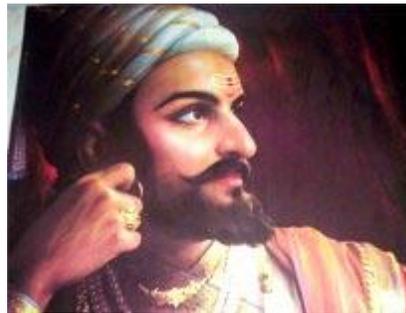


INDIAN ICONS

CHATRAPATHI SHIVAJI



Shivaji Bhonsle is a warrior king of the Marathas or Maharashtra people and the founder of the Maratha dynasty. He is now revered all over India and known as **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj**.

Shivaji was born in Shivner on **February 19, 1630** to Jijabai and Shahji. His father Shahji was a nobleman in the royal court of Bijapur. Shivaji was named so after Lord Shiva as his mother was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva.

His mother Jija Bai was a very pious lady. Shivaji got the best qualities of his character from her. His father used to read to him stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Thus, the fire of patriotism was kindled in him when he was very young.

He did not learn how to read and write. But he became skilful in all sorts of manly games and games of war. Soon, he became a master of riding and the arts of war and fighting. Since childhood, Shivaji was brave and never feared anything. There are many instances in his childhood that show he was a born ruler. At the young age of fourteen, he had the dream of building his own kingdom.

Stories of the acts of cruelty of Mughal kings upon the Hindus had a great influence on him. He made up his mind to free his country from the cruel hands of the Mughals. With the help of his small army of hill country men he began his work.

Shivaji very much wanted a guru who would guide him in the right path. He was very eager to visit Samarth Ramadas Swami after hearing about His fame, and ask him to be his guru. So, he decided to go to Kondhaval chasm to meet him. Shivaji went there and waited till evening, but could not meet the Swamiji. Later he returned to Pratapgad, but even in his sleep the thought of

meeting Samarth Ramadas Swami was revolving in his mind. Actually, Samarth Ramadas Swami was purposely avoiding Shivaji Maharaj.

A few days passed by in a similar way. One day, the longing to meet the Swamiji increased so much that Shivaji Maharaj went to the temple of Bhavani Devi and at night, he fell asleep in the temple itself in front of the Devi. That night he had a vision of the radiant form of Samarth Ramadas Swami wearing paduka (wooden slippers), a saffron robe, a Japmala (Chanting beads) in his hand and a crutch under His armpit. In his dream Shivaji bowed down to Samarth Ramadas Swami and paid obeisance to him. Ramadas Swami placed His hand on Maharaj's head and blessed him. When Maharaj woke up in the morning, he saw that he had a coconut in his hand as a sacrament. From that day, Shivaji started regarding Samarth Ramadas Swami as his Guru.

At the age of 20, he took out his very first military attack and captured the Torna Fort of the kingdom of Bijapur. He then took some more forts and districts of Bijapur state. After that there was no stopping Shivaji and he went on to capture Kondana and Raigad forts and exercised full control over the region of Pune. Around the year 1659, Shivaji took over the forts in Western Ghats and the ones near the Konkan coast. In order to disrupt Shivaji's series of triumphs, Adil Shah arrested his father Shahji by unfair means and sent armies against Shivaji and his elder brother Sambhaji.

At last the Adil Shah, the king of Bijapur sent a General named Afzal Khan to arrest him. However, Afzal Khan's armies were no match for the two strong Maratha brothers armies and he was defeated by them. Shivaji's father was released. Afzal Khan later seized an opportunity to kill Shivaji's brother Sambhaji by deceit.

Shivaji had sent a messenger saying that he did not want war. A meeting was arranged, both Shivaji and Afzal Khan were deeply suspicious of each other. It was agreed that the two would meet unarmed, but both were prepared for treachery. Afzal Khan had hidden a small dagger and Shivaji wore armor underneath his clothes with tiger claws inside one of his hands.

Afzal Khan tried to stab Shivaji in the back while portending to embrace him. The dagger was deflected by Shivaji's armor. Shivaji responded by cutting open Afzal Khan's stomach with the tiger claws. Khan was later chased and killed by one of Shivaji's generals. The King of Bijapur made peace with him.

The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb now identified Shivaji as a major threat to his empire. He sent his uncle Shaista Khan with a large army to defeat Shivaji. Shivaji lost a large number of forts and areas to Aurangzeb and was driven out of Pune. But he did not stay defeated for long and soon overthrew Khan and re-established his rule. In a few years he recovered most of his forts.

Shivaji fought a number of battles thereafter, a vast number of them against Aurangzeb. He was even captured on one occasion but managed to escape by means of a clever plan a few day prior

to his execution. He fought a life-long battle against the British and other foreigners on Indian land and never bowed down to any of them. He built a number of forts in his time and even acquired a large number along the way.

Shivaji's center of power and growth became the fort of Raigad in the Raigad district of Maharashtra. This place became Shivaji's capital city. Perched on top of a hill that was split off from the Western Ghats, the fort was virtually inaccessible from three sides. It is said that prizes were given to those who tried innovative methods to reach the top.

He built a strong and powerful army, comprising of infantry and cavalry, getting them adapted to the techniques of swift flanking attacks, hill campaigns and commando actions, apart from pioneering the guerrilla warfare method. Shivaji's army specialized in making lightning attacks on the Mughal armies and retreat back to their hill forts equally quickly. The Mughals used to call him the desert rat, because of the speed of the Maratha attacks

Under his rule 'untouchables' were given true justice. They were also recruited in the army as well as promoted. Shivaji also laid great importance on Sanskrit. He ensured that Sanskrit was never lost. He vigorously promoted the use of Marathi and Sanskrit in his court instead of Persian, the existing Royal language. He brought true justice to those who were wronged. The people of his land loved him and truly worshipped him.

Religion too was given importance. He allowed his people to follow their religion of choice. He also allowed people to convert back to being a Hindu after having converted to Islam under Aurangzeb.

Despite being a devoted Hindu, he showed great respect to all religions, including Islam and Christianity, and was unbiased towards other castes and communities. He ensured that respect was given to mosques and other Muslim places of worship and also to Muslim women. As a result, a large number of Muslims served in his army.

Shivaji was an efficient ruler and administrator and ruled with a just and firm hand. His government had concepts that we know of now like the Cabinet known as Ashtapradhan Mandal, foreign affairs known as Dabir and also an internal intelligence wing.

He organized a commanding and disciplined navy, including 200 warships, to keep the coastline of his empire secured from the Portuguese, British, Dutch, and Mughals, thereby earning the title 'Father of Indian Navy'.

Shivaji is known for his protective and fatherly attitude towards his citizens. He is remembered till date as a hero who worked for the welfare of his subjects and state.

Because of these qualities, Shivaji was able to instill the same passion for revolution against the Mughals in the minds of his people. He inspired his people so much that the Maratha Empire continued to fight the Mughal rule for 27 years after his death. The Maratha Empire continued to grow even after Shivaji's death. At its peak, it grew to cover a very large portion of India.

Shivaji breathed his last in 1680 after suffering from fever for three whole weeks, but is fondly remembered for his acts of bravery and kindness towards his people even today. His birthday is celebrated with grand fervor in Maharashtra, amongst Maharashtrians and many other places in India even today.

QUIZ

1. Where was Shivaji born?
 - a. Shivner
 - b. Mumbai
 - c. Raigad
 - d. Pune
2. What was the greatest source of inspiration for Shivaji during his childhood?
 - a. His father used to read to him stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata
 - b. His school teacher
 - c. His older brother
 - d. New Delhi
3. Where was Shivaji's center of power?
 - a. Pune
 - b. Mumbai
 - c. Raigad fort
 - d. New Delhi
4. Who was Shivaji's Guru?
 - a. Shahji
 - b. Adil Shah
 - c. Swami Samartha Ramadas
 - d. Sambhaji
5. Who was the general sent to kill Shivaji by the ruler of Bijapur?
 - a. Adil Shah
 - b. Shaista Khan
 - c. Aurangzeb
 - d. Afzal Khan
6. How did Shivaji escape from Afzal Khan?
 - a. He beheaded Afzal Khan
 - b. Cut his stomach using tiger claws
 - c. Drew up a clever plot to escape from jail

- d. None of the above
7. What was Dabir?
- a. Shivaji's cabinet of ministers
 - b. A part of Shivaji's army
 - c. Ministry of foreign affairs which also had spies
 - d. The Maratha navy
8. Which of the following are NOT true?
- a. Shivaji was born in 1625
 - b. Shivaji showed great respect to all religions, including Islam and Christianity
 - c. Shivaji is the founder of the **Maratha dynasty**
 - d. Shivaji is called the 'Father of Indian Navy'.
9. In which year did Shivaji die?
- a. 1625
 - b. 1635
 - c. 1705
 - d. 1680