



13. Life of the People in Maharashtra

The Hindawi *Swaraj* formed by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was a State for the people, founded with the noble intention of the welfare of common people, removal of oppression and the protection of Maharashtra *Dharma*. In the period after Shivaji Maharaj, Maratha power spread to all parts of India. It lasted for about 150 years.

We gathered information about the Maratha administration in the last few chapters. In this chapter, we shall study the social conditions and life of the people in that period.

Social conditions : Agriculture and occupations based on agriculture were the major sources of production at the village level. The *Patil* was responsible for the protection of the village and the *Kulkarni* handled the revenue. The *Patil* received land as *inam* for his work as a *Patil*. He also received a part of the village revenue. The *balutedars* were paid in kind (in the form of objects, foodgrains, etc.) for the work they did for the village people. The village occupations were divided into *kali* and *pandhari*. Peasants worked in their fields in the *kali* (land, earth or soil) and others, in *pandhari* – within the village precincts. It was considered important to conduct the affairs of the village with mutual understanding. Joint family system was prevalent.



Do you know ?

There were twelve *balutedars* such as the blacksmith, carpenter, potter, goldsmith, etc. in a village. They worked for the village people.

Customs and traditions : Child marriages were prevalent. It was acceptable to have many wives. There are a few examples of widow marriages in this period. To perform the last rites, burning, burial and immersion methods were used as per tradition. *Muhurta*, or auspicious occasions were sought for every little thing, and also to open battles. People believed in dreams and omens. '*Anushthans*' were performed to avoid the wrath of gods and planets. Charitable deeds were also done for the same purpose. People believed in astrology. There was a general lack of a scientific attitude and offerings to god (*navas*) were considered more important than medical treatment.

Standard of living : A majority of people lived in villages. The villages were mostly self-sufficient. Only salt had to be imported from other places. The needs of farmers were limited. They grew jowar, bajra, wheat, *ragi* (*nachani*), maize, rice and other grains in their fields. The daily diet consisted of *bhakari*, onion, chutney and an accompaniment. Barter system was used for everyday transactions. Village houses were simple mud and brick constructions. *Wadas* with one or two storeys were seen in cities. Rice, dal, chapatis, vegetables, salads, milk and *dahi* products were mainly included in the rich people's diet. Men wore a *dhoti*, *kurta*, *angarakha* and *mundase*. Women wore nine-yard sarees and blouses.

Festivals : People celebrated Gudhi Padwa, Nagpanchmi, Bail-pola, Dasara, Diwali, Makarsankrant, Holi, Eid and other festivals. In the *Peshwa* period, Ganeshotsava was celebrated in many homes. The *Peshwa* himself being a

devotee of Ganesha, these celebrations acquired importance. Every year these celebrations lasted from Bhadrapad Chaturthi up to Anant Chaturdashi.

Dasara being considered as one of the three and a half most auspicious occasions, many new things were started on this day. Weapons were offered *puja*, and it was customary to cross the boundaries ceremoniously (*seemollanghana*) and distribute 'apta' leaves on Dasara. The Marathas launched their campaigns after Dasara. During Diwali, Balipratipada and Bhau-beej celebrations had special importance. In most of the villages, fairs were held. Wrestling bouts were a common feature of the fairs, (*jatras*). *Gudhis* were raised to celebrate Gudhi Padwa. Celebrations included entertainment programmes like songs and dances. *Tamasha* was a popular form of entertainment.



Bailpola

Education : *Pathshalas* and *madarasas* were the institutes that imparted education. Reading, writing and arithmetic was taught at home. The *modi* script was used in most transactions.

Travels and communication : Transport was carried out by roads, through *ghats* and across bridges on rivers. Cloth, foodgrains, groceries were transported by loading them on the backs of bullocks. Small boats were used in rivers. Messengers and camel riders carried letters to and fro.



Mallakhamb

Sports : Various sports were popular in this period. They were a means of entertainment. Wrestling and martial arts were very popular. *Mallakhamb*, *dand*, *lathi*, *dandpatta*, *bothati* were practised. *Hututu*, *kho-kho*, *atyapatya* were the popular outdoor games and chess, *ganjifa*, dice were popular indoor games.

Religion and conduct : The two major religions seen in this period were Hindu and Muslim. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had a liberal religious policy. The general understanding was that everyone should follow their own religion and should not impose it on others. The government gave grants to *pathshalas*, temples, *madarasas* and mosques. Followers of both religions took part in the celebration of each other's festivals. Varkari, Mahanubhav, Datta, Nath and Ramdasi *panths* were prevalent.

Women's life : Women's life in those days was full of hardships. Their world was confined to the house of first their father, and then their husband. Their education was neglected. Only a few exceptional women had achieved any progress in literacy, administration and battle skills. They include Veermata Jijabai, Maharani Yesubai, Maharani Tarabai,

Umabai Dabhade, Gopikabai, Punyashlok Ahilyabai. Customs like child marriage, unequal marriage, widowhood, *keshwapan*, *sati*, polygamy had imposed harsh restrictions on the way women lived.

The period from 1630 CE to 1810 CE is broadly defined as Maratheshahi. Let us review the art and architecture of this period in brief.

Sculpture : We find references to restoration of Kasba Ganapati Mandir, building of the Lal Mahal, construction on Rajgad and Raigad, building of sea forts, etc. that are related to architecture. Hiroji Indulkar was a famous architect of that period.

While setting up a village, the usual pattern was : roads cutting one another at right angles, stone construction along the sides and extensive *ghats* (steps) along the river bank. During the Peshwa period, a drinking water supply system was built like the one at Ahmadnagar and Bijapur. The Peshwas built underground pipes, small dams, gardens and courts, tanks, fountains, etc. The Mastani Talav at Diveghat, Hadapsar near Pune city is worth a mention in this regard.

Shaniwarwada and Vishrambagwada in Pune, Sarkarwada in Nashik, Raghunathrao Peshwa's *wada* at Kopargaon, the *wadas* of the Satara Chhatrapati, as also the old *wadas* at Wai, Menvali, Toke, Shrigonde, Pandharpur are symbols of the medieval *wada* culture.

Baked as well as unbaked bricks were used to build the *wadas*. Wooden columns, rafts, boards, dressed stones, arches, finely prepared lime, round tiles for the roof, mud and bamboo were all used in the construction. The *wadas* were decorated with sketches, paintings, wooden sculptures and mirrors.

Temples : The temples of this period are build in the Hemadpanti style of the

Yadav period. The *shikhar* of the Ambabai temple at Kolhapur, the temples on the Jotiba hill, Shambhu Mahadev temple at Shikhar-Shinganapur, Ghrishneshwar temple at Verul are excellent specimens of sculpture. The Bhavanidevi temple on Pratapgad and the Saptkoteswar temple at Goa were built by Shivaji Maharaj. Other temples of the Peshwa period are



Ghrishneshwar Temple

the Kalaram temple at Nashik, the Shiva temple at Trimbakeswar, the Shiva temples at Kaygaon and Toke on the confluence of the Godavari and Pravara, and the Mohiniraj temple at Newase.

Ghat : Stone *ghats* built on a river or at the confluence of rivers are characteristic of Maratheshahi. The most remarkable specimen of a *ghat* is the one at Toke, Pravara Sangam on the confluence of the Godavari and Pravara. In a flight of steps, there would be one wide step at regular intervals. This would lend beauty to the entire *ghat* construction. Strong bastions were built at regular intervals so as to prevent damage due to water currents.

Painting : The paintings on the walls of Shaniwarwada are the important ones of the Peshwa period. Ragho, Tanaji, Anuprao, Shivram, Mankoji are some of the important painters of this period. The painter Gangaram Tambat was famous at the time of Sawai Madhavrao Peshwa.

The Peshwas encouraged painting. *Wadas* in the Pune, Satara, Menvali, Nashik, Chandwad and Nipani regions during the Peshwa period had paintings on their walls. Temples at Pandeshwar, Morgaon, Pal, Benwadi, Pashan near Pune have paintings on the walls. The themes of those paintings were Dashavatara, Ganapati, Shankar, Rampanchayatana, mythological stories, Ramayana, Mahabharata, festivals and so on. At Jamod in Vidarbha, Jin Charitra paintings adorned the Jain temple. Illustrations in the *pothis*, minatures, portraits, scenes, etc. were also painted.

Sculpture : Important specimens include the sculpture of the meeting between Mallamma Desai and Shivaji Maharaj at the time of his Karnataka campaign, the sculpture at Bhuleshwar temple including sculptures of individuals and animals (e.g., elephant, peacock, monkey), the sculptures on the Toke temple and the idols within, the Trishund Ganapati temple in Pune, the memorial to Punyashlok Ahilyabai in

Madhya Pradesh, the sculptures at the Mohiniraj temple at Newase.

Metal idols : The Peshwas had specially commissioned the metal idols of Parvati and Ganapati in the Parvati temple for the purpose of *Puja*. Wooden sculptures were also seen.

Literature : Important forms of literature include the compositions of the Sants, mythological narratives, '*teeka*' literature, *owi*, *abhanga*, treatises, narrative poems, biographies, *aaratis* of deities, *powadas*, *bakhars*, historical letters, etc.

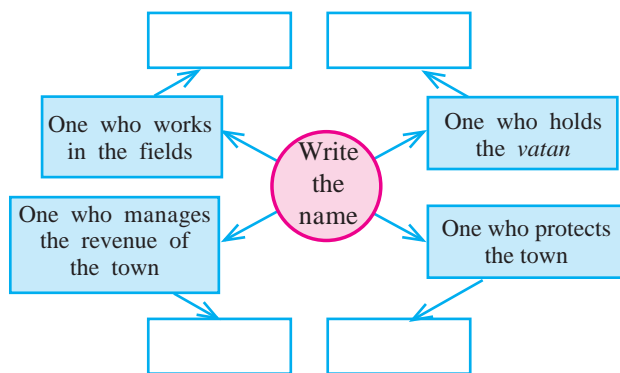
Drama : At Tanjavur in the South, Marathi plays has emerged near the end of the seventeenth century. Sarfoji Raje encouraged this art. Songs, music and dance were prominent parts of these plays.

So far we reviewed the medieval period of history and the rise and expansion of the Maratha power. Next year, we shall study the modern period.



Exercise

1. Complete the chart.



- Which undesirable customs are prevalent in today's society? Suggest measures for their eradication.
- Make a detailed note about the festivals celebrated in your area.
- Use the following points to compare life in the era of Shivaji Maharaj and today's life.

Sr. No.	Point	At the time of Shivaji Maharaj	Today
1.	Transactions	.....	.....
2.	Houses	.....	Permanent, well - constructed cement-concrete multi-storeyed houses
3.	Transportation	.....	Bus, railway, aeroplanes
4.	Entertainment	.....	.....
5.	Script	.....	.....

Activity

Gather information about the capable women of our country and read it aloud in your class, e.g. information on P.V. Sindhu, Sakshi Malik.

