

Chhatrasal

Maharaja Chhatrasal (4 May 1649 – 20 December 1731) was an early modern Indian warrior from the Bundela Rajput clan who fought against the Mughal Empire, and established his own kingdom in Bundelkhand.^[1]

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Early life

Chhatrasal was born at Kachar Kachnai in Tikamgarh, on 4 May 1649, to Champat Rai and Lal Kunwar into the Bundela Rajput clan. He was a descendant of Rudra Pratap Singh of Orchha.^[2]

Power Struggle against the Mughals

Chhatrasal was 12 when his father Champat Rai of Mahoba was killed by the Mughals during the reign of Aurangzeb. Inspired by Chhatrapati Shivaji's ideals he travelled to Maharashtra and sought guidance from him. Chhatrasal raised the banner of revolt against the Mughals in Bundelkhand at the age of 22, with an army of 5 horsemen and 25 swordsmen, in 1671.^[3] During the first ten years of his revolt he conquered a large tract of land between Chitrakoot, Chhatarpur and Panna on the east and Gwalior on the west. His domains stretched from Kalpi in the north to Sagar, Garhakota, Shahgarh and Damoh in the south. Some of the Mughal generals who were defeated by him were Rohilla Khan, Kaliq, Munawwar Khan, Sadruddin, Sheikh Anwar, Sayyid Latif, Bahlol Khan and Abdus Ahmed. He maintained an army of 25,000 soldiers in Bundelkhand.

Chhatrasal	
<i>Maharaja of Bundelkhand</i>	
 <div>A painting of Maharaja Chhatrasal, ruler of Bundelkhand, seated on a throne, holding a mace and a bow, wearing a crown and ornate attire.</div>	
Ruler of Bundelkhand	
Reign	1675–1731
Predecessor	Post established
Successor	Harde Sah (<u>Panna State</u>) Jagat Rai (<u>Jaitpur State</u>) Bharti Chand (<u>Jaso State</u>)
Born	4 May 1649 <div>Kachar Kachnai, Mughal Empire (Present day: Kachar Kachnai, <u>Tikamgarh District</u>, <u>Madhya Pradesh</u>, <u>India</u>)</div>
Died	20 December 1731 (aged 82)
Spouse	Dev Kunwari, Ruhaani Bai (protected)

Chhatrasal was able to defeat the Mughals until he was attacked by Muhammad Khan Bangash on December 1728. Chhatrasal was 79 years old when he led his army against Bangash, after a severe battle Chhatrasal was defeated and was forced to retreat to his fort at Jaitpur. The Mughals besieged him and conquered most of his territories. Chhatrasal made several attempts to ask the Baji Rao I, the Peshwa of Maratha Empire, for help. However, the Peshwa was busy and could not help Chhatrasal until March 1729. In a letter sent to Bajirao, Chhatrasal wrote: *"Know you Bajirao! That I am in the same plight in which the famous elephant was when caught by the crocodile. My valiant race is on the point of extinction. Come and save my honour"*.^[4] Peshwa Bajirao I personally led his army towards Bundelkhand and attacked several Mughal outposts, the Mughal supplies were completely cut off by the swift Cavalry of the Peshwa. Bangash who was surprised by the sudden involvement of the Marathas, sent several letters to the Mughal emperor for aid, however upon being denied any help he started negotiations with Chhatrasal and Bajirao. Bangash was allowed to retreat on the condition that he never returns or shows aggression towards Bundelkhand. Chhatrasal rewarded the peshwa with large tracts of lands and diamond mines in Bundelkhand which helped the Marathas to gain access in Central and North India.^{[5][6]}

Issue	Harde Sah Jagat Rai Bharti Chand <u>Mastani</u>
House	<u>Bundela</u>
Father	Champat Rai
Mother	Lal Kunwar
Religion	<u>Hinduism</u>



Chhatrapati Shivaji sending Chhatrasal to liberate his ancestral lands.

Relations with Bajirao I

The Maratha Peshwa Baji Rao I's second wife Mastani was Chhatrasal's daughter born from his Muslim concubine.^[7] ^[2] In his book *Mastani*, the historian D. G. Godse states that the relationship between Chhatrasal and Baji Rao I was like that of father and son.

Before his death on 20 December 1731, Chhatrasal bequeathed Mahoba and the surrounding area to Baji Rao I in return for Baji Rao's assistance against the Mughals. Also , Chhatrasal put an army of 5,000 men under service of Peshwa in Pune. Chhatrasal also payed 12 lakh rupees as a tribute to Maratha Emperor (Chhatrapati) so as to establish long time relationship with Satara royal family.

Patron of literature

Chhatrasal was a patron of literature, and his court housed several noted poets. His eulogies written by Kavi Bhushan, Lal Kavi, Bakhshi Hansaraj and other court poets helped him gain lasting fame.^[8]



Mastani, the wife of the Maratha Peshwa Baji Rao I was Chhatrasal's daughter

Religious views

Chhatrasal was a disciple of Mahamati Prannathji and accepted him as his guru. Their meeting took place in Mau Sahaniya in 1683, a place near Panna. His nephew Dev Karanji who had met Swami Prannathji, earlier in Ramnagar, was instrumental for this meeting. Chhatrasal was highly impressed of Prannathji and became his disciple. When Maharaja Chhatrasal came to meet him, he was going for a battle against Mughals. Swami Prannathji gave him his own sword and covered his head with a scarf, saying, "You will always be victorious.

Diamond mines will be discovered in your land and you will become a great emperor." His prophecy came true and even today Panna region is famous for their diamond mines. Swami Prannathji was not only the religious Guru of Chhatrasal; but he guided him too in political, social, and economic matters. It was by being granted the boon of finding diamonds in Panna by Swami Prannathji that Maharaja Chhatrasal became prosperous.^{[9][10][11]}

Successors and descendants

Chhatrasal gave a third of his kingdom to Marathas under Peshwa Baji Rao I for his assistance, the other parts of his kingdom was divided amongst his sons. The eldest son, Harde Sah was given the kingdom of Panna State; second son, Jagat Rai was given Jaitpur State and the youngest son Bharti Chand was given Jaso State.^[12] The Jaitpur State was further divided into Ajaigarh State, Bijawar State, Charkhari State and Chhatarpur State by his descendants.

Legacy

The Chhatarpur town and its eponymous district in Madhya Pradesh are named after Chhatrasal. Several places in Chhatarpur, including the Maharaja Chhatrasal Museum, Maharaja Chhatrasal Station Chhatarpur railway station (a railway station in Chhatarpur), are named after him. The Chhatrasal Stadium in Delhi is also named after the Maharaja Chhatrasal.

Veer Chhatrasal is a 1971 Indian historical film about the king by Harsukh Jagneshwar Bhatt, starring Ajit in the titular role.^[13]



Chhatri of Maharaja Chhatrasal, at Dhubela (near Chhatarpur)

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Further reading

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- "Mastani" by D. G. Godse
- *Dharmika Teja*, a Kannada language historical novel; the story revolves around Maharaja Chhatrasal's youth

External links

-  Media related to Chhatrasal at Wikimedia Commons
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