

# Peshwa Madhav Rao I

Shrimant Peshwa Madhavrao Bhat I was the 9th Peshwa of the Maratha Empire, who played a crucial role in reviving Maratha supremacy following the disastrous third battle of Panipat in 1761.

For his efforts, he is regarded as one of the greatest Peshwas of the Maratha Empire.

This article will give details about Peshwa Madhav Rao I within the context of the Civil Services Examination.

## Background of Peshwa Madhav Rao I

Peshwa Madhav Rao was the second son of Peshwa Nansahaheb, born on February 5, 1745. The Maratha Empire at the time governed much of western, central and northern India.

Peshwa Nansahaheb had expanded a robust system of governance to administer the vast empire and was looking forward to further expansion when it suffered a devastating defeat at the hands of Ahmad Shah Abdali at the third battle of Panipat in 1761. Peshwa Nansahaheb's eldest son and heir Vishwas Rao and cousin Sadashivrao Bhau lost their life during the battle. Peshwa Nansahaheb would pass away on June 23, 1761, in Pune

Upon his brother's death Madhav Rao, who was 16 years old at the time was made the next Peshwa of the Maratha Empire while his paternal uncle, Raghunathrao acted as regent.

## Reign of Peshwa Madhav Rao I.

Peshwa Madhav Rao I had inherited a Maratha Empire reeling from the after-effects of the disaster at Panipat. The treasury was nearly empty due to other war campaigns and extravagant spending. He ensured that unnecessary funding was cut down and financial discipline was upheld.

But his new assertiveness in state administration put him at odds with his uncle Raghunathrao. It came to a head when a campaign against Nizam Ali was undertaken in Karnataka in 1762. Raghunathrao abandoned the army midway and returned to Pune, while Peshwa Madhav Rao continued on.

Eventually, a treaty was signed with the Nizam and Madhavrao returned. Both Madhavrao and Raghunathrao had their preferences even over the Sardars (Generals). Madhavrao usually preferred the company of Gopalrao Patwardhan, Tryambakrao Mama Pethe, Nana Fadnavis and Ramshastri Prabhune; while Raghunathrao was dearer to Sakharambapu, Gulabrao and Gangoba Tatya.

On August 22, 1762, the hostility between Peshwa Madhav Rao and Raghunath Rao came out into the open when Raghunath Rao raised his own army against the Peshwa at Vadgaon Maval.

Ragunath Rao's army began raiding the countryside as a way of defying the Peshwa's rule. Madhav Rao in anger marched against his own uncle, but not wanting to fight him due to their blood relations he proposed a treaty. Raghunath Rao seemingly accepted only to deceive the young Peshwa, attacking his camp and holding him hostage on November 1762.

Raghunath Rao began to make all the critical decisions about governance and even decided to ally with the Nizam. This proved to be a mistake as the Nizam took advantage of the infighting between the Marathas and began to encroach upon Maratha territories.

As time slipped by, Peshwa Madhav Rao pointed out the gravity of the situation to his uncle. Eventually, on March 7, 1763, the Peshwas, once again under Madhavrao's leadership, decided to attack Aurangabad to crush Nizam. After months of chasing, Peshwas faced Nizam's army on August 10, 1763, in the Battle of Rakshasbhuvan near Aurangabad Nizam's army suffered huge losses in this war and Nizam retreated.

The young Peshwa was restored to his office and gave due credence to Raghunath Rao's authority in order to pacify him. In the early 1760s, Peshwa Madhav Rao fought various wars against Hyder Ali of Mysore. Although defeated multiple times Hyder Ali would escape on multiple occasions.

In 1767 he organized the 3rd expedition against Hyder Ali and inflicted defeats on Hyder Ali in the battles of Sira and Madgiri and made a surprise discovery of Queen Virammaji the last ruler of the Keladi Nayaka Kingdom and her son who were kept in confinement in the fort of Madgiri by Hyder Ali. They were rescued by Madhavrao I and were sent to Pune for protection.

In January 1771, Hyder Ali's army was subdued at Balapur. Peshwa Madhav Rao then proceeded through Mysore, taking one district after another. In June 1772, the Maratha army reached Srirangapatnam, which was Hyder Ali's capital. At this point, Hyder Ali finally sued for peace. He ceded Kolar, Bangalore, Ouskota, Balapur, Mudgiri, and Gurukonda to the Marathas and 3,600,000 rupees as a war indemnity, along with an annual tribute of 1,400,000 rupees per annum.

## Peshwa Madhav Rao's northern expedition

Following the victory at Panipat Abdali had left Najib ud Daullah to rule in his absence, forcing the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam, to take the protection Shuja ud Daullah, the Nawab of Awadh. When Awadh fell to the British after the battle of Buxar in 1764, the emperor was placed under the protection of the East India Company.

Suraj Mal, the Jat king, tried to take over Delhi but was killed in the fight with Najib. But the war between the Jats and the Rohillas continued through their respective sons.

Peshwa Madhav Rao wanted vengeance for Panipat and sent an army under the command of Visaji Krishna Baniwala, assisted by Tukoji Holkar and Mahadji Scindia in 1769. The Maratha army swept across the north asserting their authority over the Rajputs and the Jats then they turned their attention towards Rohilkhand. Plundering the land they defeated the Rohillas battle after battle, this prompted Shah Alam to throw in his lot with the Marathas. The new Rohilla chief, a son of Najib ud Daullah - Zabita Khan- was forced to flee under the Maratha onslaught and only returned when he had paid the ransom demanded by the Maratha army in return for lost territory.

## Death and Legacy of Peshwa Madhav Rao I

Peshwa Madhav Rao I had to cut short his campaign against Hyder Ali when he contracted tuberculosis in 1770. He had to return to Pune on account of his ill health. He underwent treatment for his health but it worsened eventually.

On 18 November 1772, Peshwa Madhavrao I died at the temple premises of Chintamani, Theur. Thousands of citizens visited the site and paid their last respects. Madhavrao was cremated on the banks of the river which was about half a mile from the temple. A small memorial carved out of stone rests today at the location of his passing.

Along with being the symbol of equanimity, he was an efficient administrator and a brave general. After the debacle of Panipat, he rekindled the Maratha spirit by his unwavering leadership. He resurrected a flagging economy and replenished the kingdom's treasury through various expeditions.

He was known to be a benevolent Peshwa who cared for his subjects. He ensured every man in his kingdom was heard and proper justice was meted out to all and brought radical revolutions in the Maratha Empire in terms of efficiency and honesty. Corrupt and lethargic officials were flogged in the courtyard; this brought about the much-required discipline in the administration.

To this day Peshwa Madhav Rao I is credited with reviving the fortunes of the Maratha Empire when it was near collapse.

