

C H A P T E R T W O

RISE OF THRILLING ENTERTAINMENT IN MAHARASHTRA

Powada as a source of history

Powada or the ballad is a source of history. When we talk of sources naturally the question of its classification arises. When a ballad is written by a person who was a participant in that event this ballad should be considered as a primary source. Whenever a ballad is written by a person who was not connected with that event whatever this should be taken as a secondary source. In a ballad all the aspects of the event are quite unlikely to appear whenever it is written after some time. So that a researcher must use this form very meticulously. As regards its authenticity there can be common errors about the place, names and the time. This pit-fall must be averted. Powada is generally based on the form of a poetry. Whenever the events in the powada corroborates with the events in the documents in that case powada turns out to be the primary source. There is a typical form of writing a powada. It is neatly drawn-out picture of an event. The language used is pointed out clear cut. There is, no entanglement of rhythm¹. The paragraphs in the powada are turned as " Chouk ". The singer of the pawada assumes the characters in the

powada. He conveys the story both through prose and poetry. The singer through actions tries to create a picture of the event.

There is a thin layer between some of the powadas and the lavnis. Because the writer of both these forms has been the same person. Powada described the political condition, when lavni depicts the social atmosphere².

While going through the powadas we see that in some cases they depict the special conditions also. Some of the lavnis have described the political events. Honaji Bala has described the battle of Khadki. " Bhramini Rajya Jordar, Ghodyawar Swar Hote Shipai³". These lines show that the Brahamins were in ascendancy.

Some scholars have discovered about 300 pawadas on the history of the Marathas. These can be divided in various phases from Shivaji to Chhatrapati Shahu. There are seven pawadas covering this period. There are about one hundred fifty pawadas depicting the maratha state in the 18th and 19th centuries. And the remaining one hundred forty three have been written on the British period. These pawadas provide a picture of reality. Of course, these pawadas have their own shortcomings. Even with this, we cannot brush them aside as

a mere poetry and flights of imagination. Shivaji (1630 to 1680) though was engaged throughout his life in war fare, he also had inclination towards thrilling entertainment. There were Sanskrit poets, who adorned his court. These poets used to amuse the court by composing poems on the topics of current interests. They wrote extempore poems to please the ruler. Kavi Parmanand, the Sanskrit poet was in Shivaji's court⁴. Alongwith poetry , ballad was also a popular form of entertainment during the days of Shivaji. People had tremendous fascination for pawadas.

RISE OF MARATHI BALLADS

In Marathi ballad is termed as " Powada ". The term " POWADA " was used by Dnyaneshwar for the description of Arjuna's bravery in Dnyaneshwari⁵. The ingredients of this type of poetry are based on creating thrill in the minds of the people. It appealed the common masses in the 17th and 18th centuries. The social and political atmosphere was conductive for instilling thrill in the minds of the people to make them fight against the enemies like the Muslim Kingdoms of the South and the mughals from the north. Ballad is associated with bravery from its beginning. Although the term "Powada " was in existence since the 13th century, but we can't claim such a long

history for this type of poetry. Because there is no evidence which can prove that ballad was a form of entertainment in the 13th century Maharashtra. The first Marathi ballad entitled " Virmal Shivajicha" was written and sung in 1659 A.D.⁶ by Shahir Adnyandas. It was written on the historical event of Shivaji's victory over Afzalkhan in 1659. This ballad is important not only as a thrilling form of entertainment but also as an historical incident. It has importance because it was a contemporary ballad. There are some natural short comings in the ballads. Although Adnyandas has over-estimated Shivaji in this ballad we find some reliable informations about the controversial event like Afzalkhan's death. He has clearly pointed out in this ballad that Afzalkhan struck first blow to Shivaji and thereafter Shivaji killed him for his personal protection⁷. ~~It was an act done~~ It was an act done in self defence. Shivaji had honoured Adnyandas for having written the ballad on a matter of significant event. He honoured the poet by giving him a horse and a gold ring known as "Toda"⁸.

Another ballad on the historical event during this period was written by Tulsidas. It was written on Tanaji's victory of fort Kondhana in the year 1673⁹. Tulsidas was Shivaji's contemporary. However, the ballad

lacks historical authenticity. Considering the gravity of the situation, the people appreciated it. Particularly the description of the battles between Tanaji and Udaybhanu and Shelar created much sensation . The characters of Tanaji, Shelar, Shivaji and Jijabai are depicted in this ballad. Tulsidas pointed out that he was honoured by Shivaji with a Gold ring worth Rs.1000/-¹⁰.

Shahir Yamaji has written a ballad on the life of Baji Pasalkar¹¹. Although this ballad could not become popular like the other two ballads mentioned above, it is considered as a genuine historical source. Shahir Yamaji pointed out how Baji Pasalkar and his soldiers fought against Sonu Dalvi of *Maval region* and Markatrao for the protection of the horse Yashwanta which was a prestige to Baji Pasalkar. Baji Pasalkar honoured Yamaji with a gold ornament known as Lunger after he had heard this ballad¹². The people were much attracted towards this form of entertainment as it was flushed with enthusiasm.

With this evidence we can say that ballad was a popular form of amusement of the Maratha Sardars and royal families during the 17th century. The ballad players were honoured respectfully with the golden

ornaments. As it was an age of valour and bravery people found ^a suitable form of entertainment in Pawada.

Shivaji's death in 1680 altered the political balance in the country. Sambhaji was not a competent ruler like Shivaji. He could not maintain unity among the Marathas. Furthermore, his excessive indulgence in vices unnerved him and made him slave to the most superstitious beliefs in witch craft and demon worship under the advise of Kavi Kalash¹³. The most notorious poet from Varanashi. With the death of Sambhaji in 1689 started the war of independence. This war came to an end in 1707 on the death of Emperor Aurenjeb at Ahmadanagar. As the Marathas were fighting tooth and nail battle for their survival hardly there was any scope for performing ballads in the royal courts. Hence there is a dearth of ballads in this period.

PROGRESS OF BALLADS

With the arrival of Shahu in Maharashtra in 1707 and the consequent establishment of his throne in Satara in 1708, civil war came to an end¹⁴. In opposition to Shahu's kingdom in Satara Tarabai founded her separate kingdom first at Panahla and then at Kolhapur in 1710. Shahu ruled from 1708 to 1749. During his long career, the rear authority of the State passed in to the hands of ^{the} Peshwas. The Chhatrapati became a puppet in the hands of the Peshwas. Naturally there-

fore, the political balance shifted in favour of the Peshwas. The peshwas assumed a dominant position. Many ballads were written during the 18th and 19th centuries on historical events and on great personalities. The ballad players were not only respectfully honoured but also kept in the services by the Peshwas. The historical personalities like Shahu Chhatrapati, Ahilyabai Holkar, Nana Phadnis and Bajirao IInd became the subject matter of the ballads. Shahir Pirangu Nana wrote a ballad on the death of Chhatrapati Shahu.¹⁵ In this ballad he compared Shahu's rule with the rule of Lord Ram. He compared Shahu's jolly behaviour with Lord Krishna.

Shahir Prabhakar wrote a ballad on the life of Ahilyabai Holkar¹⁶. In this ballad he described Ahilyabai's noble character and sincere rule. Bala Bahiru wrote a ballad on the life of Nana Phadnis¹⁷. He described how Nana Phadnis protected the Maratha Swaraj with the help of his intelligence and defeated even the British. He pointed out that Nana Phadnis always remained faithful to his Master Sawai Madhavrao. Shahir Honajibata wrote a ballad on the life of Bajirao IInd¹⁸. In this ballad he compared Bajirao IInd with King Harishchandra of Ayodhya. He also traced the point that Bajirao IInd appointed many Brahmins at the

holy places in Maharashtra.

All the above mentioned ballads were appreciated by the ordinary audience ~~and~~ from ~~feudal~~ lords and royal families as well . There was realistic picturization of historical personalities in these ballads. They were trying to glorify the herose to the audience. That is why the ballads became popular in Maharashtra. It had a mass appeal. 19

Some ballads were written on historical events. Ballads ^{were} written on such events by Sagan Bhau, Rama Satwa and Satwa Rama. Among them Saganbhau's ballad on the 3rd battle of Panipat in 1761¹⁹ / was well appreciated by the people. Saganbhau picturised how Sadashivbhau the commander of ^{the} Maratha army fought against the Afgan troops in the 3rd battle of Panipat in 1761. He explained how the Afgan troops caught Sadashivbhau in the trap. He has described the manner in which the Maratha army suffered owing to the lack of food. This information confers the description in the historical sources. 9

The murder of Peshwa Narayanrao is a unique event in Maratha history. Shahir Lahiri Mukunda has written an excellent ballad on this event²⁰, which gives some information about the event. He pointed out that Narayanrao was killed by the Gardi in the presence of Raghunathrao.

He described how Narayanrao tried to protect himself from the Gardis by running through the halls of Shaniwarwada at Pune.

Apart from these ballads, Shahir Prabhakar's ballad on the battle of Kharda of 1795²¹ indicates how the events were renowned to ordinary people and their feelings about the Peshwa. Saganbhau's ballad on the battle of Khadki²², Shahir Anant Fandi's ballad on Yashwantrao Holkar²³ were appreciated by the people in Maharashtra. Shahir Bapu Sawai Rama wrote a ballad on the Karnataka expedition arranged by Fattesing Bhosale during 1725-1726. V.K.Rajwade published this ballad in the third volume of Marathyanchnya Itihasa-chi Sadhane²⁴. Although this ballad was not popular yet it is important as a historical document as it has provided details of the Maratha invasion of Fort Budhiyala.

The tradition of ballad became popular particularly in the Peshwa period. Peshwa Bajirao II kept many ballad players in his service. He granted yearly pension of 300 Rupees to Shahir Honaji Bala²⁵. As Bajirao II was fond of romantic entertainment, the ballad players during this time had to place more emphasis on romantic songs rather than on the thrilling ballads.

POLITICAL LIFE AS SEEN IN THE MARATHI BALLADS

Shahir Adnyandas wrote a ballad on the killing of Afzalkhan by Shivaji. This incident has been narrated by Adnyandas very vividly in his ballad entitled " Virmal Shivajicha ". This ballad is politically very important. We get a host of information about Shivaji's forts and his earlier activities. Even the forts have been glorified on the strength of their Geographical set-up. There is a mention of Rohida, Makarandgad, Simhagad, Tung Tikona. It also indicates that the territory from Indiapur to Mahad was controlled by Shivaji. In Konkan Shivaji had occupied 14 Tal Konkans including 12 ports. It also describes the annexation of Jawli. This information leads us to the events proper. Adnyandas also describes the political scene at Vijapur. He mentions the names of Adilshahi statesmen like Abdulkhan, Rustam Jamal, Siddi Hilal, Musekhan, Zunjarrao Ghatge, Jiwaji Deokate and Mambaji Bhosale. Afzalkhan on his way to Maharashtra to crush Shivaji came to Tuljapur and pulvarised the Goddess Bhavani. Then he came to Pandharpur and afterwards he came to Shingnapur²⁶. After these events Adnyandas describes the actual meeting of the two. In the personal meeting Shivaji used his dagger as a protective measure. Afzalkhan tried to run away but Shivaji beheaded him and went

to the fort. After the event Shivaji's army put the Adilshahi army to flight.

Shahir Tulssidas has written a ballad on Tanaji Malusare. This ballad describes the political situation of Maharashtra after Shivaji's arrival from Agra in 1666. In this ballad the Shahir has mentioned that Tanaji had taken 12000 soldiers with him. He also describes the duel between Tanaji and Udaybhanu²⁷. This description clearly shows the intention of attacking Simhagad.

There is a ballad written by Shahir Yamaji on the life of Baji Pasalkar. This ballad establishes the fact that Baji Pasalkar of a Desai of 8 villages. He had a number of soldiers with him. Baji Pasalkar was a powerful and trusted soldier of Shivaji. There is a mention of battle fought near village " Kurdu "²⁸.

There is a ballad written by Shahir Trimbak Sali on the death of Bajirao Ist²⁹. It gives a clear picture of the emotions and feelings on hearing the untimely death of Bajirao Ist by the death of his elder brother Chimaji Appa was thoroughly shocked. There are two ballads written by two different Shahirs on the death of Chhatrapati Shahu. Shahir Dadu wrote that Shahu died

on friday. His death coincides with a dark mist in the capital³⁰. Shahir Firangu Nana has compared Shahu with Lord Ram³¹. There are 3 ballads on the battle of Panipat of 1761. These ballads are written by Saganbhau, Rama Satwa and Satwa Rama. Saganbhau has given a detailed account of political conditions of the Marathas prior to Bhau's expedition to Panipat. He mentions that there were 60000 Pathans at Kunjpura³². He also mentions that the Holkars betrayed the Marathas . It shows that the betrail of Holkars was known to the people in those days. 9

There are some ballads on Parshurambhau's expedition to Karnataka which gives a clear picture of the battle. There are 10 ballads written on the battle of Kharda of 1795. The battle of Pattankudi is picturized by Shahir Khemu Omu which has clearly indicated that Parshurambhau Patwardhan was cut into pieces when he was unconscious³³. Shahir Khemu Omu was a resident of Kolhapur. This shows that Parshurambhau was not killed in the battle.

In this way the ballads provides us political setup in the period under review.

SOCIAL LIFE AS SEEN IN THE MARATHI BALLADS

The Maratha ballads have narrated the social life in the 18th and 19th centuries. Some of the customs and traditions of the society have been described in these ballads. There is a ballad on the life of Ramabai, the wife of Peshwa Madhavrao I~~st~~³⁴. The fragments of this ballads are available. The composer of the ballad is unknown. In the ballad it has been described that Vishwasrao, Madhavrao and Narayanrao were the brothers of a great virtue . They have been equated with Ram and Laxman of the epic period. It also describes the early exploits of Madhavrao I~~st~~. Some of the qualities like the assessment of horse and elephant have been explained. The ballad mainly describes the pathetic scene of Madhavrao's last days at Theure. In the 3rd chok the Shahir has described oblations which Ramabai had devoted to the deity. She had decided to offer 5 lakhs of Rupees to Lord Ganpati if her husband was saved³⁵. But unfortunately on wednesday 18th Nov.1972, Madhavrao expired. Ramabai decided to become a Sati³⁶. In the 5th of chok of the ballad, a near description of the process of Sati is given.

The next ballad that we come across depicting the social customs of birth, thread ceremony and marriage

ceremony deals with Sawai Madhavrao. This ballad is written by Shahir Khandu Santu. In this ballad, Sawai Madhavrao has been compared with Lord Parshuram ~~ks~~. It indicates that the Maratha kingdom was spread over six and half Subhas in the south. The third chouk narrets ⁹⁴ the thread ceremony of the ^Peshwa³⁷. On this occassion how the whole city was decorated is also described. There is also a description of the house of glasses in Poona. In short the social ceremonies of thread and marriage throws some lights on the customs prevealent in the 18th century. Then we come to a very famous ballad written by Shahir Prabhakar on the occasion of Rangpanchami³⁸. Shahir Prabhakar gives us a picture as to how the people celebrated Rangpanchmi in those days. He compares Sawai Madhavrao with Lord Krishna. Honajibala also has written a ballad on the Rangpanchmi³⁹. He compares Sawai Madhavrao with Lord Krishna. He speaks in high tone about Mahadji Shinde. According to him there is no greater city in the south than poona. He describes that at almost every corner various colours were kept available for the people to use it freely to throw at each other. Just as there is a description about ceremonies. There is also a ballad written by Ram Joshi on the famine of Maharashtra and the attacks of the Pendharies on the people⁴⁰. Of course

this is a political situation in the early 19th century. It describes how thrice the Pathans plundered the area relentlessly. He described how the women were dishonoured⁴¹. ~~It~~ He also described how the cows were slottered^{and}, the Brahmins were compelled to eat meat. By taking advantage of the chaotic condition, bands of maruders plundered the area. This condition led to the fact that certain vices such as witch-craft, gend currency. The famine in Maharashtra had annihilated the society to a large extent. This ballad throws light on the declining state of the society in the early 19th century.

The glory of a state depends on the aesthetic sense of the rulers. The Peshwas had an aesthetic sense. Due to this sense they developed Poona as a major city in the South. Ram Joshi has described the life in Poona in "Punyacha Pawada"⁴². He described the water system of the city. In order to make his rule benevolent the peshwa had erected tanks at important places. They had also brought out gardens at several places, in order to beautify the city. He has described the rituals at Parvati the sacred shrine of the Peshwas. This ballad throws light on the social attitude towards things of natural beauty.

ECONOMIC LIFE AS SEEN IN THE MARATHI BALLADS

As compared to the narretion of socio-political life of the 18th century, we get a scanty reference about the economic conditions of the period under consideration in the ballads. The year 1797 is a vital year in the history of the Marathas. The chaotic atmosphere began since this year. In 1802 there were riots in the Maratha kingdom. In 1803 there was a famine in and around Poona. Lord Valeneia had visited Poona during this famine. He saw nearly 100 dead bodies lying near a pond in a state of decline and decay. The dead bodies were devoured by vultures and dogs. This is a very typical situation of a famine stricken area. Ram Joshi has given a graphic picture of this famine in his ballad " Dushkalacha Pawada ". He gives the rates of various commodities such as sweet oil, geagry, chillies⁴³. These rates indicate that the economic condition was on the decline. Due to the famine the rates of commodities were raised to a very large extent. Shahir Saganbhau has described the economic condition in " Dusarya Bajiraocha Powada "⁴⁴. In this ballad described that due to the famine the Sawakars closed down their establishments. Due to the lack of money circulation all the 18 karkhanas in the state were closed down.

From the above ballad we find the declining state of affairs. Economically the country was pushed backwards. The economic condition is the indication of the political upheavals. The ballad players in the Maratha period picturized the economic condition of Marathasociety in their ballads. However, a clear picture does not emerge out of these ballads. Yet^{it} is a source ~~of~~ to know the situation then.

ESTIMATE OF THE BALLADS

The ballad tradition made a valuable contribution in the history of amusement in Maharashtra. The ballads not only provided entertainment to the people but also awakened their bravery by telling the stories of historical personalities. They picturized not only the historical events but also the socio-economic condition of the contemporary Maharashtra.

They created pride about their forefathers in the minds of the young people.

Ballads are important in Maratha history not only as a form of entertainment but also as a source of historical record. V.K.Rajwade has described the ballads as an authentic source of Maratha history⁴⁵. The ballads written on ~~the~~ historical events provided genuine infor-

mation as most of them were written soon after the events. The English ballad researcher Prof. Heart pointed out that " Ballad is at its best when it is early caught and fixed in the prints "⁴⁶. Although the Marathi ballads were not fixed in the print soon after their writings but they were sung by the Gondhalis and their successors. And these were brought down generation to generation by cramming. Some ballad players also kept the collections of written ballads which are helpful for the study of Maratha history.

However, there were some drawbacks of the ballads. The ballad players presented historical themes with artistic treatment, these themes were concerned mostly with the royal families and feudal lords. They wrote about the battles and prosperity of their heroes⁴⁷. Common man and his difficulties were rarely picturized in the ballads. Further more many times the ballad players over estimated their heroes for receiving handsome amount of royalty from their masters. Naturally, some partial informations were also added in the ballads. Romantic craze also damaged the authenticity of ballad literatures.

Even with these drawbacks, the popularity of ballads had ~~also~~ increased in South India during the 18th and 19th centuries. Many military personalities

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