

Unit -III

Rise of Marathas and Peshwas



Learning Objectives

- ❖ To trace the origin and the growth of Maratha kingdom with particular emphasis on the role played by Shivaji in strengthening it.
- ❖ To know about the administrative structure introduced by Shivaji.
- ❖ To examine how far the Marathas were responsible for the decline of the Mughals.
- ❖ To assess the role of Peshwas in carrying on Maratha power.



Introduction

The rising power of the Marathas in the south-west posed the real danger to the Mughal Empire. Shahji Bhonsle, Shivaji's father, an officer of the Ahmednagar State and later Bijapur, proved to be a thorn in the flesh of the Mughals, even in Shah Jahan's period. But it was his son, Shivaji, who attained glory among the Marathas as he could stop the Mughal Empire's expansion in the Deccan. Shivaji was a gallant fighter, army general and a guerilla leader. He built up a band of brave mountaineers, who were loyal to him. With their help, he captured many forts and gave Aurangzeb's commanders a tough time. As Marathas grew stronger, the Mughal Empire weakened. The Mughal Emperor had

to recognise the right of the Marathas to collect their Chauth tax all over the Deccan. Warfare opened opportunities for talented commanders who contributed to the vigorous expansion of Maratha power early in the eighteenth century. The prime minister of Maratha rulers, called the Peshwas from the time of Shahu, held real power. Under the aegis of Maratha power, the Peshwas continued their supremacy until 1761.

Factors Responsible for the Rise of Marathas

Geographical Features

The physical features of the Maratha country developed certain peculiar qualities among the Marathas, which distinguished them