

Impact Factor : 3.452

ISSN : 2348-7143

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH FELLOWS ASSOCIATION

## RESEARCH JOURNEY

Multidisciplinary International E-Research Journal

PEER REFEREED & INDEXED JOURNAL

January - 2018

Special Issue - XXVI



# Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj : Life and Mission

Guest Editor : Prin. Dr. R. M. Kulkarni

- Principal, RNC Arts, JDB Commerce & NSC Science College, Nashik Road, (M.S.) India
- Zonal Secretary (Nashik Zone), Gokhale Education Society, Nashik

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This Journal is indexed in -

- UGC Approved Journal No. - 40705 & 44117
- Scientific Journal Impact Factor (SJIF)
- Cosmoc Impact Factor (CIF)
- Global Impact Factor (GIF)
- Universal Impact Factor (UIF)
- International Impact Factor Services (IIFS)
- Indian Citation Index (ICI)
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## Military System of Shivaji Maharaj

**Kudase Udhav Kalu**

M.S.G. College, Malegaon Camp, Dist. Nashik

### Introduction

Shivaji has been acclaimed as 'The Father of the Maratha Nation'. Besides being a great conqueror and a diplomat he was a successful administrator. According to Rawlison, "Like nearly all great warriors – Napoleon is a conspicuous example. Shivaji was also a great administrator, for the qualities which go to make a capable General are those which are required by the successful organizer and statesman."

In theory, Shivaji was an autocrat, like his contemporaries. He could do what he pleased. However, he was assisted by a council of eight ministers known as the Ashta Pradhan. It is absolutely misleading to say that Ashta Pradhan was like a Modern Cabinet.

Shivaji, the founder of Maratha Swaraj condemned the defeat of the Saranjami army of Muslim forces. His army's infantry and cavalry were two main divisions. Besides this, Shivaji was also handed over the hand rule and the strength of the camel was used to carry warehouse materials. Durg of Gadh was the instrument of his protection. He very much relied on the durg. Apart from this, he also set up an independent army for the protection of Swarajya.

### Army

Shivaji was a military genius and no wonder he took pains to put the army on an efficient footing. It was the practice of the Marathas to work half the year on their field and to spend the remaining half serving in the army. Shivaji introduced the system of keeping a regular standing army. During the rainy season, it was provided with quarters and the soldiers were given regular salaries for the whole year. Regular grades were fixed up.

### Cavalry

In the case of cavalry the unit was formed by 25 troopers. Over 25 troopers was placed one Havaladar. Over 5 Havaldars was placed one Jumledar and over Jumledars was placed one Hazari. Other higher ranks were the five hazaris and Sar-i-Naubat of cavalry or supreme commander for every 25 troopers. There was a water carrier and a ferrier. The cavalry was divided into two classes, the Bargirs and the Shiledars. The Bargirs were supplied with horses and arms by the state and shiledars had to find their own equipment.

### Infantry

The infantry was divided into regiments, brigades and divisions. The smallest unit was formed by 9 soldiers who were under a Naik. Over 5 Naiks was placed a Havaladar and over two or three Havaldars was placed a Jumledar. Over 10 Jumledars was placed a Hazari and over 7 Hazaris was placed a Sar-i-Naubat.





Both Hindus and Muslims were recruited in the army without any distinction. Soldiers were paid in cash and had full confidence in their leaders. Those soldiers who showed bravery were rewarded. Shivaji was able to attract a large number of persons from different parts of the country on account of his appreciation of works.

Forts played a very important role in the military organization. Garrisons of forts were carefully selected. Great care was taken to keep the troops disciplined. Every fort was placed under three officers of equal status, viz., the Havaladar the Sabnis and the Sar-i-Naubat.

### Elephants

It is certain that Shivaji had platoons of elephants as well as camels. His elephants numbered 1260 (source: sabhasad) but according to other sources, it was either 125 or 300. Camels numbered around 3000 or 1500.

### Artillery

According to Chitnis there were 200 guns kept ready for field service and the rest were placed in the forts. Each field gun had some elephants and a battalion of infantry attached to it. Artillery was not under the control of the Marathas themselves.

### Intelligence Unit

This was a very important part of Shivaji's military department. His dictum was included in the enemy nations and to inform the King. Shivaji won many spectacular victories in his life against adversaries who were mightier than him. Many house towns were looted in the enemy states. He discovered all the hidden treasures kept secret and he was able to get it done by his efficient and honest hedges.

Shivaji had Bahirji Naik as the head of the spies. Shivaji first looted Surat in 1664 A.D. before the Surat loot Bahirji Naik informed about the entire detail about the Surat City, gave information about the rich people in the city, their wealth estimates etc. Joseph T. Allins write about the performance of Shivaji's intelligence unit stating Shivaji did not have any talks about Surat city being robbed. Several days before the city was robbed he sent 200 soldiers dressed as fishermen, merchants etc. The soldiers retained all the information about the property before Shivaji came. Shivaji entered the city with his soldier and with help of information received from his soldier within a short span of time he looted the city and safely went away.

Afzal Khan halted at Wai during his invasion. At that time Nanaji Prabhu Muserkhorekar was appointed as the head of 5000 infantry to supervise them. Everyday he disguised himself as a fakir and collected information about the preparation for the army and the intent of the army of Afzal Khan. Shivaji looted many cities during his time and must have got the entire information from his spies. Many have stated that he was well-versed in finding the wealth and money hidden by the traders and merchants. Of course, Shivaji was getting information about this through his spies. It was looted by making perfect attack.

There is no information about the number of spies Shivaji had and the salaries they got. Sabasad has written about this, "as many cities were under the Mughals, they were supervised by four-five people who would disguise themselves. From this we come to know that Shivaji had spread his spies all through the enemy state and through them would regularly collect





information. Shivaji would pay a heavy amount to his spies for it, Shivaji would get proper information and expected success in his loots and invasion. Dr. Sen says, "Shivaji knew how to make new friends with money and like his wealth his friends were innumerable and they sent him information every hour."

## Navy

A Portuguese letter dated 06<sup>th</sup> August 1659 says, "a son of Shahaji, rebel against Adilshah has captured the areas near Bassein (Vasai) and Chaul. He has constructed some fighting vessels in the Bhiwandi, Kalyan, Panvel parts of the Bassein region. We are therefore forced to remain alert. We have ordered the Portuguese Captain not to allow these vessels to come out of the ports and see that they do not move out on the seas."

Shivaji and his people had inherited a great military tradition. However, the sea was a new element for them. It is not evident from history of Yadavas of Devgiri whether there was any attempt to build a naval power which ruled the waves. Shivaji is therefore, rightly hailed as the father of the Maratha Navy. The coastline of Konkan has many creeks, which offered excellent sites for Naval strongholds. Shivaji quite early in his career, realized the importance of a strong naval fleet to protect the coastline.

The fleet was necessary for the peace of his country, the safety of his subjects and the prosperity of his ports, which should not beat the mercy of other existing naval powers such as Siddhis, Dutch, English and the Portuguese. A strong Maratha Navy could ensure the safety of the Maratha merchant vessels which could freely navigate the sea and they would not be required to seek the permission of Goa or obtain Portuguese passports which were given on certain conditions. With the help of a strong Naval fleet, Shivaji could secure for his subjects the same rights and freedom on the seas and also share in the maritime trade, besides ensuring against the possibility of being starved by blockade on land. After visualizing the need Shivaji built a number of Naval forts – Vijaydurg, Suvarnadurg, Padmadurg, Jaigad, Sindhudurg etc. he also constructed Naval bases with docks for the construction and repair of armed and mercantile vessels such as Ratnagiri and Anjanwel besides building a merchant fleet for conducting trade with distant muskat and mocha.

The actual strength of Shivaji's fleet is not known. According to Sabhasad, Shivaji's naval fleet consisted of two squadrons, each consisting of two hundred ships of different class. According to Malharrao Chitnis these were four to five hundred ships. Although the Portuguese, English, Dutch records mention the number of Maratha ships on particular occasions they do not give the full strength of Shivaji's Navy. The Maratha Navy had different types of fighting ships: Gurabs, Galbats or Galivats, Pals and Majhuas. Nothing proves Shivaji's genius as a born statesman more clearly than his creation of a navy and Naval base. After gaining the towns of Kalyan and Bhiwandi, Shivaji in 1658 started building ships of his own. Shivaji's fleet consisted of Ghurabs and Galivats. The Ghurabs have rarely more than two masts, those of three are about 300 tons burden but the others are not more than 150 tons. The Galivats are large row-boats build like the gurabs but of smaller dimensions, the largest rarely exceeding seventy tons.

## Objectives

- 1) To study the vision of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.



- 2) To understand the Chhatrapati's leading policy.
- 3) To study importance of Management techniques, well structured administration and battle preparation of Chhatrapati Shivaji.
- 4) To study major part or elements/objects of Chhatrapat Shivaji's success vis. Naval force, forts, secret agency.

### Conclusion

Shivaji was a great conqueror and a diplomat. He was a successful administrator. His system of administration was better than the Mughal administration in several areas. He was not merely a daring soldier and successful military conqueror but also, an enlightened ruler of his people. Shivaji was readily accessible to all his subjects. He was a popular monarch. He kept a close watch on the administrative affairs of the state. All powers were concentrated on him but he ruled with the advice of his ministers. Common people regarded him with great devotion. They considered him as their greatest benefactor.

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