

Raja Serfoji

July 23, 2022

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.