

Unit-I MARATHA MILITARY SYSTEM

1. Maratha Military system under the Shivaji:

Shivaji's Administration:

Shivaji has been called the 'father of the Maratha nation.' Besides being a great conqueror and a diplomat, he was a successful administrator.

Shivaji's Administration 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 his all 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. The common people regarded him with great devotion. They considered him as their greatest benefactor.

General features of Shivaji's administration

1. He employed members of all castes and tribes to maintain balance among them.
2. He assigned separate responsibilities to the ministers and each of them was made responsible for his work to him.
3. He made no office hereditary.
4. In general he did not assign jagirs to his civil and military officers.
5. He gave special attention towards the administration of the forts.
6. In matters of administration, he gave superior position to his civil officers as compared to military officers.
7. He established Ryotwari system in revenue administration. The state kept direct contact with the farmers.

Shivaji took special care to make his administrative system responsive to the needs of the people. In the words of Dr. Ishwari Prasad, "The institutions which he established were an improvement upon the existing order and were well adapted to the well-being of his subjects."

Central Administration:

He had a council of ministers (Asht Pradhari) to advise him on the matters of the state but he was not bound by it. He could appoint or dismiss them. This appointment was subject to their efficiency. The Peshwa was the first among ministers. The word Peshwa stands for leader or senior one.

Shivaji's Asht Pradhan (Council of Eight Ministers):

Excepting the Senapati, all other ministers were Brahmans.

All excepting the Pandit Rao and Nyayadish were expected to command the army whenever needed.

Provincial administration:

Shivaji divided his kingdom into four provinces. Each province was under the head called Mamlatdar or Viceroy. Each province was divided into several districts and villages. The village was an organised institution.

The chief of the village was called Deshpande or Patel. The head used to run the affairs of the village with the help of the Village Panchayat.

Like the centre, there was a committee or council of eight ministers with Sar-i- 'Karkun' or the 'prantpati' (Head of the province)

Revenue system:

Important features were:

- (1) Land in every village was measured and the produce was roughly assessed.
- (2) On the basis of assessment, the cultivators were asked to pay 40 per cent of their produce as land revenue.
- (3) The Ryotwari system was introduced in which the revenue was directly collected from the farmers.
- (4) Wherever possible, Shivaji abolished the jagirdari system.
- (5) The farmers had the option to pay land revenue in cash or kind.
- (6) The peasants could pay the revenue in installments.
- (7) The accounts of the revenue officers began to be thoroughly checked.
- (8) In the event of famine or natural calamity, the state offered loans to the peasants.
- (9) Shivaji introduced the collection of two taxes called the Chauth and 'Sardeshmukhi'.

'Chauth' and 'Sardeshmukhi':

Historians differ as to the exact nature of these two taxes levied by Shivaji. According to Ranade, 'Chauth' was not merely a military contribution without any moral or legal obligation but a payment in lieu of protection against the invasion of a third power and he compares it with Wellesley's

Subsidiary Alliance System. Sardesai holds that it was a tribute exacted from hostile or conquered territories.

Chauth was only a means of buying off one robber and not a subsidiary system for the maintenance of peace and order against all enemies. Thus 'Chauth' was a military contribution paid toward off any attack of the Marhatas. It was, in theory, $\frac{1}{4}$ of revenues of the district invaded but in practice it was sometimes much more than that. Sardeshmukhi was an additional tax of 10% which Shivaji claimed as the hereditary Sardeshmukhi or overlord of Maharashtra.

Judicial administration:

Judicial administrative system was rather simple, crude and primitive. The highest court was 'Hazar Majils' or the court of the king. The day-to-day administration was carried on by the village Panchayats and the village 'Patel' decided criminal case.

Shivaji's army administration:

Shivaji's army organisation was very efficient. His army was very patriotic, well trained, efficient and extremely mobile.

Shivaji introduced the following reforms in the army:

1. Regular army:

He maintained a regular army. In the traditional military organisation, the soldiers served army for six months and thereafter, they worked in their fields. Now the soldiers were to serve around the year.

2. Cash payment:

He paid the soldiers in cash.

3. Patriotism:

He inspired the soldiers with patriotism.

4. Merit:

He recruited the soldiers on merit.

5. Branding of horses:

He introduced the system of branding the horses and keeping the identification of the soldiers.

6. Discipline:

He enforced strict discipline.

7. Guerilla warfare:

He trained his soldiers in the guerilla warfare.

The guerilla warfare was very suitable in the geographical location of most territories in Maharashtra. He believed in the surprise attacks on the enemy, killed or looted it and disappeared into the forest.

8. Forts:

He paid particular attention to the maintenance of forts. Old forts were repaired and new forts built. The forts also served as military cantonments. About the sanctity of forts it is said that the "people were taught to regard them as their mother." There were about 280 forts. The inhabitants of the surrounding villages took protection in these forts.

The families of the deceased soldiers were looked after carefully.

9. Muslim soldiers:

Shivaji had about seven hundred Muslim soldiers.

Divisions in the army:

Army had six divisions namely, cavalry, infantry, camel battalions, elephant battalions, artillery and navy.

1. The cavalry:

The cavalry formed the main part of the army. Its number was 40,000. There were two categories of horsemen:

(i) Bargis:

They were paid from the state exchange.

(ii) Silhadars:

They were casual soldiers and they numbered about 50,000.

Discipline in the army:

Shivaji was very strict in maintaining discipline in the army. To kill or torture ladies and children, to loot the Brahmans, to spoil cultivation etc. were punishable offences even during the course of war. Elaborate rules for the maintenance of discipline were rigorously enforced. No soldier was allowed to take his wife in the battlefield.

Liberal Religious policy:

Shivaji was a cultured and a tolerant Hindu ruler. He proclaimed to be the protector of the Hindus, the Brahmans and the cows. He showed respect to religious texts of all religions. He did not destroy a single mosque. He protected Muslim ladies and children even during the course of war.

He gave financial help to Muslim scholars and saints. He employed Muslims in civil and military departments. When Aurangzeb issued a fresh order reimposing the jizya on all the Hindu population, it was an open challenge as much to Shivaji as to many Rajput chiefs.

Shivaji wrote a strong letter of protest to Aurangzeb. He wrote "God is the Lord of all men and not of the Muhammadans only. Islam and Hinduism are only different pigments used by the Divine Painter to picture the human species." At the same time Shivaji was never actuated by a hatred of the Muslims. He respected the personal honour of a Muslim. Maratha Administration

The Maratha administration can be studied under three heads- Central Administration; Revenue Administration; and Military Administration. Maratha's system of administration was largely borrowed from the administrative practices of the Deccan states.

Maratha State appointed Hindus on high post and made Marathi as an official language instead of Persian. They prepare their own state craft dictionary i.e. 'Raja Vyakaran Kosh' for official use. The Maratha administration can be studied under three heads- Central Administration; Revenue Administration; and Military Administration.

Central Administration

It was founded by Shivaji for the sound system of administration which was greatly inspired from the Deccan style of administration. Most of the administrative reforms were inspired from Malik Amber reforms in Ahmednagar.

The King was the supreme head of state who was assisted by a group of eight ministers known as the 'Ashtapradhan'.

The Asthapradhan

Peshwa or the Chief Minister- He looked after general administration.

Amatya or Majumdar- Accountant general, he later became revenue and finance minister.

Sachiv or Surunavis- Also called Chitnis; he looked after the Royal correspondence.

Sumant or Dabir- Foreign affairs and the master of Royal ceremonies.

Senapati or Sari-i-Naubat- Military commander. He looked after the recruitment, training and discipline of army.

Mantri or Waqia Navis- Personal safety of the king, he looked after the intelligence, post and household affairs.

Nyayadhish- Administration of Justice

Punditrao- Looking after charitable and religious affairs of the state. He worked for the moral upliftment of the people.

Apart from the departmental duties, three of the ministers- Peshwas, Sachiv and the Mantri were also given incharge of extensive provinces.

All ministers, except the Panditrao and the Nyayadhish, had to serve in a war whenever necessary.

Minister was assisted by a staff of eight clerks

Diwan – secretary

Mujumdar – auditor and accountant

Fadnis – deputy auditor

Sabnis or Daftardar – office incharge

Karkhanis – commissary

Chitins – correspondence clerk

Jamdar – treasurer

Potnis – cashier

Shivaji divided entire territory into three provinces, each under a viceroy. He further divided the provinces into Prants then Pargana and Tarafs. The lowest unit was the village which was headed by its headman or Patel.

Revenue Administration

Shivaji abolished the Jagirdari System and replaced with Ryotwari System, and changes in the position of hereditary revenue officials which was popularly known as Deshmukhs, Deshpande, Patils and Kulkarnis.

Shivaji strictly supervised the Mirasdars who had hereditary rights in land.

The revenue system was patterned on the Kathi system of Malik Amber. According to this system, every piece of land was measured by Rod or Kathi.

Chauth and Sardeshmukhi were other sources of income: Chauth was amounted to 1/4th of the standard which was paid to Marathas as a safeguard against Shivaji's forces plundering or raiding Non-Maratha territories. Sardeshmukhi was an additional levy of 10 percent demanded from areas outside from the kingdom.

Military Administration

Shivaji organised a disciplined and efficient army. The ordinary soldiers were paid in cash, but big chief and military commander were paid through jagir grants (Saranjam or Mokasa).

The army consists of Infantry i.e. Mavali foot soldiers; Cavalry i.e. Horse riders and equipment holders; Navy.

Military System under the shivaji

Sar-i-Naubat (Senapati)- Incharge of army

Qiladars- Officers of Forts

Nayak- Head of the member unit of infantry

Havaldar- Head of five Nayaks

Jumladar- Head of five Nayaks

Ghuraw- Boats laden with guns

Gallivat- Rowing boats 40-50 rowers

Paik- Foot Soldiers

The army was effective instrument of policies of Marathas State where rapidity of movement was the most important factors. Only in the rainy season, the army get rested otherwise rest of the year was engaged in expeditions.

Conclusion

Maratha's system of administration was largely borrowed from the administrative practices of the Deccan states. Hence, the Marathas had important positions among administrative and military system in the contemporary kingdoms especially Ahmednagar and Bijapur.

MARATHA MILITARY SYSTEM SHIVAJI MAKES A BEGINNING;

He started operations with a small force attached to his father's jahgeir which probably needed a few officers. But as soon as this force was increased by the addition of Sambhaji Mohite's cavalry a Sarnobai or commeder-in chief was appointed. By 1659 Shivaji was in a position to bring ten thousand cavalry and ten thousand infantry into the field. Strength of the regular cavalry compared to that of the Silhedra was increased. The Silhedras were placed under the jurisdiction of the regular cavalry. This contributed to greater discipline in Shivaji's army. He recognised early the supreme need of unity of command in the battle-field and this, he attained by establishing a regular cadre of officers both for the infantry and for the cavalry.

PAY AND ALLOWANCES; The infantry officers were not so well paid as their colleagues in the cavalry. The Bijapur officers obtained hereditary Jahgirs in lieu of pay. Shivaji did not favour the Jahgir system nor did he approve of hereditary appointments. Shivaji's men and officers were paid either in cash from the central treasury or by *varat* or assignments on the provincial revenue. Shivaji tried his utmost to undo the evils of feudalism.

DISCIPLINE IN THE ARMY; Shivaji wanted to introduce strict discipline in his army. His success in this direction was far from complete. For he had to fight against tradition and environment. None the less he deserves credit for his attempt. He had down that the gains of war belonged to the state and not to the army. **BAGGAGE AND EQUIPMENT** On their march. The Maratha army of Shivaji's days was not encumbered with much baggage or equipment. Their arms were of the simplest and most primitive kind. Field artillery they had none. In their saddle bag they carried with ease the scanty provision on which they and their mounts could subsist for days.

INFANTRY AND CAVALRY; During Shivaji's time. The infantry exceeded the number of the cavalry. A cavalry trooper was necessarily more expensive. He needed a good horse. Better equipment and therefore a higher salary. Shivaji's military operations were often confined to hilly regions where

horses would be of little or no use. He frequently led his men through unfrequented mountain tracks where only the infantry could go. The infantry continued to maintain its majority in the Maratha army even after Shivaji's death.

FORTS: Shivaji's name has been associated with almost all the old forts of his country. He had built new ones and the hills of Deccan offered him excellent sites for them. Not a pass was left undefended, not a peak was left unfortified. The whole country had been secured by a net work of forts—sinhgad, purandar, vijragad, Sajjangad, Raigad, etc. Shivaji was famous for his forts and observation posts. The military architecture of the Marathas had not attained a high standard in Shivaji's time, and he does not seem to have made any attempt to improve it.

DESCRIPTION OF THE FORTS:

Shivaji's forts were defended by a stone wall. Besides the barracks of men and officers, every fort was provided with a Darukhana or a powder house, an Ambarkhana or granary and store room for oil and ghee. Either a tank or well yielded sufficient drinking water. In every fort there were officers of the same status and conjoint authority. For everything, even of the least importance touching the fort, they had to consult one another.

In times of danger a fort was reinforced with men. Provision and stores. These men were armed with swords and spears, bows and arrows, matchlocks and muskets. Against their assailants they also used rockets. In artillery, Shivaji's forces must have been very poor, for he had to depend entirely upon the European merchants for his guns and ammunition and the cannons he purchased from the French and Portuguese were certainly not of the best type. But while he was weak in firearms, his enemies were not better equipped, and the garrison could often repulse an attack by rolling down huge pieces of rock as their assailants laboriously climbed up the hillside.

SHIVAJI AS A GUERRILLA LEADER:

Shivaji's leadership qualities were great. It was due to his leadership that he collected few people and started his military career. He had not inherited any empire or weaponry. He started off everything of his own like any irregular war leader. Shivaji organized his small band of soldiers. His resources were limited against mighty forces of the Mughals.

Shivaji's great asset was popular support due to political cause which encouraged him to wage his war. Mughal harassment, forceful conversion and heavy taxation on Hindus had disturbed Hindu community at large. After the emergence of Shivaji as leader, these people fully supported Shivaji and helped him to carry out his struggle. The terrain condition also favoured Shivaji. The mountainous country made it possible for the Marathas to adopt guerilla tactics successfully. The broken ranges of hills provided the Marathas "readymade and easily defensible rock forts." The Deccan land is more suitable for guerilla form of war than the regular type of war. Since Shivaji's army was smaller and had limited resources, the best course of their struggle was guerilla warfare. Shivaji trained his men for hit and run tactics which proved very successful. Deceptive tactics for attack employed by Shivaji against Mughals provided success after success to Shivaji and boosted the morale of Marathas while demoralising the Mughal soldiers. Shivaji's strategy was to harass the enemy and create chaos and confusion in the enemy camps to demoralise the enemy soldiers and enemy leadership. He used to achieve the objective through unexpected military moves, shock

tactics, hit and run and other deceptive techniques successfully. Surprise, mobility, speed and deception were the other features of Shivaji's army which is considered a must for successful guerilla army. Maratha guerillas were able to cut of enemy's supply line and put fire near enemy's camp to harrass the enemy's soldiers. Advantage was always with Shivaji because of short-cut road approaches,defensible hills and local areas were well-known to Maratha guerillas while Mughals were not so familiar with the terrain conditions.

Maratha guerillas were able to watch enemy movement,direction and distance well in advance,and accordingly they used to formulate their strategy with the help of mobile cavalry to sabotage enemy plans.Their forts proved as 'eyes' and 'ears' for observing the enemy.Aurangzeb rightly called him a 'mountain rat'.

Topic 2. MARATHA NAVY- ROLE OF KANHOJI ANGRE

Kanhoji Angre: India's first naval commander,

Not since the British Empire, built on maritime dominance, ended in the mid-20th century, have maritime affairs dictated world politics as they do today. Even in our digital age, when trade happens instantaneously and face-to-face communication occurs at vast distances, seaborne piracy, maritime security and debates over regional supremacy once again dominate the dialogue between nations. For India, with its 7,517 kilometers of vulnerable coastline, this is a particularly urgent issue.

India's great empires used the sea for trade and prosperity; rarely have they looked to the sea for military or commercial might; of the major forces that have held sway over the subcontinent, only the Cholas and the later colonial powers can be regarded as true maritime empires. Yet in the emergent period of European colonialism, beginning in the late 17th and early 18th Centuries, a single, semi-autonomous figure emerged along the Konkan coast as the first indigenous defender of local sovereignty over coastal waters: a man called Kanhoji Angre.

The first important naval figure in modern India, Angre managed to maintain an unquestionable hold over a heavily disputed stretch of coastline throughout the early decades of the 18th century. At its peak in 1729, Angre's Maratha fleet held a mere 80 ships, many of them little more than overgrown fishing boats engineered by the local *kolis* (fisher folk) who populated his domain. Yet with the combination of that modest fleet and an unsurpassed strategic mind, Angre established a fearsome authority in the name of the Maratha Emperors over a vast swath of India's west coast. The competition was fierce and came from some of the greatest powers of the day – the Portuguese, the British, and the Mughals in the form of their coastal vassals, the Siddis.

Though often classified as a pirate by frustrated European powers vying for total mercantile control over trade routes into and out of India's west coast, Angre was in fact a semi-autonomous, though steadfast, vassal of the Maratha crown. The latter used his great tactical genius to establish late-Medieval India's only local power along the coast.

At the time that Angre took his position as the head of the Maratha Navy in 1698, the Konkan was a patchwork of competing forces at the forgotten fringe of the Subcontinent. Over the *Ghats* on the Deccan plateau, the Marathas faced off against the Mughals, two decidedly continental powers who

wasted little time and energy on the sea. On the coast, the Muslim Siddis held a handful of important forts in the name of their Mughal overlords.

The Portuguese remained the largest mercantile and colonial force, based in Goa and Bassein (present-day Vasai). The British – comparative newcomers to the region – had begun the centuries-long process of transforming the incidental island fort of Bombay into one of the world’s great centers of trade. And just offshore, pirates from the Gulf, Europe and the Malabar Coast marauded the open waters of the Arabian Sea, active threats to free commerce. From his base at Kolaba, Angre established his own semi-independent region. “The people and the noblemen of the Konkan recognized no other master than Kanhoji Angre,” says Marathi novelist and historian Manohar Malgonkar in his 1981 *Kanhoji*.

Though Angre neither set foot in Bombay, nor had any apparent interest in international trade, he nevertheless exerted a lasting influence on commerce in the region, antagonizing the European powers, and insisting on the Maratha Empire’s rights to taxation and sovereignty in its own fairly conquered land. Angre’s extraordinary success did not guarantee a long legacy (his navy was destroyed within 20 years of his death in July 1729), but in the eyes of some historians, it has made him among the first “champion[s] of Indian resistance to European Imperialism” (Patricia Risso, ‘Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Piracy’).

Angre’s family hailed from the inland village of Angarwadi, near Pune, but Kanhoji himself came of age on the water. Immediately following the conquest of the Konkan in 1657, Shivaji had installed Kanhoji’s father as commander at the coastal fort of Suvarnadurg. Kanhoji most likely received a traditional Brahmin upbringing before entering the fledgling Maratha navy around the age of 15.

The fact of any Maratha presence along the coast is itself a testament to the forethought and political intelligence of Chhatrapati Shivaji. According to Commander Mohan Narayan, who now serves as the Curator of the Maritime History Society in Mumbai, “among all the Medieval [14th-15th century] rulers in India, the only ruler who realized the importance of the sea was Shivaji.”

Though the full force of the Marathas never shifted from the Deccan, Shivaji’s Finance Minister Ramchandra Amatya, in his political treatise *Rajanati*, theorized a centrally funded naval power with military capacity designed to safeguard the state’s interests on the coast and to facilitate commerce at all costs (qtd. V.G. Dighe, *Kanhoji Angira*, 100).

Though, as historian VG Dighe points out, “[The Marathas’] maritime activities were confined to guarding their ports and castles and protecting their sea-borne commerce, which was inconsiderable in quantity,” the very fact of a theorized naval power suggests Shivaji’s interest in securing coastal control. His blockade of Surat’s harbour prior to the famed 1664 sacking of that once-great port city proves his tactical cunning and inherent understanding of the sea as a viable forum for demonstrating power.

Kanhoji’s own rise through the naval ranks came much after Shivaji’s death. His appointment as Sarkheel – often translated as ‘admiral,’ (though, as Cmdr. Narayan pointed out, the title in fact originates in the land-based cavalry of the Maratha Navy came under the reign of Tarabai, regent to the Maratha crown. With this appointment, says Malgonkar, Kanhoji was “by royal command in independent charge of 150 miles of wide-open coastline” (65).

Inheriting no more than 10 ships, Angre used what resources he had at his disposal – namely teak forests and a humble seafaring population of fishermen – to develop a unique fleet and military techniques to match it. With smaller ships, simpler technologies, and no experience in classical maritime warfare, Kanhoji, says Cmdr. Narayan, “realized he could never fight an overt war with the Europeans, so he started [using] guerilla warfare. He knew his coast; he knew what the advantages of fighting near the coast were.” These guerilla techniques transformed Angre into the most dreaded figure in the Konkan.

Topic 3. Third Battle of Panipat (1761)

The Third Battle of Panipat took place on 14 January 1761, at Panipat, about 60 miles (95.5 km) north of Delhi between a northern expeditionary force of the Maratha Empire and a coalition of the King of Afghanistan, Ahmad Shah Durrani with two Indian Muslim allies—the Rohilla Afghans of the Doab, and Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Oudh. Militarily, the battle pitted the French-supplied artillery^[4] and cavalry of the Marathas against the heavy cavalry and mounted artillery (zamburak and jizail) of the Afghans and Rohillas led by Ahmad Shah Durrani and Najib-ud-Daulah, both ethnic Pashtuns (the former is also known as Ahmad Shah Abdali). The battle is considered one of the largest fought in the 18th century,^[5] and has perhaps the largest number of fatalities in a single day reported in a classic formation battle between two armies.

The decline of the Mughal Empire following the 27-year Mughal-Maratha war (1680–1707) had led to rapid territorial gains for the Maratha Empire. Under Peshwa Baji Rao, Gujarat and Malwa came under Maratha control. Finally, in 1737, Baji Rao defeated the Mughals on the outskirts of Delhi, and brought much of the former Mughal territories south of Delhi under Maratha control. Baji Rao’s son, Balaji Baji Rao (popularly known as Nana Saheb), further increased the territory under Maratha control by invading Punjab in 1758. This brought the Marathas into direct confrontation with the Durrani empire of Ahmad Shah Abdali. In 1759 he raised an army from the Pashtun tribes and made several gains against the smaller Maratha garrisons in Punjab. He then joined with his Indian allies—the Rohilla Afghans of the Gangetic Doab—forming a broad coalition against the Marathas. The Marathas, under the command of Sadashivrao Bhau, responded by gathering an army of between 45,000–60,000, which was accompanied by roughly 200,000 non-combatants, a number of whom were pilgrims desirous of making pilgrimages to Hindu holy sites in northern India. The Marathas started their northward journey from Patdur on the 14th of March, 1760. Both sides tried to get the Nawab of Awadh, Shuja-ud-Daulah, into their camp. By late July, Shuja-ud-Daulah made the decision to join the Afghan-Rohilla coalition, preferring to join what was perceived as the ‘army of Islam’. This was strategically a major loss for the Marathas, since Shuja provided much needed finances for the long Afghan stay in North India. It is doubtful whether the Afghan-Rohilla coalition would have the means to continue their conflict with the Marathas without Shuja’s support.

The slow-moving Maratha camp finally reached Delhi on the 1st of August, 1760, and took the city the next day. There followed a series of skirmishes along the banks of the river Yamuna, and a battle at Kunjpura, which the Marathas won against an Afghan garrison of about 15,000 (at this time, Abdali and the other Afghan forces were on the eastern side of the Yamuna river). However, Abdali daringly crossed the river Yamuna on the 25th of October at Baghpat, cutting off the Maratha camp from their base in Delhi. This eventually turned into a two-month-long siege led by Abdali against the Marathas in the town of Panipat. During the siege both sides tried to cut off the other’s supplies.

At this the Afghans were considerably more effective, so that by the end of November 1760 they had cut off almost all food supplies into the besieged Maratha camp (which had about 250,000 to 300,000, most of whom were non-combatants). According to all the chronicles of the time, food in the Maratha camp ran out by late December or early January and cattle died by the thousands. Reports of soldiers dying of starvation began to be heard in early January. On the 13th of January the Maratha chiefs begged their commander, Sadashiv Rao Bhau, to be allowed to die in battle than perish by starvation. The next day the Marathas left their camp before dawn and marched south towards the Afghan camp in a desperate attempt to break the siege. The two armies came face-to-face around 8:00 a.m., and the battle raged until evening.

The specific site of the battle itself is disputed by historians, but most consider it to have occurred somewhere near modern-day Kaalaa Aamb and Sanauli Road. The battle lasted for several days and involved over 125,000 troops. Protracted skirmishes occurred, with losses and gains on both sides. The forces led by Ahmad Shah Durrani came out victorious after destroying several Maratha flanks. The extent of the losses on both sides is heavily disputed by historians, but it is believed that between 60,000–70,000 were killed in fighting, while the numbers of injured and prisoners taken vary considerably. According to the single best eye-witness chronicle- the bakhar by Shuja-ud-Daulah's Diwan Kashi Raj, about 40,000 Maratha prisoners were slaughtered in cold blood the day after the battle.[3] Grant Duff includes an interview of a survivor of these massacres in his History of the Marathas and generally corroborates this number. Shejwalkar, whose monograph Panipat 1761 is often regarded as the single best secondary source on the battle, says that "not less than 100,000 Marathas (soldiers and non-combatants) perished during and after the battle.

The result of the battle was the halting of further Maratha advances in the north, and a destabilization of their territories, for roughly 10 years. This period of 10 years is marked by the rule of Peshwa Madhavrao, who is credited with the revival of Maratha domination following the defeat at Panipat. In 1771, 10 years after Panipat, he sent a large Maratha army into North India in an expedition that was meant to (a) re-establish Maratha domination in North India, and (b) Punish refractory powers that had either sided with the Afghans, such as the Rohillas, or had shaken off Maratha domination after Panipat. The success of this campaign can be seen as the last saga of the long story of Panipat.