

## ANGLO-MARATHA WARS: THE STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY IN 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY

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### ABSTRACT

After the decline of the Mughal Empire, the Marathas emerged as one of its most formidable opponents, seizing the opportunity to ascend to power. They held sway over a vast expanse of the Indian subcontinent, extracting tribute even from regions not under their direct rule. By the mid-18th century, they had expanded their aspirations to the North Indian empire, having an influential presence in Lahore and playing a pivotal role as kingmakers in the Mughal court.

Although their ambitions suffered a setback after their defeat by Ahmad Shah Abdali at the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761, the Marathas soon regathered their forces. Within ten years, they once again became a dominant force in Indian politics.

**Keyword:** Treaty of Surat, Wadgaon, Bengal, English Government, Maratha.

### INTRODUCTION

After the death of Madhavrao Peshwa in 1772, his brother Narayanrao became peshwa (prime minister) of the Maratha Empire. Narayanrao's palace guards murdered him in August 1773, and his uncle Raghunathrao (Raghoba) became the Peshwa. However, Narayanrao's wife, Gangabai, gave birth to a posthumous son, who was the legal heir to the throne. The newborn infant was named 'Sawai' Madhavrao (Sawai means "One and a Quarter"). Twelve Maratha chiefs, known as the Baarbhai <sup>[6]</sup> and led by Nana Phadnavis, directed an effort to install the infant as the new Peshwa and to rule in his name as regents.

Raghunathrao, unwilling to give up his position of power, sought help from the British at Bombay and signed the Treaty of Surat on 6 March 1775. According to the treaty, Raghunathrao ceded the territories of Salsette and Bassein (Vasai) to the British, along with part of the revenues from Surat and Bharuch districts. In return, the British promised to provide Raghunathrao with 2,500 soldiers.

At the same time, the Marathas tried to form a military alliance with the French. Two Frenchmen, Saint-Lubin and M. Montigny acted as intermediaries between France and the Poona Regency. Although the alliance proposals went nowhere, British suspicions of a global anti-British front increased in the midst of the concurrent American War of Independence.

The British Calcutta Council condemned the Treaty of Surat, sending Colonel Upton to Pune to annul it and make a new treaty with the regency. The Treaty of Purandhar (1 March 1776) annulled that of Surat, Raghunathrao was pensioned and his cause abandoned, but the revenues of Salsette and Bharuch districts were retained by the British. The Bombay government rejected this new treaty and gave refuge to Raghunathrao. In 1777, Nana Phadnavis violated his treaty with the Calcutta Council by granting the French a port on the West coast. The British retaliated by sending a force towards Pune.

## **FIRST ANGLO-MARATHA WAR**

The **First Anglo-Maratha War** (1775–1782) was the first conflict fought between the British East India Company and Maratha Empire in India. The war, fought in between Surat and Poona, began with the 1775 Treaty of Surat after the East India Company agreed to support the recently-deposed Raghunathrao's claim as peshwa of the Maratha Empire. Several years of intermittent and largely inconclusive campaigning followed, in which the East India Company failed to decisively defeat the highly mobile Marathas. The war ended in 1782 following the Treaty of Salbai. As per the treaty, both sides returned each other's captured territory, and the British withdrew their support for Raghunathrao. The British and Marathas would not fight against each other again until the Second Anglo-Maratha War 20 years later.

Raghunath Rao had concluded the treaty of Surat with the English in 1775, agreeing to cede Salsette and Bassein in return for British help to secure for himself the post of Peshwa. Warren Hastings disapproved of his treaty, and sent Colonel Upton from Bengal to conclude the treaty of Purandar on March 1, 1776. Under this treaty, the English withdrew from the side of Raghunath Rao, but retained Salsette and Bassein. But the Court of Directors was still in favour of the old treaty of Surat. Hence the English decided to fight against the Marathas. For this purpose the army at Bombay was ordered to proceed for a fresh war.

The Bombay army advanced towards Poona, but was faced by a large Maratha force. A retreat before a Maratha army was considered difficult, and the enterprise ended with the convention of Waragon, by which British promised to restore their recent conquests. This action was condemned, the commanders were dismissed, and Hastings sent Goddard from Bengal to prosecute the war. Goddard took Ahmadabad, Captain Poham distinguished himself by taking the hill-fort of Gwalior, and the war was at last concluded by the treaty of Salbai in 1782. Madhu Rao II was recognised as Peshwa, Raghunath Rao retired on an allowance, and Salsette and some other islands were retained by the British.

## **PRIMARY CAUSE OF THIS WAR**

The primary cause of the first Maratha war was the interference of English government at Bombay in the internal affairs of the Marathas. Peshwa Madhav Rao died in 1772. He was succeeded by his son, Naryan Rao. His uncle, Raghunath Rao got him murdered in August, 1773 and himself became the Peshawa. But many Maratha nobles disliked him and thought of him as a usurper. It was, afterwards, found that Raghunath Rao was certainly guilty of the murder of his nephew. This infuriated them and, in 1774, they declared the posthumous child of Narayan Rao, Madhav Rao Narayan, as the Peshawa.

Raghunath Rao fled away for his safety and found shelter with the British at Surat. There he signed the treaty of Surat with English government at Bombay on March 7, 1775. By this treaty, the British agreed to provide military assistance to Raghunath Rao and help in aking the Peshawa in return for their expenses. Besides, Raghunath Rao agreed to cede the islands of Salsette and Bassein to the British and promised that the Marathas would not attack the territories of Karnataka and Bengal. This treaty resulted in the beginning of the war against the Marathas.

## **SECOND ANGLO-MARATHA WARS**

In the second Anglo-Maratha war, Peshwa Baji Rao II accepted subsidiary and protection from the British East India Company and signed a treaty, the Treaty of Bassein.

In the history of the Maratha dynasty, the second Anglo-Maratha war was an impactful war. As a result of this war, the base of the Maratha dynasty was shattered. Modern Indian history's significant part is the chapter on this second conflict between British and Maratha emperors. In history, three main Anglo-Maratha wars are found to have occurred. The timeframe of these wars was between the late 18th century and the starting of the 19th century. The treaty of Bassein is considered to be the "death knell of the Maratha Empire".

### **FACTS REGARDING THE SECOND ANGLO-MARATHA WAR**

- a) In this war, the Maratha Empire and the British East India Company were involved
- b) The reason behind this war was the defeat of Peshwa by the Holkars
- c) Nana Phadnavis died in the year 1800 and the British East India Company was provided with an important and beneficial edge
- d) In the second next year, 1802, a joined army of Scindia and Peshwa Baji Rao II was found to be defeated in the Battle of Poona
- e) The joined army of Scindia and Peshwa was defeated by an efficient ruler of Indore, Yashwantro Holkar
- f) This treaty was not considered an effective one and led to another war, the second Anglo-Maratha war
- g) This war was won by the British East India Company

### **ANGLO-MARATHA WAR: IMPORTANCE**

This divided Marathas were found to pay price for being separated. Their loss against the united British was a great lesson for the Marathas. The result of the second Anglo-Maratha war was important for this dynasty for understanding their value and weaknesses. Losing independence the Marathas were faced with the reality and resulted in being captured by the British. Another attempt to free the motherland, India from British colonial rule was considered by this dynasty and resulted in defeat again. The second Anglo-Maratha war was important to understand the strength and level of British power at that time.

### **RESULT OF THIS WAR**

- As a result of the second Anglo-Maratha war, the British East India Company established its power in Orissa
- The British's power extended up to Yamuna River in which Delhi and Agra were also included
- The treaty of Surji-Arjun-Gaon was signed by Scindias in 1803
- This treaty has helped the British to grab lands, namely Ganga-Yamuna Doab, various districts of Gujarat, Gurgaon, Ahmednagar fort, and some important sections of Bundelkhand
- The treaty of Deogaon was also signed by Bhonsles which helps them to obtain Balasore, Cuttack, and some specific parts of the west portion of the Wardha River
- As per the treaty of Rajghat, Holkars were forced to hand over Rampura, Bundi and Toink to the British Empire

- An important result is the acquisition of central India's many significant swaths by the British

### **IMPORTANCE OF THE TREATY OF DEOGAON**

The second Anglo-Maratha war is integrally associated with the treaty of Deogaon. This treaty was mainly concluded by the 1st Duke of Wellington, Sir Arthur Wellesley on 17th December in 1803.

- British East India Company was provided Balasore and Cuttack of Orissa by this treaty
- Hyderabad's Nizam Ali Khan was ceded to the Berar of west portion of the Wardha river by the Bhonsle
- The Bhonsle dynasty was found to be fully dependent on the British East India company by considering subsidiary and residency

### **IMPORTANCE OF THE TREATY OF SURJI-ARJUN-GAON**

- After two huge losses to the British in the battle of Laswari and in the battle of Assaye, this treaty was an important consideration by the Marathas
- The treaty of Surji-Arjun-Gaon was signed on 30th December, in the year 1803
- This treaty was signed at Anjangaon town of Maharashtra
- An important part of the Maratha confederacy, Scindia is integrally connected with this treaty
- Arthur Wellesley was found to lead the British forces that were against Holkars, Bhonsle, and Scindia
- A total of two revisions were found to be done in this treaty
- There was a second revision of this treaty in which Sindhia was granted more power

### **MARATHA CONFEDERACY**

Maratha confederacy, alliance formed in the 18th century after Mughal pressure forced the collapse of Shivaji's kingdom of Maharashtra in western India. After the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's death (1707), Maratha power revived under Shivaji's grandson Shahu. He confided power to the Brahman Bhat family, who became hereditary peshwas (chief ministers). He also decided to expand northward with armies under the peshwas' control. In Shahu's later years the power of the peshwas increased. After his death (1749) they became the effective rulers. The leading Maratha families—Sindhia, Holkar, Bhonsle, and Gaekwar—extended their conquests in northern and central India and became more independent and difficult to control.

The effective control of the peshwas ended with the great defeat of Panipat (1761) at the hands of the Afghans and the death of the young peshwa Madhav Rao I in 1772. Thereafter the Maratha state was a confederacy of five chiefs under the nominal leadership of the peshwa at Poona (now Pune) in western India. Though they united on occasion, as against the British (1775–82), more often they quarreled. After he was defeated by the Holkar dynasty in 1802, the peshwa Baji Rao II sought protection from the British, whose intervention destroyed the confederacy by 1818. The confederacy expressed a general Maratha nationalist sentiment but was divided bitterly by the jealousies of its chiefs.

## CONVENTION OF WADGAON

**Convention of Wadgaon**, (Jan. 13, 1779), compact concluded after the First Maratha War in India (1775–82), marking the end of British efforts to intervene in Maratha affairs by making Raghunath Rao *peshwa* (the nominal leader of the Maratha confederacy) or at least regent for his infant great-nephew.

The compact was concluded after a British expedition, commanded by Col. William Cockburn and controlled by Col. John Carnac, was surrounded by Maratha forces at Wadgaon, 23 miles (37 km) from Poona (Pune), and forced to come to terms. The terms included the return of all British annexations of Maratha territory since 1773, including Salsette Island; the halting of a British force marching from Bengal; and a share of the revenues from the district of Broach (Bharuch) for the Maratha chief Sindhia. The terms were disavowed by the British authorities at Bengal, and the First Maratha War dragged on until 1782, ending with the British abandonment of Raghunath and retention of Salsette.

## TREATY OF DEOGAON

Treaty of Deogaon, (Dec. 17, 1803), pact concluded by Sir Arthur Wellesley (later 1st duke of Wellington) between Raghujji Bhonsle II—the Maratha raja of Berar—and the British East India Company. With the Treaty of Surji-Arjungaon (Dec. 30, 1803), it marked the end of the first phase of the Second Maratha War (1803–05). By this treaty the raja of Berar ceded Cuttack and Balasore in Orissa to the company, thus making British territory continuous between Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Madras (now Chennai).

The Bhonsle ceded to Nizam Ali Khan of Hyderabad all of Berar west of the Wardha River. By agreeing to receive a British resident and subsidiary force at his capital, the Bhonsle dynasty became dependent on the British East India Company.

## THIRD ANGLO MARATHA WAR (1817-1818)

The Third Anglo-Maratha War was the last war fought between the British East India Company and the Maratha Empire between 1817 and 1818. The causes of the Anglo Maratha War III

The two main causes that led to the war between the British and the Marathas were:

- (i). The growing desire of the Marathas to get back their lost territories and
- (ii). Excessive control over Maratha nobles and chiefs by the British.

The third Anglo-Maratha war was fought during the Governor-Generalship of Marquess of Hastings. This was the last attempt made by Maratha to regain their old prestige and independence. They declared war against the English. A huge army was made by Baji Rao II to attack the British Residency at Poona in 1817. The rulers of Nagpur and Indore also came for the help of Peshwa.

This war continued for two years and ended with the defeat of Maratha. A large part of the territories of Maratha was annexed by the British. When the Peshwa attacked the British Residency in November 1817, the Maratha chiefs were defeated at various places such as Ashti, Nagpur, Mehidpur, etc. On 5 November 1817, the Treaty of Gwalior was signed in which Scindia became a mere spectator in the war.

On 6 January 1818, the Treaty of Mandasor was signed between Malhar Rao Holkar and the British, in which the Peshwa was dethroned, which was followed by the pensioning of the Peshwa. The defeat of Maratha's in this war led to the abolition of the Peshwa's hereditary office, the emergence of Poona with the Bombay presidency, and the British emerged as the unchallenged power in India.

So, with great diplomatic skills and superior military strength, the British crushed the Maratha power in the course of three Anglo- Maratha wars from 1775 to 1818.

#### **FOUR IMPORTANT REASONS FOR THE DEFEAT OF MARATHAS**

Disaster at Panipat was net outcome of poor military organization, lack of coordination, over-confidence of Maratha leaders, absence of allies, poor utilization of available resources, the blunders committed by Maratha leaders, superior adversary etc.

##### **1. Lack of Maratha sympathizers:**

The Marathas who were expanding rapidly in North India confronted and ill-treated many local Rajput rulers of Rajasthan and Northern India. In fact Marathas hardly had any friend or sympathizer or ally when they were planning to meet the Afghans at Panipat. For instance Sadashiv Rao Bhau failed in his diplomacy and did not get support from any Rajput ruler. He even lost the support of Suraj Mai, the Jat ruler of Bharatpur who had once agreed to support him.

##### **2. Military weaknesses and failure:**

The Maratha fighting force consisted of only 45,000 soldiers while Abadali had 60,000 soldiers with him. Marathas had a large number of women and slaves at their camp which were a liability to them in battle. They failed to maintain their line of communication and did not get supplies. When the Marathas were in short supply of everything, they were forced to fight on January 14, 1761. In fact they fought the battle when they did not have sufficient food to eat and no proper fodder for their horses for the last two months.

The geographical distance of Panipat from Deccan, the home of the Marathas acted as an impediment as far as replenishment of men and supply of material is concerned. The Peshwa failed to keep contact with Bhau and send him the required reinforcement and supplies. The situation further worsened in absence of any North Indian friend or ally of Maratha.

##### **3. Failures of the Maratha leadership:**

Bhau failed as a military strategist and lost three months at Panipat facing Abdali. The choice of location for camping of Maratha troops and lack of coordination between Maratha Generals were also important factors for their defeat at Panipat.

##### **4. Superior adversary:**

Abdali and his soldiers were definitely superior in arms, organization and fighting tactics. The superior military skills, planning and strategy adopted by the Afghans under the extraordinary generalship of Abdali decided the fate of the battle

#### **CONCLUSION**

The first phase of the second Anglo-Maratha war was found to come to an end with the treaty of Deogaon. Maratha raja of Berar was an important part of the treaty of Deogaon. Raghuji Bhonsle the second was the other party, with which the treaty was signed. The treaty of Surji-Arjun-Gaon is important to understand the relevance of settlement between British and Maratha chief Daulat Rao

Sindhia. This settlement was an important result of Lord Lake's campaign. The first phase of the Second Maratha war was associated with this treaty.

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