



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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PM to attend 300th birth anniversary celebrations of Ahilyabai in MP today

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Context

• Prime Minister Narendra Modi will preside over the commemoration of the 300th birth anniversary of erstwhile queen of Indore Ahilyabai Holkar on Saturday.

Ahilyabai Holkar

- Ahilyabai Holkar was the **queen of Indore within the Maratha Confederacy**. She established Maheshwar (in Madhya Pradesh) on the banks of the Narmada River as the capital of the Holkar Dynasty.
- She was born in **1725** to a Dhangar/Gadariya (shepherd) family in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district.
- Her **father**, Mankoji Shinde, was from a respectable Dhangar (Gadariya) family who served as the **Patil (title like village head)**.
- Although women did not go to school back then, Ahilyabai's father taught her to read and write.
- Ahilyabai gained prominence when Malhar Rao Holkar, a commander in the Maratha Peshwa Baji Rao's army, visited Chaundi.
- Impressed by her piety and character, Malhar's son, **Khande Rao Holkar, married Ahilyabai** on the Peshwa's advice in 1733.
- **After her husband's death** in the 1754 Battle of Kumbher against the King of Bharatpur, **Ahilyabai took control of Malwa**.
- She excelled at administrative and military strategies under the guidance of her father-in-law, who believed she should lead her people and not die by Sati.
- **After the death of her father-in-law and son a few years later, she petitioned the Peshwa to become the ruler, backed by the support of her army.**
- She defended the **Malwa state** against intruders and personally led armies into battle, with **Tukoji Rao Holkar as her military commander**.
- Ahilyabai was known for her administrative acumen, breaking traditional gender norms in 18th century India.
- Ahilyabai was a **prolific builder, constructing Hindtemples and Dharmashalas** across the Indian Subcontinent.
- Ahilya Bai **resurrected the jyotirlingas across the country as a tribute to Lord Shiva**.

Kamaraj IAS Academy

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040

Phone: **044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477** / Whatsapp : **09710729833**

- She carried out **renovations in Somnath temple, Kashi Vishwanath temple Varanasi (1780), Trambak, Gaya, Pushkar, Vrindavan, Nathdwara, Haridwar, Badrinath, Kedarnath** and many other sacred sites.
- She patronised many artists, including **Marathi poet Moropant, Shahir Ananta Gandhi, and Sanskrit scholar Khushali Ram.**
- She **established Maheshwar (in Madhya Pradesh) as the seat of the Holkar Dynasty.**
- She **promoted Maheshwari saris (from Maheshwar) and paved the way for empowering women.**
- Ahilyabai **repealed a traditional law that allowed the state to confiscate the property of childless widows**