

1. Maharashtra before Shivaji

Shivaji Maharaj was a great man. We celebrate his birth anniversary with great pomp and reverence. It is a happy day for you children. You sing songs and ‘powadas’ in his honour. You garland his picture and say ‘Shivaji Maharaj Ki Jai’. Who was this Shivaji Maharaj? What was the great work he did that we celebrate his birthday every year?

The time in which Shivaji Maharaj lived was that of the medieval period. In those days, monarchy or the rule of kings prevailed everywhere. Many of the kings pursued their own pleasures and enjoyments instead of the welfare of their subjects. But even in those days, there were some kings who looked after the welfare of their subjects. The Moghul Emperor Akbar in the North and Emperor Krishnadevraya of Vijaynagar in the South are famous in history for their benevolent rule. Likewise, Shivaji Maharaj also commands great respect even today.

Shivaji Maharaj established Swaraj in Maharashtra. Swaraj means self-government, our own rule. For about four hundred years before Shivaji Maharaj, Maharashtra was not free. A large portion of it was under the rule of the Nizamshah of Ahmadnagar and the Adilshah of Bijapur. These two Sultans had divided Maharashtra among themselves. They were not liberal in their outlook. They oppressed the people over whom they ruled. They were also sworn enemies of each other. They constantly fought against each other with the result that

the people suffered and were harassed. The people could not get enough to eat, nor could they celebrate their festivals or worship their gods openly and freely. They were not sure of safety even in their own homes. There was injustice everywhere. In Maharashtra, there were many Watandars like Deshmukhs and Deshpandes who owned Jagirs. They loved only their Jagirs and not their country. The constant fighting among them brought great misery to the people. There was misrule everywhere. People were tired of this oppression and were very unhappy.

Shivaji Maharaj saw all this. He undertook the noble task of establishing Swaraj in Maharashtra which would bring happiness to the people. He first brought to book the Watandars who fought among themselves. He then used them in his plan to establish Swaraj. He fought against the Powers that oppressed the people, and defeated them. He established ‘Hindavi Swaraj’ based on justice, fair play and equal treatment to people of all castes and religions. Shivaji Maharaj made no distinction between Hindus and Muslims. He honoured the saints of all religions. We draw inspiration from these noble deeds of Maharaj.

During a period of about three to four hundred years before Shivaji Maharaj, many saints were born in Maharashtra. Their work helped Shivaji Maharaj in his successful effort of establishing Swaraj. We shall see in the next chapter, what these saints did.

1. Fill in the blanks choosing the correct option.

- (a) The time in which Shivaji Maharaj lived was that of the period.
(ancient, medieval, modern)
- (b) Shivaji Maharaj established Swaraj in
(Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh)

2. Match the pairs.

‘A’

- (a) Emperor of Vijaynagar
(b) Sultan of Ahmadnagar
(c) Sultan of Bijapur

‘B’

- (1) Nizamshah
(2) Adilshah
(3) Krishnadevraya
(4) Emperor Akbar

3. Write the answer in one sentence.

- (a) Name the kings who looked after the welfare of their subjects.
- (b) What noble task did Shivaji Maharaj undertake ?
- (c) Who did Shivaji Maharaj fight against ?

4. Find the odd-man-out.

- (a) Swaraj, slavery, freedom
(b) People, subjects, king

Activity

- (a) Celebrate Shivajayanti in your class.
(b) Present historical songs and ‘Powadas’ in the cultural programmes held in your school.

