

# Raja Serfoji

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**In news**– A rare 19th century painting of Raja Serfoji-II and his son Sivaji, which was stolen from Saraswathi Mahal, Thanjavur, a few years ago has been traced by Idol Wing CID police to the Peabody Essex Museum, Massachusetts, USA.

## About Raja Serfoji-

- Raja Serfoji the descendant of the Bhosle dynasty **ruled over the dominions of the Maratha principality of Thanjavur from 1798-1832.**
- **Born on September 24, 1777 in the household of Maratha ruler Chattrapati Shivaji,** Serfoji II was formally **adopted by Raja Thulajah, the king of Thanjavur,** on January 23, 1787.
- Danish missionary Reverend Christian Frederick Schwarz was put in charge of the adoptive heir's education.
- However, after the death of Thulajah, his half-brother Amar Singh usurped the throne, leaving the young Serfoji under house arrest.
- It was **with the help of British intercession that Serfoji came to power on June 29, 1798.** The help came with a caveat: **Serfoji was made to cede over administration of the kingdom to the British in return for a pension and a share in the land revenue.**
- **Serfoji II was among the first rulers in the area to formally document the technical expertise of the craftsmen and artisans** in the kingdom and create a record for posterity.
- The archival repository of the **Saraswathi Mahal Library,** established by Nayakar kings in the 16th century, was greatly enhanced by **Serfoji's personal collection.**
- As one of the **first native honorary members of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain** and Ireland, from 1824, **Serfoji would receive a copy of every book published**

**there**, adding to his collection of over 5,000 volumes at the library.

- **Serfoji's interest in medicine was seen in the multi-disciplinary hospital Dhanvantri Mahal**, as also by his research into ophthalmology.
- Besides **promoting women's education through the Navavidhya Kalanidhi Sala**, he established a **hand press for the Devanagri script in 1805**.
- He **wrote hundreds of songs in Tamil, Telugu and Marathi, set to be performed at music and dance recitals**, and also experimented in fusing Western and Indian classical music traditions.
- **Serfoji II had the history of the Bhosle dynasty inscribed on the south western wall of the Brihadeshwara Temple, a feat considered among the largest inscriptions in the world**.
- The royal paid equal respect to all communities in his dominion, by building churches and mosques for Christians and Muslims, and patronising the upkeep of shrines built by other dynasties.

### **Sivaji-II son of Raja Serfoji-**

- He was the **only son of Shivaji and ruled the fortress of Thanjavur** and its surroundings from 1832 to 1855.
- He was the **last Raja of Thanjavur known to wield any authority**.
- The missionary Heber describes the young Shivaji as a **'pale and sickly child'**.
- He contributed to the **expansion of the Saraswathi Mahal Library** and gave many useful books.
- He was a scholar and a linguist. He knew Marathi, Sanskrit, Telugu and Tamil languages.
- King Shivaji II **authored a Marathi drama "Natesa Vilasa"** the drama is hailed as an excellent piece of Marathi literature based on ancient Sanskrit type of dramas or natakas.

- **He wrote several Padas** (devotional songs) in Marathi under the pen name “Dhakte Diwan” or younger Diwan.