ShivRai

The Currency of Swarajya



Samadhan Bhartiya · Abhishek Deshmukh

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Chhatrapati Shivray, the ryot and the journey of Swarajya told through a copper coin.

Gold hon · both faces



Copper Shivrai · both faces



A Note from the Authors

The name Chhatrapati Shivray brings to mind the forts of the Sahyadris, the courage of the Mavalas and the dream of Swarajya. It also fills us with pride in the ryot whose labour sustained that dream.

The small copper Shivrai takes us from a market-place to Raigad. Its letters carry a royal name, while its history opens a window onto the relationship between a state and its people.

For us, this book is a tribute: to Maharaj's achievement, Jijau's influence, the courage of his companions and the labour of ordinary people. In telling this inspiring history, we have taken care to distinguish information about real coins from artistic interpretation.

We dedicate this book to those whose work gave Swarajya strength, and to everyone who continues to find hope in Shivray's life.

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1 · Swarajya Takes Root in the Sahyadris

In the seventeenth century, the Deccan was caught in struggles among several powers. War, revenue demands and insecurity weighed on its villages. Shivaji Maharaj was born at Shivneri on 19 February 1630. The world came to know him as Chhatrapati; Maharashtra affectionately calls him Shivray.

The lives and experiences of his parents, Jijau and Shahajiraje Bhosale, were closely connected with his upbringing. Around Pune, he saw local conditions, the mountain paths of Maval and the lives of the people. The vision that developed was not merely to conquer territory, but to build a state able to govern under its own authority.

In laying the foundations of Swarajya, Shivray found companions who knew the Sahyadris. People connected to forts, paths and villages carried the work forward through their labour. Resources were limited at first, but the purpose was clear and the leaders were prepared to adapt.



The Sahyadris, their forts and the lives linked to them

The journey that began with forts such as Torna passed through many reversals. Taking a fort is one moment; holding it requires grain, water, watchfulness, repair and people’s trust. Shivray’s achievement lay in both the bold step and the durable arrangements built behind it.

2 · Struggle, Companions and the Journey

The path of Swarajya was far from straight. Struggles with the Adilshahi and Mughal powers brought sieges, treaties and the need to rebuild. The encounter at Pratapgad in 1659 and the struggle that followed were important. Behind every victory stood knowledge of the terrain, information and the readiness of companions as well as strategy.

In 1660 Panhala was besieged. Maharashtra remembers the stand of Bajiprabhu Deshpande and his companions during Shivray's escape towards Vishalgad, and the sacrifice of associates such as Shiva Kashid. Their names belong in the story of Swarajya.

The campaign against Shaista Khan, the Treaty of Purandar and the escape from Agra in 1666 revealed different sides of Maharaj's leadership. Sometimes a treaty or withdrawal was necessary; at other times strength had to be rebuilt through swift action. Tanaji Malusare's role in the battle for Sinhagad, and the contributions of countless known and unknown companions, form part of that effort.



Swarajya advances along the paths of the forts

Later generations have told many stories about these events. They belong to public memory. Yet

Shivray’s accomplishments need no exaggeration: bringing people together in adversity, entrusting them with responsibility and rebuilding after crisis are remarkable in themselves.

3 · Raigad and the Moment of Sovereignty

On 6 June 1674, Shivaji Maharaj was crowned at Raigad and became Chhatrapati. The ceremony gave formal sovereign expression to a state built through years of struggle. It honoured one leader and, equally, the many people who had taken part in the work.

Coronation meant more than a throne, a royal umbrella and ceremony. Independent rule needed authority, duties, officers, revenue and a public identity. The beginning of the coronation era, royal titles and the tradition of coins bearing a royal name were connected with this broader change.



Raigad and the memory of the coronation

A name on a coin was one public sign of authority. Passing from hand to hand, a coin could reach merchants, markets and many others engaged in exchange. A Shivrai is therefore more than a piece of metal: it is an object connected to the history of an independent state.

Shivray's life ended in 1680, but the struggle for Swarajya and the coinage tradition associated with his name continued.

4 · Shivrai: A Royal Name in Copper

The name Shivrai brings to mind the tradition of copper coins associated with Chhatrapati Shivray's royal name. On familiar types, one face bears the Nagari legend *Shri / Raja / Shiva* and the other *Chhatra / Pati*, the royal title Chhatrapati. Wear and imperfect striking mean that not every surviving coin shows every letter completely.

The Reserve Bank of India's historical overview says Shivray issued coins in 1664 and again on the occasion of the 1674 coronation. That is a broad account of coinage. Neither date can automatically be assigned to every surviving Shivrai, photograph or die.

The two images below show the faces of a real copper coin of the Shivrai type. Wear and differences in the original strike leave parts of the lettering and edge less clear. The precise mint and year of the coin shown have not been independently established.



Two faces of a copper Shivrai · historical photographs

The lettering identifies a ruler and opens up the coin’s small world. Markets need exchanges of different sizes. Copper was useful for transactions of lower value, while coins of precious metal met different needs.

Shivrai is not the name of coins all made from one die on one day. Coins connected by their names, legends and appearance can differ in type and period. To understand their history, each surviving object’s features need attention.

5 · How Was a Coin Made?

Compared with machine-made coins, an old hand-struck coin often looks uneven. The small piece of metal and the blow that impressed a design could leave differences in shape, the position of letters and the depth of the strike. Worn dies or a slightly misplaced blow could leave letters incomplete.



An artistic view of the craft of making coins

The legends, symbols and marks on both faces matter to researchers. Identification becomes stronger when metal, weight, size, die design and information about where and how a coin was found are considered together. A royal name is important evidence, but does not always give an exact year.

One copper specimen catalogued as a Shivrai paisa by the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge weighs

9.45 grams and measures approximately 18 by 19 millimetres. Those measurements belong to that individual museum object, not to the photographs in this book. The museum gives it a broad and uncertain date range of 1674–1818.

These details reveal the richness of the tradition. Shivray's royal name was not confined to one generation. It could appear on later coins or remain associated with money still in use. Each surviving coin is a distinct piece of evidence in a long and complex story.

6 · The Copper Shivrai and the Gold Hon

The hon enters this story because both kinds of coin belong to the monetary world of Swarajya, but they should not be confused. In this book Shivrai refers chiefly to the copper coin type associated with Shivray's royal name. The hon belongs to an older tradition of gold coins; this does not mean that Shivray invented the hon.

The guide to the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya in Mumbai records a gold hon with the royal name. It gives a weight of 2.9 grams and a diameter of approximately 1.1 centimetres. The museum suggests that this particular specimen was

probably struck for the coronation of 1674. That cautious conclusion about one object does not establish the date or mint of every hon.

Gold hon and copper Shivrai differed in metal and in their place in exchange. A coin's value could vary with place, time, metal quality and acceptance. It would therefore be misleading to give a single fixed number of Shivrais for every hon, or an exact conversion into present-day rupees.

Markets, trade routes and different coinages existed in the Deccan before Swarajya. That setting helps us understand Shivray's achievement. Our central concern remains the copper Shivrai and the Swarajya that gives it meaning.

7 · Currency in the Marketplace

At dawn, grain leaves the fields. Tools are repaired in a village. Someone brings salt, someone carries cloth and someone loads a cart to cross a mountain pass. Coins can help such exchanges. This is an illustration of economic life, not a record of a particular day.



The marketplace and wealth created by labour

For people to accept a coin, they needed to recognise it, have confidence in its metal and weight, and expect it to pass in a later transaction. A royal name marked authority, but local practice and acceptance also mattered.

A market includes the labour of farmers, craftspeople, carriers, traders, workers and their families. War, excessive demands or unsafe roads could affect everything from grain to commerce. Stability, by contrast, could support exchange.

The history of the Shivrai is tied to this daily life. It would be wrong to say every transaction used one coin: different coins and exchanges of goods existed together. Still, the low-value copper coin offers one way to connect the identity of Swarajya with the lives of ordinary people.

8 · Farmers and the Ryot: The Foundation of Swarajya

At the foot of a fort lie fields. Sowing needs labour, animals, water and hope for the next season. A crop supports a household; its surplus enters the market and can also provide revenue to the state. The condition of the ryot was therefore fundamental to the strength of Swarajya.



Farming and labour as a foundation of Swarajya

Historical accounts of Shivray's administration discuss land, collection and the protection of farmers. Studies describe attention to providing animals and seed to cultivators in difficulty, sustaining cultivation and collecting revenue responsibly. Arrangements varied by region and circumstance; the outcome was not identical everywhere.

Drought, war and plunder harmed the ryot. A royal instruction did not make every difficulty disappear,

nor can we assume that every official always obeyed it. The records nevertheless point to a direction of governance that valued cultivators' livelihoods and the continuation of sowing and the next harvest.

In *Who Was Shivaji?*, Govind Pansare considers Shivray from the viewpoint of farmers and working people. His writing encourages us to look at history from the edge of a field as well as from a royal court. To understand Swarajya, we too must place the people whose work sustained it at the centre.

9 · From a Vegetable Stalk to Military Discipline

Instructions associated with a Shiv-era military camp near Chiplun express concern that the ryot should not be troubled, stores should be protected and necessary goods should be purchased. They also attend to fodder for horses, grain supplies before the monsoon and the danger of fire.

Popular memory sums up the lesson as "do not take even a vegetable stalk". This is not presented here as a verbatim quotation from the letter. It is a remembered expression of the principle that people should not be coerced: those meant to protect ordinary people should not themselves make them afraid.



Supplies, payment and military responsibility

An army needed planning and discipline as well as bravery. Forts could not be held without arrangements for soldiers, horses, weapons, food and routes. Government had to consider pay and supplies. Revenue in the treasury was connected to those expenses and to the labour of the people behind it.

War and harsh conflict were also realities of Shivray's state. Rather than imagine a past free of suffering, we should consider both the recorded expectation that the ryot be protected and the human cost of war.

10 · Forts, Ports and Trade Routes

The forts of the Sahyadris were more than stone walls. They required water, grain, ammunition and watchfulness. Officers, soldiers, artisans and nearby villages together formed a working system. Defence and life in the surrounding region were intertwined.

Mountain passes linked the interior with the Konkan. Ports handled goods, ship repairs and storage. Conscious of coastal rivalries and the challenges of sea routes, Shivray placed importance on a navy and sea forts. Forts such as Sindhudurg recall that policy.



Coastal trade and Swarajya’s connection with the sea

The sentry on a fort, the worker carrying goods and the merchant bargaining at a port had different tasks, but all contributed to the state’s foundations.

Trade needs routes; routes need security; security needs resources. A coin is one visible sign of that network, but it cannot tell the whole story alone.

11 · Administration and Human Dignity

Building Swarajya meant creating institutions to carry decisions out. Responsibilities were assigned for revenue, correspondence, the army, forts and justice. Offices associated with the Ashtapradhan council became more prominent after the coronation. Titles mattered, but the work and accountability behind them mattered more.

Leadership included choosing officers, receiving news, judging circumstances and changing decisions when necessary. People from varied backgrounds worked with Shivray. Alongside courage, the history of Swarajya has a place for administration, diplomacy, writing, communication and supply.



Governance, consultation and responsibility

School histories describe respect for the worship of different faiths in Shivray's policy and instructions to preserve the dignity of women during warfare. Seventeenth-century politics cannot simply be fitted into today's language, but treating people as enemies because of their faith is no sound way to understand that history. Its conflicts were also tied to power and politics.

Honouring Maharaj's work does not require hatred of others. Giving justice, duty and human dignity a place in our conduct can be a more meaningful tribute.

12 · A Tradition That Outlived Shivray

After 1680, Swarajya faced great crises. Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj bore responsibility for the state in difficult circumstances and resisted Mughal invasion. He was captured and killed in 1689. His struggle and sacrifice are an important chapter in Maratha history.

The struggle continued under Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj. Jinji became an important centre of resistance. After Rajaram's death, Maharani Tarabai led the struggle on behalf of her young son. Later, under Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, political alignments and the reach of Maratha power changed.



Leadership and responsibility in times of crisis

War burdened villages, farming and markets. A change of power does not instantly change every

coin in people’s hands. Old currency can remain in use for a time, and familiar types can continue to be struck. The royal name on a Shivrai and the date of a particular object must therefore be considered separately.

In the eighteenth century the geographical and economic world of Maratha power changed. Mints and rupee types from several regions formed part of its monetary life. A study of the coinage of the Angre family on the coast discusses copper money associated with the Shivrai type. That is a thread in a later tradition; it does not establish that the coin photographed here came from an Angre mint.

An old Poona Gazetteer also refers to copper coins known as Shivrai or Chhatrapati in the nineteenth century. It shows the long life of a coinage tradition associated with the name, but does not establish the origin of every surviving coin.

13 · Preserving the Coin and Its History

The letters and impressions on both faces first draw our attention. Research also follows other clues: metal, weight, diameter, thickness, edge, wear, find-spot and available ownership record. Colour alone, or resemblance to an image on the internet, cannot establish that a coin is genuine or dates from Shiv-

ray’s lifetime.

A published metallurgical study recorded weights of 8.50 to 9.23 grams for five copper Shivrai samples. Those are measurements of those five coins, not a rule that every genuine Shivrai must fall within that range. The 9.45-gram Fitzwilliam specimen discussed earlier is a separate object.

The old Poona Gazetteer also mentions counterfeit Shivrais. Rather than deciding on the basis of a claim of rarity or great value, preserve clear images of both faces and measurements, and consult a qualified numismatist or museum. Vigorous rubbing or chemical cleaning can damage an old object; seek conservation advice.

A preserved coin is more than an object in a collection. When reliable information travels with it, a later generation can learn history from it. However attractive a story may be, honesty where evidence is incomplete is the proper tribute to this inheritance.

14 · What Shivray’s Life Can Teach Today

Maharaj’s life offers lessons in leadership: understanding circumstances, retaining courage in crisis, choosing companions, sharing responsibility, planning and recognising the moment to decide. These are lessons we draw today from history, not quotations attributed to Maharaj.

A leader with a long view does not count only today’s victory. Can people live tomorrow? Will companions have the resources they need? Will the work endure? Shivray’s treaties, returns from adversity, management of forts and concern for the ryot reveal different forms of responsibility.



Passing the lessons of history to the next generation

Today’s world is not the same as a seventeenth-

century monarchy. The frameworks of rights, equality and responsibility in a modern democracy are different. Rather than copy the past exactly, we can draw inspiration from it to act justly and accountably in our own time.

Fair reward for a farmer's work, respect for a worker, trust in transactions and care for vulnerable people when exercising authority remain important. For us, economic Swarajya today means opportunity for people's labour, support for knowledge and accountability in decisions. This is a present-day statement of values; it does not claim that the Shivrai coin was a modern economic system.

A meaningful beginning need not require abundant resources. Beginning with a small step and continuing with good companions is an inspiring lesson we take from Shivray's life. Joined with concern for society, love of history becomes action.

A Final Salute

The copper Shivrai fits in a hand and carries only a few letters. Behind them stand the forts of the Sahyadris, the courage of the Mavalas, Jijau's influence and the labour of the ryot. The coin reminds us of both the dignity of independent authority and its responsibilities.

We speak Chhatrapati Shivray's name with pride. That pride grows when our work brings someone justice, honours a farmer and helps build a better world for the next generation.



The path from the Sahyadris towards the future

Jai Jijau! Jai Shivray!

Timeline

1630 — Shivaji Maharaj is born at Shivneri.

1640s — The building of Swarajya begins in the Maval region; forts gain importance.

1659 — The confrontation with Afzal Khan near Pratapgad.

1660 — The siege of Panhala and escape towards Vishalgad; the stand of Bajiprabhu and his companions.

1665–1666 — The Treaty of Purandar and, the following year, the escape from Agra.

6 June 1674 — Coronation at Raigad and formal establishment of the Chhatrapati's sovereign position.

1680 — Chhatrapati Shivray dies.

1689 — Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj is killed; resistance continues under Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj.

After 1700 — Maharani Tarabai's leadership; politics takes another direction later in the reign of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj.

Nineteenth century — The Poona Gazetteer mentions old Shivrai coins. The precise origin and date of individual specimens can differ.

Selected Sources and Image Credits

The coin information is based on museum records and research. Maharashtra's official school history and selected historical works provide context for the narrative. Interpretations in the books and the individual objects described by museums are distinct

sources of evidence.

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Shivrai photos (Chapter 4): Pratish Khedekar, Wikimedia Commons. The original record identifies the coin as being in Naveen Kishore Mhatre's collection. First face · Second face · CC BY-SA 4.0. The photos have been resized and compressed for layout. This credit does not imply endorsement by the photographer or collector.

The coloured historical scenes on the cover and inside the book are artistic illustrations from the earlier book; they are not photographs of the events.

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Lessons from Chhatrapati Shivray



Honour the people, respect their labour

Let courage be guided by judgement, and authority by responsibility. Respect the people and face adversity with courage and humanity.

Let us keep the inspiration of Swarajya alive through our actions.

Jai Jijau! Jai Shivray!

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