Prithviraj marched on to Bhatinda and met his enemy at a place called Tarain (also called Taraori) near the ancient town of Thanesar. In face of the persistent Rajput attacks, the battle was won as the Muslim army broke ranks and fled leaving their general Mahmud Ghori as a prisoner in Pritiviraj's hands.

Mahmud Ghori was brought in chains to Pithoragarh - Prithviraj's capital and he begged his victor for mercy and release. Prithviraj's ministers advised against pardoning the aggressor. But the chivalrous and valiant Prithviraj thought otherwise and respectfully released the vanquished Ghori.

**The 2nd Battle of Tarain 1192 C.E. - Defeat of Prithiviraj Chouhan**

The very next year Prithiviraj's gesture was repaid by Ghori who re-attacked Prithiviraj with a stronger army and guilfully defeated him by attacking the Rajput army before daybreak. (The Hindus incidentally followed a hoary practice of battling only from sunrise up to sunset. Before Sunrise and after Sunset there was to be no fighting- as per a time honoured battle code).The defeated Prithiviraj was pursued up to his capital and in chains he was taken as a captive to Ghor in Afghanistan.
 **The Blinding of Prithviraj**

The story of Prithiviraj does not end here. As a prisoner in Ghor he was presented before Mahmud, where he looked Ghori straight into the eye


Ghori ordered him to lower his eyes, whereupon a defiant Prithiviraj scornfully told him how he had treated Ghori as a prisoner and said that the eyelids of a Rajputs eyes are lowered only in death.On hearing this, Ghori flew into a rage and ordered that Prithviraj's eyes be burnt with red hot iron rods

This heinous deed being done, Prithiviraj was regularly brought to the court to be taunted by Ghori and his courtiers. In those days Prithiviraj was joined by his former biographer Chand Bardai, who had composed a ballad-biography on Pritiviraj in the name of Prithviraj Raso (Songs of Prithviraj). Chand Bardai told Prithiviraj, that he should avenge Ghori's betrayal and daily insults.



The Blind Prithviraj Avenges the Injustice done to him

The two got an opportunity when Ghori announced a game of Archery. On the advice of Chand Bardai, Prithviraj, who was then at court said he would also like to participate. On hearing his suggestion, the courtiers guffawed at him and he was taunted by Ghori as to how he could participate when he could not see. Whereupon, Prithiviraj told Mahmud Ghori to order him to shoot, and he would reach his target.

Ghori became suspicious and asked Prithviraj why he wanted Ghori himself to order and not anyone else. On behlaf of Prithiviraj, Chand Bardai told Ghori that he as a king would not accept orders from anyone other than a king. His ego satisfied, Mahmud Ghori agreed.

On the said day, Ghori sitting in his royal enclosure had Prithiviraj brought to the ground and had him unchained for the event. On Ghori's ordering Prithviraj to shoot, we are told Prithiviraj turned in the direction from where he heard Ghori speak and struck Ghori dead with his arrow. This event is described by Chand Bardai in the couplet, ***"Dus kadam aggey, bees kadam daey, baitha hai Sultan. Ab mat chuko Chouhan, chala do apna baan."***(Ten feet ahead of you and twenty feet to your right, is seated the Sultan, do not now miss him Chouhan, release your baan - arrow).

Thus ended the story of the brave but unrealistic Prithviraj Chouhan - the last Hindu ruler of Delhi. Delhi was to remain under Muslim rule for the next 700 years till 1857 and under British rule till 1947. Those few Hindus who came close to liberating Delhi during the seven centuries of Muslim rule were Rana Sanga in 1527, Raja (Hemu) Vikramaditya in around 1565 (2nd battle of Panipat), and Shrimant Vishwas Rao who was the Peshwa's son and was co-commander of the Maratha forces in the 3rd battle of Panipat in 1761. Metaphorically speaking, the next Hindu ruler to actually preside over Delhi was to be Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of Independent India (and Jawarharlal Nehru - who was the President's first Minister).

[Baji Prabhu](http://hinduhistory.blogspot.com/2008/02/baji-prabhu.html)

Baji Prabhu is remembered as a hero of India, especially in Maharashtra. He was a sub-leader serving under the Mores of Javli, in Maharashtra, until Javli was annexed to Shivaji’s territories in 1656. At first it was impossible for Baji Prabhu to appreciate Shivaji, but he soon realised that Shivaji stood for a cause larger than that of his disposed leader. He became an enthusiastic supporter of the Maratha Hindu movement. From then on he was a staunch friend and supporter of Shivaji.

In 1660, Shivaji was locked up in a fort, under siege by a big army from Bijapur. He made his escape on the dark night of July 13th, with a contingent of about 1500 Maratha troops. Baji Prabhu was 2nd in command of the contingent. Baji Prabhu would have perhaps won no place in history and ended his life in relative obscurity if Shivaji and his party had reached their destination in safety. But Fazl Khan, the son of Afzal Khan (a general of Bijapur who Shivaji had slain) was a sworn enemy of Shivaji and gave hot pursuit, with an army of 12,000. By day break, it was clear that there was no way to shake of the enemy except by giving fight. Shivaji decided that this was inevitable. He ordered Baji Prabhu to face the troops of Bijapur, for which undertaking he was given half of the contingent. Shivaji said that Baji Prabhu would hear the cannon fire from Vishalgadh (the destination fort), as a signal of Shivaji’s safety.

Baji Prabhu occupied the narrow pass of Ghodkhind, blocking the path of the pursuers, and made a determined stand against them. He knew the great importance of his task - he had to protect the safety of a man of destiny. This resolved him to stand until the last man. Fazl Khan repeatedly tried to break through the defences of the pass, to get to Shivaji, but was constantly repulsed. The unequal battle raged for hours, with the valiant defenders clinging to their positions, rapidly depleting in numbers.

At last, 5 hours after the battle started, the cannon fire announcing Shivaji’s return to Vishalgadh was heard. Seven hundred valiant Marathas had by then laid down their lives. Each one was a martyr of a great cause. Baji Prabhu was badly hurt. The dying hero was however jubilant. He had done his duty and saved his king, and saved the realm from chaos. He showed spirit of sacrifice few today could match. He asked for no greater reward in life and died a happy man. If Shivaji had fallen, the history of the suffering of our ancestors under the Moghul yoke would have been longer and more gruesome.

"The defence...," says historian Dennis Kincaid, "has become legendary in Western India. The action is remarkable as an example of the spirit which Shivaji’s leadership infused into his followers." Shivaji’s mother, Jijabai, wept at the news of Baji Prabhu’s death. Ballads and poems have been composed in his memory, some of which are still sung today. Sri Aurobindo, the great yogi, mystic and revolutionary of the 20th century wrote a splendid poem dedicated to Baji Prabhu, which was used as a symbol to capture the spirit of sacrifice that was required of the young men in India's freedom struggle which was then under way. Baji Prabhu and his men will be remembered as long as good and brave deeds are considered worthy of commemoration.

[Tanaji Malusare](http://hinduhistory.blogspot.com/2008/02/tanaji-malusare.html)


Perhaps no episode in Maratha history has stirred the hearts of people as deeply as the death of Tanaji Malusare, the conqueror of Sinhagad (the Lion’s Fort), the tale of which is most popularly told by the Ballad of Sinhagad. The Treaty of Purandar (June 1665) had forced Shivaji to surrender 23 forts to the Moghuls, including Sinhagad. The treaty hurt the pride of the Marathas. None felt the sting more deeply than Jijabai, the mother of Shivaji, who was in a way the mother of the kingdom. Shivaji, however deeply he loved his mother, could not fulfill her wish, because the conquest was considered virtually impossible, with the fortifications and select Rajput, Arab and Pathan troops guarding it. Shivaji’s lieutenants shared this view.

But, Jijabai refused to share their hesitation. It is said that once determined, a woman’s strength of will and thirst of sacrifice are the most potent forces, and the example Shivaji’s mother Jijabai definately supported this view. One morning, says the ballad of Sinhagad, while she was looking out of the window of Pratapgad, she saw in the distance the Lion Fort. The thought that the fort was now under the control of Moghuls enraged her. She summoned a rider and ordered him to go in all haste to Shivaji, then resident at Rajgad, and tell him that she desired his immediate presence.

Shivaji promptly responded to his mother’s summons, without knowing the reasons for its urgency. His heart sank when he discovered what it was that Jijabai wanted of him. He tried to plead earnestly that the conquest would be likely to be in vain, despite even mammoth efforts. The lines of the ballad have Shivaji saying:

“To win it went forth many, but there came back never any: Oft planted was the mango seed, but nowhere grows the tree.”

However, eventually dreading his mother’s displeasure most of all, he thought of a suitable man to whom could be entrusted the perilous task. There was nobody else capable thought Shivaji other than Tanaji Malusare, his prized companion from early youth, and a man of iron will, who had accompanied Shivaji on all historic associations.

Tanaji was in the village of Umbrat, engaged in celebrating his son’s wedding, when the call came for him to meet with Shivaji at Rajgadh. He hastened to meet Shivaji, accompanied by his brother Suryaji and his uncle Shelarmama. Shivaji did not have the heart to tell his dear comrade that he had been summoned to such a mission, and directed Tanaji to Jijabai to hear from her the nature of his mission.

Undaunted by the terrifying nature of his mission, the lion-hearted Tanaji vowed either to accomplish it or die in the process. He set out at night and from the Konkan marched towards the fortress with his men, reaching it unnoticed on a cold, clear and moonless night - in February 1670. He had taken with him Shivaji’s favourite ghorpad or lizard to assist in scaling the fort wall (the lizard was regularly used to map a suitable route for climbing forts). The creature, to whose waist a cord was tied, refused to climb the fort, as if to warn Tanaji of the impending disaster. Tanaji expressed his rage, and the lizard got the message and terrified, scaled the hill top, which helped the Marathas to clamber the cliff.

Scarcely before 300 men had reached the top, their arrival was detected by the guards. The sentries were swiftly slain by the Marathas, but the clash of arms thoroughly roused the garrison. Tanaji was faced with a grave problem. With 700 of his troops still at the bottom of the fort, he had to challenge an enemy that greatly outnumbered his troops. His mind was already made up, and he ordered his troops to charge. The fight proceeded. Tanaji lost many men, but they inflicted heavy casualties on the Moghul forces. Tanaji repeatedly sang to keep the spirits of his soldoers high. After some hours, the Moghul commander Uday Bhan engaged in a fight with Tanaji. The odds were against the Maratha. The long night march, the anxiety of the mission, scaling the fort and the vigorous combat Tanaji had already been engaged in before Uday attacked him had drained him thoroughly, hence after a lengthy fight, Tanaji fell.

The death of their leader unnerved the Marathas, but Tanaji had kept the battle going just long enough so that the 700 troops who had been left at the bottom of the fort when the battle began had managed to breach the defence and force entry. They were led by Suryaji, Tanaji's brither. The timely arrival of Suryaji, Tanaji’s brother, who had entered the fort, and his exhortation to the Marathas to fight till the end saved the situation. In the fierce battle that continued, the Moghul commander was slain, and the entire garrison routed. Several hundred Moghuls in order to try and save themselves ventured over the rock and were slain in the attempt.

It was a great victory for the Marathas, but there was no elation in their camp. The news of the victory was conveyed to Shivaji, who rushed to the fort eager to congratulate Tanaji, but to his dismay he saw the brave man’s slain body. The Ballad of Sinhagad describes the grief as such:

Twelve days the king wept over him for the great love that he bore him.

The sorrow of Jijabai was also described:

The scarf removed, she saw his face, No worthier chief of the race, Twas thus she wailed and drew a sword, before the armies of his Lord:“Shivaji son and king today, Thy best limb has been chopped away” Nor less the monarch to his chief, The tribute paid of royal grief.

When Shivaji learned of his friend's death, he remarked **"Gad ala pan Sinha gela",**meaning "We have gained the fort, but lost a lion."