

Anglo-Maratha Wars

Venue: Pune, Central India, Maharashtra and neighboring areas

Year: 1775-82, 1803-05, 1817-18

The three conflicts or wars fought between British East India Company and the Maratha confederacy or the Maratha Empire in India are referred to as the great Maratha Wars or the Anglo-Maratha Wars. The wars started in 1777 and ended in 1818, with the victory of the British and the destruction of the Maratha Empire in India.

The reasons that led to the battle

When the Marathas were defeated in the battle of Panipat, the third Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao could not bear the defeat and died on 23 June 1761. After his death, his son Madhav Rao succeeded him. He was an able and efficient leader who maintained unity among his nobles and chiefs and soon was successful in retrieving the lost power and prestige of the Marathas. The growing importance of the Marathas made the British become more cautious and they wanted to destroy their re-establishment. In 1772 when Madhav Rao died, it opened the doors of the British to attack the Marathas.

- **First Maratha War (1775-82):** The main cause of the first Maratha war was the increased interference of the British in the affairs, both internal and external, of the Marathas and also the struggle for power between Madhav Rao and Raghunath Rao. After the death of Peshwa Madhav Rao, his younger brother, Narain Rao succeeded him but it was his uncle, Raghunath Rao who wanted to become the Peshwa. And so he sought the help of the English to get him murdered and make him the Peshwa and in return, he promised to hand over Salsette and Bessien to the British, along with revenues from Surat and Bharuch districts. The British promised to help Raghunath Rao and provided him with 2,500 soldiers. The combined armies of the English and Raghunath Rao attacked the Peshwa and they won. The Treaty of Surat was signed on 6 March 1775 but was not approved by the British Calcutta Council and the treaty was annulled at Pune by Colonel Upton, in which the supremacy of Raghunath was renounced and he was promised only a pension. This was rejected by the Bombay government, who gave refuge to Raghunath. In 1777, Nana Phadnis granted the French a port on the west coast, much against the treaty with the Calcutta Council. As a result, the British and the Maratha armies met at Wadgaon on the outskirts of Pune.
- **Second Maratha War (1803-05):** The Second Anglo-Maratha War was the second war fought between the British East India Company and the Maratha Empire between 1803 and 1805 in Central India. The main cause of the second Maratha war due to the defeat of the peshwa Baji Rao II by the Holkars, one of the prominent Maratha clans, as a result of which he accepted British protection by signing the Treaty of Bassein in December 1802. The other Maratha rulers such as the Gwalior's Scindia rulers and the Bhonsle rulers of Nagpur and Berar did not accept this and they wanted to fight against the British. As a result, the second Anglo-Maratha war broke out in Central India in 1803.
- **Third Maratha War (1817-18):** The two main causes that led to the third and the final conflict between the British and the Marathas were (1) the growing desire of the Marathas to get back their lost territories and (2) excessive control over Maratha nobles and chiefs by the British. The war took place in Maharashtra and neighbouring areas in the year between 1817 and 1818.

Aftermath of the battle: winner and loser

First Maratha War

Winner: Marathas

- **Loser:** British

Here, the British army was defeated by the Marathas and the British surrendered by mid-January 1779. The Treaty of Wadgaon was signed in which the Bombay government took hold of all territories conquered by the British since 1775. But, this defeat did not stop the British. They continued to fight against the Marathas, and in May 1782, the Treaty of Salbai was signed.

Second Maratha War

- **Winner:** British
- **Loser:** Marathas

In the second Maratha war, the British won and in the period between 1803 and 1805, three major treaties were signed between the Maratha Empire and the British Empire, in which the British got back many of the Indian territories. These treaties were Treaty of Deogaon (1803), Treaty of Surji-Anjangaon (1803) and Treaty of Rajghat (1805).

Third Maratha War

- **Winner:** British
- **Loser:** Marathas

This final war led to the complete downfall and end of the Maratha Empire in India and the whole of India came under the control of the British East India Company.

The larger implications of the battle

- **First Maratha War:** As per the Treaty of Salbai, all Maratha territories were returned. The British took control of Salsette but all the territories occupied by the British were given back to the Marathas.
- **Second Maratha War:** The armies of Sindia and Bhonsle were defeated by the British at Assaye in September 1803 and at Argaon in November 1803 and on 17 December 1803, the Treaty of Deogaon was signed in which the provinces of Cuttack, Balasore and land west of the river Warda were given to the British and the subsidiary alliance with British was accepted. Later, the British defeated the Sindia army at Aligarh and at Laswar and the Treaty of Surji-Arjunagaon was signed on 30 December 1803. As per this treaty, Sindia agreed to hand over the territories between the Ganga and Yamuna, Ahmadnagar, Broach and parts of Bundelkhand to the British. On 27 February 1804, the Treaty of Burhanpur was signed in which Sindia agreed to enter into subsidiary alliance with British. When the Holkar continued the war with British, the company entered into peace treaty on 24 December 1805 known as the Rajpurghat Treaty. As per this treaty, Yashvanth Rao Holkar agreed to

renounce all the areas north of the Bundi hill to the British. This treaty marked the end of the second Anglo-Maratha.

- **Third Maratha War:** When the Peshwa attacked the British Residency in November 1817, the Maratha chiefs were defeated at various places such as Ashti, Nagpur, Mehidpur etc. On 5 November 1817, the Treaty of Gwalior was signed in which Sindia became a mere spectator in the war. On 6 January 1818, the Treaty of Mandasor was signed between Malhar Rao Holkar and the British, in which the Peshwa was dethroned, which was followed by the pensioning of the Peshwa. More of his territories were annexed with the British and the British established their supremacy in India.

The overall place and significance of the battle in the Indian history

The first, second, and third Anglo-Maratha wars were very significant in the History of India. The Moghul Empire was already under the British control during that time. But, the British still could not get hold of territories in the South as they were dominated by the Maratha chieftains. The Maratha wars started in 1777 and ended in 1818. While the Marathas won in the first battle, they lost against the British in the second and the third wars. Many treaties were signed between the Marathas and the British East India Company, which led to the control of India by the British. The treaties with Princely states made the British the owner of the vast properties and territories of India and India was indeed a jewel in the crown of the British Empire. The Maratha Empire completely ended after these wars. The British completely controlled India. In fact after the wars, India became a complete property of the British, in which the British mapped and defined India, entirely on their own terms and conditions, as per the Orientalist style.

Please visit the following link for a video on Anglo-Maratha Wars: (Copy paste on the web browser)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoUIVtm6mXY>