

The Eighteenth Century Deccan

P. Setu Madhava Rao

The eighteenth century witnessed the withering away of the Mughal power and authority in the Deccan and the steady rise of the Marathas. In the earlier part of this century, however, there were a few powerful Mughal generals who were to be reckoned with, the chief among them was Nizam-ul-mulk, who alone could curb the ambitions of Marathas to occupy the whole of the Deccan effectively. After the death of Nizam-ul-mulk this province became the battlefield of struggle for supremacy between the Marathas, Nizam, French and English, which resulted in the ultimate triumph of the last power. On this eventful chapter in the history of India, there is considerable contemporary literature. But so far reliance has been placed on the Peshwa, English and French sources. A number of contemporary Persian sources have remained untouched as they are still in the form of manuscripts. In this book the author has introduced for the first time seven Persian manuscripts and four Persian works, which throw considerable light on many problems. The aim of the book is no more than to acquaint the students of history with the nature and content of these sources and thereby to create active interest in the intensive research on the unexplored material available.

Marathi Historical Papers and Chronicles The Decade of Panipat (1751-61)

Translated by Ian Raeside

Marathi has more to offer the historians than any other modern Indian language but its stock of chronicles and documents must still, for the most part, be sampled at second-hand, by all but Marathi speaking scholars. The Marathi documents translated here, most of them for the first time, are not only of immense interest and importance for the history of the Maratha Kingdom in the eighteenth century but have a unique place in the history of Indian literature as a whole.

Bhausahebanchi Bakhara is a dramatic chronicle of the diplomacy and campaigns of the Marathas in the 1750s which culminated in the terrible defeat at Panipat, told by a near contemporary in a heightened language of fictionalised form which has not prevented the *bakhara* from being a major and often unacknowledged source for the history of the period.

Atmcharitra of Nana Phadnis which covers the same great battle from the point of view of a civilian survivor, is a personal memoir by one of the greatest statesmen of the eighteenth century India.

The selection from Antaji Mankeshwar's letters gives an extraordinarily vivid picture of the day-to-day preoccupations of one of the captains of the Maratha army, told with rhetoric and even bombast but gloriously uncorrupted by hindsight.

For those with some knowledge of the period, these texts are illuminating. For those less specialised but with an interest in Indian history the *bakhara* is exciting reading.

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A FORGOTTEN LITERATURE
FOUNDATIONS OF
MARATHI CHRONICLES
R.V.
HERWADKAR

A FORGOTTEN LITERATURE

FOUNDATIONS OF MARATHI CHRONICLES

R.V. HERWADKAR

This book is an authoritative, thoughtful and fresh treatment of the Marathi *Bakhars* (Maratha Chronicles) as literature. The author develops the thesis that the *Bakhars* will retain their place as a developed literary form of emotive prose in Marathi literature and the one best adapted to the historical times.

The *Bakhars* reveal a glorious tradition of historiography in Maharashtra. Their writers have given us faith to live by and literary soul to cherish. As heroes, historians and litterateurs they pour out their hearts in profuse strains of unpremeditated art. The purpose of this book is to bring out the best in the ancient treasures, so that it may be known, enjoyed and put to use by readers.

The select bibliography, the reading and reference list and the glossary included in the Appendix should provide the reader with the formal data. This book will be a useful tool for students of history as well as literature.

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A Forgotten Literature

Foundations of
Marathi Chronicles

R.V. HERWADKAR



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To the Memory of
Vishwanath Kashinath Rajwade
(1863-1926)
the pioneer *par excellence* in
Marathi historical research

Foreword

Several years have passed since I first read an article by Dr. R. V. Herwadkar on "The Bakhars—An Appraisal." Though not unacquainted with the theme, I saw new vistas opening before me, and I was impressed by the author's command and love of his subject.

The present work has confirmed my regard for Dr. Herwadkar's competence in the field of what he has termed "A Forgotten Literature." His treatment of the Marathi Bakhari is systematic and complete, and at the same time literary and readable, and hence the book is a boon to the scholar as well as to the general reader.

Not being very well versed in Marathi history and literature, I do not venture to pronounce judgment on all of Dr. Herwadkar's findings and conclusions. But even those who may not concur with his view that "historiography in Maharashtra is to be found in the bakhars alone" will readily grant that he has given us a substantial and enjoyable study of the bakhars as literature and as history, from the point of view of craftsmanship as well as of content.

I sincerely hope that *A Forgotten Literature* will save from possible oblivion one of the great genres of our historical literature, and that Dr. Herwadkar will continue to pursue his research in this field, to the benefit of us all.

JOHN CORREIA-AFONSO, S.J.
DIRECTOR

1st March 1990
Heras Institute of
Indian History and Culture
Bombay

Preface

This book is a general survey of the Marathi Bakhars (Marathi Chronicles). In fact, it is based on my doctoral thesis 'Literature called Marathi Bakhars.' The author lays no claim beyond mere "porter's work"—except in one point, namely, the realization of the need for such a work in the interest of the study of Maharashtra's ancient heritage. The treasures of knowledge, wisdom and beauty contained in its literature are too precious to be lost. Every lover of Maratha history and culture needs to find his way into this forgotten literature of Maharashtra's past. The purpose is to bring out the best in the ancient treasures, so that it may be known, enjoyed and put to use by readers in this country as well as abroad, who will be glad to drink at the fountain-springs of *Maharashtrian Culture* undefiled.

It is not only important but also necessary to estimate literature both in terms of craftsmanship and subject-matter. The arguments advanced here are calculated to draw attention mainly to the humanistic aspect of Marathi Bakhars and to such brief inquiries into their technique and method as may open up new channels of interest. Since literature is a source of pleasurable experience, it is earnestly hoped that all serious readers will extend their field of critical reading to this literature of great perfection. The select bibliography, the reading list and the glossary included in the Appendix should provide the reader with the formal data.

Before I close, let me acknowledge my deepest gratitude to the various works which have helped me to study this subject and are mainly responsible for making my leisure hours fruitful. I am greatly obliged to Rev. Fr. John Correia-Afonso, S.J. for his 'Foreword', a splendid benediction. I

consider our friendship as one not only formed by choice, but also matured by time. We have now been acquainted long enough to have many images in common, and therefore a source of conversation which neither the learning nor the wit of a new companion can supply. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Professor K. Shri Kumar whose interest in this book and whose encouragement and advice have helped me a great deal in the writing of it. I cannot forget my old colleague late Professor Franklin Menezes Fernandes of the Department of English, St. Xavier's College, who, during long years of close friendship, made me the beneficiary of his profound learning and incisive analysis. I owe very much to my friend Ramdas Bhatkal for this publication. I set the final seal of gratitude in the Dedication.

R.V. HERWADKAR

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Rajwade Memorial Day
31 December 1993

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॥ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥ ॥ ठाणे को कण बिबस्ताने हेराज्य फिरंगी पाणे घेतले घे
 उनकु बुउधरिलि जमिदा रोचिवतने बुउविलि ॥ गावाचा गांव धरून बाटविला
 किरिस्तावंकले सास छगावव आगरवमईचा बहुतेक लोक धरून बाटविले
 व्यापमेला ह्मणजे घरात येत असता त्याची पोरंजी असतिलंतीने उडवाटवा
 विंये साउपडवमरा ह्मणसिमादिता मगलो कबः छिनाहेले पलेान कोण्टी को
 णिटदसण प्रांतिजा उतराहिले कि पाकर्म लोपजाहाला देवधर्म बुडाला प्रांतांनि
 तीर्थसेवेंलो पलिदेवदेवाले फोउताउकेलि आपतिदिबळे फिरंगी पाणे बाध
 ती फिरंगी धर्म चालवावयां सत्यागले ॥ मुलकान आत्मण फिरतां कामासन
 ये ॥ कोण्टियरुस्ताने काहिकार्य होमउपापने आरंभिला ह्मणजे घरह्मचे घर
 अवघे धरावेसे जारी पाडारी त्या घरात सापडले त्या सहिधरून न्यावे बंधि
 छिकारवे ॥ बंदिग्यानि शोत कुजरावे असा अनर्थमादिला त्या मुलकाचे बा
 ह्मणवे दरोउन फिरावयास लागले मारा ह्मधर्माचे कर्म अवघे चराहिले मुल
 खात कोणे येक गावावरसें दराचा थोडा सुपारि खेवडा सापडला ह्मणजे ते गा
 व धरून नेउने बाटवावातर कोण्टि दुसमान गिरिने न्यासाहि दिउमे करावे ॥
 दुसमान पाडिजवळ जाउने येका ध्याने बाळग्यावे आणिते राद दिने उने उगा
 इदिदेवा बिह्मणजे त्या घरह्मचे घर नेउने बाटवोवं ॥ न्याय अन्याय पाहावया
 चादकारनाहि ॥ या जानि चाउपडवमा हारा ह्मणसिमादिता माहारा ह्मणसि अग्रय
 देता कोण्टिनहि ॥ त्या मध्ये पावारे जातिचे मराटे लोक त्याची पाट हात धुवु
 न घेतली त्या जानिचे लोक बहुत बाटविले सरकर शोणबीवप्रभु ववाणि उग्र
 यास उपडव थोडा पादारे जानिस उपडव फार वेत्ता ॥ तो थोडि वासन सोसे मग
 पूर्व बादरे गाव अवघे चधरून बाटविले त्या मधून सोळे के पागायापे को
 बालनई कुदेशनारे गोडवत्येचि भावदे घेजण मधिन भिबनाई वधाकटाता
 ननाई कृतो समई उपाप त्या बार्कावहातेरं मभाळून निघाले तेकळ व्यास आ
 ले तेथून अनजुरास आले जाधियेक थडियेउन तपून राहिले येक धडी व्यास

Facsimile : Sabhasadachi Bakhar, Joshi Edition, 1960

So I turn'd to the Garden of Love
That so many sweet flowers bore;
And I saw it was filled with graves.

—William Blake

Introduction

The *bakhar* (feminine gender in Marathi) or the Marathi Chronicle survives in Marathi literary history as the queen—nay, the empress—of grace and dignity; for few literary forms are more conducive in some respects to the pleasures of society. This treatise is mainly a general plea for the standards in literature to be applied to the bakhars, in view of the analysis undertaken here of the basic forces which give to them their peculiar power as a fine art and also as a source of history. How this form of writing originated and developed over different periods is also considered. Thus it includes two surveys of the bakhars—one as literature and the other as history.

We read the bakhars from a variety of motives, primarily as a source of information. We read to experience vicariously the emotions of other people—here historical personalities. Thus we actually live another life to explore our own emotions. We enlarge our personality; we are enriched.

Maratha history is rich in its sources. It abounds in diverse Marathi sources, besides the European and the Persian. These sources are both contemporary and of later periods, comprising official and private documents and others, including diaries, notes, family histories, genealogies, all in prose, and also ballads in verse. They cover practically the entire Maratha period from the pre-Shivaji period to the fall of the Empire (A.D. 1818). Contemporary documents like letters and bakhars draw our attention to events.

Etymology and Characteristics

The word 'bakhar' is derived by metathesis from the

Arabic word *khavar* (pl. *akhbār*) which means news or report. Various scholars have attempted to derive it etymologically. Rajwade opines that the word 'bakhar' is formed from the verb 'bak' (Sanskrit) meaning 'to speak.' He further infers that the bakhars were spoken or oral in ancient times. It implies that they were not written. According to him the period of this spoken bakhar may perhaps be at least two and half thousand years ago.¹ This cannot be accepted as there is no evidence in support of this view. Besides, the verb 'bak' is not included in Panini's grammar. In view of the fact that the root of the word is Arabic and the foreign concept underlying it, Rajwade is more correct when he states that the Marathas wrote the bakhars in imitation of the style of the *tawārīkhs* written under the Muslim potentates in India.² C.V. Vaidya says that the *akhbār*s and the bakhars are antithetical in method in that while the former were authentic compositions, the latter were based on hearsay and it would appear that bakhar is a metathesis of *akhbār*. According to Dr. S. R. Kulkarni bakhar is derived from the Persian *bilkhair*—well being. However, this has not been corroborated. *Rāj vyavahāra-kosha* gives the synonym of bakhar as *akhjāyikā*, a narrative. J.T Molesworth in his *A Dictionary of Marathi and English* (1857) defines it as "Any history, relation, memoir, etc. in Prakrit prose." It is well known that the term bakhar was used in the Maratha kingdom in the sense of supplying information. However, the word came to be used in the restricted sense of political history or the history of the times.

The outstanding features of the bakhar are its (i) use of Marathi language, (ii) *modi*, a cursive script, (iii) prose, (iv) an account of the (post-Yadav and pre-British) period and (v) a narration of day-to-day life. In view of this it can be concluded that the bakhar is a narration about personalities and events in Maratha history.

Survey of Indian Historiography

Since the sense of history is very old in India, the concept

1. V. K. Rajwade, *Atitahāsik Prasāvana*, (Poona, 1928), p. 104.

2. Ibid., p. 2.

of historiography is not entirely foreign to this land. Historical material has been abundantly available here. People in ancient times had an interest in history. This is proved by the elements of history, found in some portions of Vedic texts, such as the Rigveda, for example, *dānastuti* does not only praise the patrons or the kings, but it contains their complete lists also. Still further they undoubtedly refer to historical events, that is, actual happenings. *Dāsharādnya-yuddha* is nothing but the history of an event.

Close to history are the terms *itihās* and *purāna* found first in the Atharvaveda. *Gāthā* and *Narāshamsī* (songs of bravery) are also mentioned there. One of the component sections of the Atharvaveda consists of *itihās* (legends), *akhyaṇ* (narratives) and *purāna* (cosmogonic myths). The Chhndogyopanishad refers to *itihās-purāna* as the fifth veda. These terms are used in order to explain the reason for some ritual act or other. According to the Shatapatha Brhamana, the *hoṭā* (sacrificer) has to recite some portion of the *itihās-veda* on the eighth day of *pāriplava* narrations of Rajasuya and Ashvamedha sacrifices.

In fact, the Puranas are designated beside being ritual precepts (*kalpa*) and the discussions on the same are designated in the Brhmanas as legends of origin including the creation legends, distinguishing them from *itihās* and *akhyaṇs* which are the stories of gods and men. Though the Puranas are of inestimable value as history of religion, they are useful to the historian and antiquarian as sources of political history by reason of their genealogies for the period before the sixth century. Thus the terms *itihās* and *purāna* were commonly used in Vedic literature indiscriminately; for they were sometimes used as synonyms but at other times as different kinds of narratives.

According to M. Winternitz the terms *itihās* and *purāna* did not name the specific compositions but were applied to legends, narratives and such other works.³ Dr. S.V. Ketkar opines that there must have existed a group of works like *itihās-veda* in ancient times. Besides *itihās* and *purāna* must have been separate treatises in Vedic literature.

3. M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I, (Calcutta, 1927), p. 208.

Later Sanskrit tradition accepted the idea of *itihās* as legends using *akhyan*, *kaṭā*, *akhyaṇikā* as synonyms for the same. Shankaracharya in his commentary on Brihad-ranyakopanishad clearly distinguishes between *itihās*—the story of Pururava-Urvashi—and *purāṇa*—the formation of the world from *asat* (non-existence) to *sat* (expansion). It may be inferred that scholars differ widely regarding the terms *itihās* and *purāṇa* in the Vedas upto the eighth century.

Yaska, while discussing the different schools of interpretation of vedic hymns, points out that 'aitihāsik' (historical) school explains the word 'mūhunau' as Yama and Yami and further adds that it interprets *itihās* as purely mythological stories. He refers to the stories of Devapi, Shantanu, Vishwamitra, Vishwakarma, as history. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, though popularly known as epics, are in fact history. Although the *Mahabharata* in its introduction is called by turn as *itihās*, *purāṇa* and *akhyan*, the author lauds his work as *itihāsottam* (the best *itihās*). The Purāṇic conception of *itihās* is that it comprises instructions to achieve the fourfold object of life. Kautilya in his *Arthashastra* uses the term *itihās* widely as he includes in it *Dharmashastras*, *Arthashastras*, along with *purāṇas*, *akhyaṇikās* (legends) and *itivṛttās* (reports or historical events). Patanjali in his commentary on Panini clearly distinguishes *Aitihāsik* from *paurāṇic* school of thought.

Amarkosha defines *itihās* as *purāvṛtta* (an account of the past). The five elements of Puranas are (1) the creation of the universe, (2) the animate and the inanimate world (3) the dynasties (4) their achievements and (5) the *manvantarās* (divisions of time). In view of the foregoing, it can be seen why the two terms *itihās* and *purāṇa* were commonly used together.

In the purāṇic period the modern concept of history was not clear. History lies concealed in the Puranas. It was thus linked to religion. The tradition of the long lists of kings and the accounts of the royal dynasties preserved specially in the *Purāṇas* and the epics form the chief source of early history and particularly from the sixth century onwards. The earlier part of them is rather mythical while the later

is historical. This Hindu concept of 'history' was also shared by the Buddhists and the Jains of the succeeding periods. Their writings form a valuable supplement and corrective to the evidences of these *purāṇas* and prove to be very important historical data. In sum, it can be said that the ideas of history were common to all sects of the period. It may also be noted that along with the local chronicles and preambles land in the old grants, the epigraphic records such as the numerous accurately dated inscriptions, though they leave many periods unrelated, yield much historical wealth.

Although there are practically no records of the historical writings as such, foreign travellers like Megasthenes (Greece), Hiuen Tsang (China), Al Masudi (Arabia) Manucci (Venice) and Bernier Francois (France) have recorded their impressions about India. These, of course, are not fully reliable as they are the results of superficial observations, ignorance of the language and the customs of the country. They nevertheless, along with the other sources including the *purāṇas*, are of immense help to historiography. A.B. Keith observes that "to compose history for its own sake was a conception which in my land is slow to emerge and in India in particular came very late and imperfectly into being."⁴

In the Gupta period two new types of historical literature, biographies and local chronicles, came into existence. Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsha*, the work of his maturity, is more poetry than history. The same is the case with Harsha's *Naishadhūya* which ranks with Kalidasa's epics, as a *mahākāvya* par excellence. It is idle to seek in these works any precise parallel between the mythical figures of the past and the historical personalities of the early Gupta period. Their mythic character is obvious. The *Harshacharita* of Bana, a biography in prose, passes in theory as the model of an *akhyāyikā*. All these works are consciously built on the romantic model than sober history. They were conceived not as history but primarily as medium of literature. Their authors prefer to glorify the characters rather than paint

4. A.B. Keith, *Classical Sanskrit Literature*, (Calcutta 1932), p. 61.

their true picture. The *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, a local chronicle of Kashmir, by Kalhana in the twelfth century A.D. is an historical text in the true sense. However, it is poetry, none the less. Kalhana may not be a great historian but his attempt is credible as he himself remarks that he had examined eleven works of former scholars which contain the chronicles of the kings as well as the views of the sage *Nila* (*Nilamata Purāna*—Blue Book). Thus he is a happy contrast to his predecessors. Next to Kashmir, in Gujarat historiography was also in vogue which is seen in the *Prabandhachintāmaṇi* and *Prabandhakosha*, historical works depicting the history of Gujarat under the Chalukya dynasty.

The *Chach-Nāmā*, a history of the Arab conquest of Sind, in the early eighth century, which is a Persian translation of the original Arabic, was written in the thirteenth century. It is also known as *Tarikh-i Hind Wa Sind* or *Fath-Nāmā*. This work was translated by Muhammad Ali bin Hamid Abu Bakra Kufi. In spite of its defective lineages and anachronisms, it is considered an authentic history. There were probably local chronicles which formed the basis of *Chach-Nāmā* detailing the usurpation of the Brahmin Chach.

India attracted the attention of Arabic writers since the conquest of Sind. Two and half centuries later, the Arabic scholar Abu-Rihan or Alberuni, the contemporary of Sultan Gazanavi, wrote *Tahkik-i-Hinda* (An Inquiry into India) in A.D. 1030. It is judicious as it was written in the spirit of quest for truth. However, the accounts therein rest on Indian culture rather than the political condition of the times. Its chief source was the literary works and not personal observation. After two centuries, the Turks established their political supremacy over India. They introduced the art of writing chronicles, following the Arabic tradition, by recording the political events. Henceforward, India prominently figured in the Muslim Chronicles more comprehensively. Biographies and autobiographies of emperors like Babur, Jahangir and Aurangzib are well known. Worth citing unique feature of the Mughal administration is the recording of daily events, preservation of all political cor-

respondence and systematic compilation of accounts of major events with accurate dates besides news reports.

Local histories (*vaṁśhāvalī*) of Nepal, the bardic chronicles (*rāsās*) of Rajasthan, 'Dharmamangal poems of Bengal, *Buranjis* of Assam, *Yazawins* of the Burmese, *Pongsawadans* of the Siamese and lastly *Mahāvamso* and *Dīpavamso* of the Buddhist monasteries in Ceylon fall in another class of history writing.

Marco Polo and Nicolo de Conti (Venice), Ibn Batuta (Africa) and others have left interesting information about various parts of India in the Middle Ages. Similarly, reports of Jesuit missionaries, factory records of the Dutch, the Portuguese, the French and the English trading settlements throw light on contemporary history. Though not scientific, these manifest the historical sense of the time. In short, the sources of the Mediaeval period (13th to 18th centuries) yield more valuable glimpses of fundamental data as compared with their counterparts in the ancient period.

Impact of Muslim Rule

With the arrival of the Muslims in India, the approach to historiography underwent a radical change. Politics became its determining factor. In the Muslim kingdoms, history was in the form of *tawārīkh*, *nāmā* and *akhbār*. A daily record of events was a regular feature in the courts of all the rulers. Khafikhan, Jahūr, Abul Fazl and others were the court writers in Maharashtra and in Delhi. They were ordered to write histories and this inevitably led to praising their own people and condemning others. However, this tradition of writing which had already existed in Persia, Arabia and Afghanistan is important and is a characteristic of the period. The Mughal administration which was the legacy of the Perso-Arabic system in Indian setting came to be proved by the experience of centuries as the most successful one. Traces of it still survive under the modern edifice.

Muslim rule in India greatly influenced the people's mode of life for several decades. Rajwade opines that the *Ashta-Pradhān* system of Shivaji was borrowed from the Moham-

medans.⁵ The terms Peshwa, Majumdar, Waknis, etc., are clearly foreign in origin. It was only later in life, particularly at the time of his coronation that Shivaji made a deliberate attempt to substitute Sanskrit equivalents to these Persian terms. Even so most of the terms in his administration remained Islamic, where native equivalents were not readily available. This Persian influence seems to be pronounced in Maratha historiography, the bakhars as we have already seen.

Features of the Bakhar

Political history is the determining factor of the bakhar. Its other characteristics are: (i) It is primarily in prose, (ii) and is produced under the orders of a master, (iii) it begins with a courteous greeting as in a letter and ends with a subscription, (iv) it starts in mythological fashion describing the origin of the world and genealogies of kings, before the subject proper is treated, (v) it is written to extol great persons or events, (vi) it lists the armies, forts and generals in detail as in an account book, (vii) destiny and supernatural elements are its common features and (viii) traditional records and stories, including gossip are its raw material.

Rajwade estimates the total number of bakhars at more than 200. He includes in them all kinds of historical writing.⁶ Only half of them are extant though, and of these about 70 have been published to date. According to their forms they may be classified as (i) biographies, for example, *Shiv Chhatrapatiche Charitra*, (ii) autobiographies, for example, *Nānā Fadnavisāche Ātmacharitra*, (iii) family histories, for example, *Peshwāyānchi Bakhar* (iv) accounts of great events, for example, *Pānipatchi Bakhar* (v) history of a particular period, for example, *Peshwaichyā Akherchi Akhbār* (vi) narrative in defence of a particular person in a contention, for example, *Holkarāchi Thaili*, (vii) news reports, for example, *Shake Satrāshe Chalisātil Māhiti* and (viii) translations, for example, *Kashi Rājāchi Bakhar*.

5. V.K. Rajwade, op. cit., p. 104.

6. Ibid., p. 2.

Rajwade has classified the bakhars in a different way. He mentions the contemporary bakhars as primary.⁷ Though not fully authentic, they are reliable to a large extent in the absence of truly authentic ones, as they are written from first hand knowledge, for example, Sabhasad's Bakhar. Secondly, the bakhars based on hearsay reports, for example, the major portion of *Peshwyānchi Bakhar* by Sohoni. Lastly, those bakhars which record or copy the facts from old bakhars or improve them to advantage, for example, *Saptaprakarnātmak Charitra* (Chitnis).

A division of the bakhars, which is very convenient, is the one based on epochs. It divides them into pre-Shivaji period, the Shivaji period, the Peshwa period, and the British period. In view of this, contemporary and later bakhars narrating the events of the respective periods may be classified as sub-divisions. During the British period there are practically no bakhars except on non-political subjects. However, there are only the family histories of different historical pedigrees written for the requirement of Inam Commission (1852).

The bakhars in prose filled in the gap in ancient Marathi literature which consists more of poetry, rather than of prose works. Moreover they enriched Marathi literature by introducing a new form of writing. Though the span of the historical period covered by them is limited, even then, they have made a noteworthy contribution. They are like the lightning, which though of short moment, attract the attention. The truth, that beauty is ever transient, applies equally to bakhar-writing. There is no doubt that the bakhars occupy a remarkable position in the history of Marathi literature.

7. Ibid., p. 214-215.

II

Bakhar-writing in Maharashtra

When life is the criterion and not art, the prose of a nation is far more important than its poetry.¹ Into prose go its laws and politics and, in historical times at least, its philosophy and history. The best that a nation can ask of its historians is a prose that is unpretentious, unambiguous and unadorned. Often a writer may embellish prose with elaborate patterns and decorative words or he may use a simple prose, but the simplicity will be accompanied by power and eloquence.

In this chapter an attempt is made to record the works only of such bakhar-writers as have added to the potentialities of Marathi as a medium of literary expression. It is typical of their unconscious artistry that their prose is clear but defies imitation; it is a clarity sustained by the most perceptive minds of the historical times. Never is the meaning obscure, and each argument is developed with a deadly certainty, not through rhetoric, but by putting proper words in proper places. To be with the bakhar-writer is to be with one of the best works that Marathi literature in its glorious tradition has produced.

Pre-Shivaji Bakhars

Writing of history has been practised in Maharashtra from pre-Shivaji times as is attested by the numerous writings which go under the designation of bakhars. Writers were not merely interested in recording the events but also in re-creating the past, throwing light on details which are

1. B. Ifor Evans, *A Short History of English Literature*, (Penguin, 1955). p. 192.

often absent in historical letters. In spite of their shortcomings, they contain some of the essential features of historical writing: inquiry into the past, human interest, evidence and historical imagination.

The bakhar mentioned by Rajwade as the oldest one, *Shalivāhanāchi Bakhar*,² focuses on some glimpses of history and records the life of the 'maker' of the Shaka era, which Hindus use in their religious rites and calendar. An extant manuscript appears to be a modernised copy of the original. The chronicle records only the popular legend which narrates, among other things, Shalivahana's little clay soldiers suddenly springing to life and battling on his behalf. The name Shalivahana is a Prakrit corruption of the Sanskrit *Sātavāhana*, which was the name of the first known king of Maharashtra. Here it may be noted in passing that the *Sātavāhanas* (230 B.C.-A.D. 230), believed to be originally from Andhra according to the Puranas, may have been from Maharashtra. *Sātavāhana*, at first a personal name, later became dynastic. According to modern scholars, Kanishka, the Kushān sovereign ruler (A.D. 78), was the 'maker' of the Shaka era. The chronicle mentions two names Shālīvāhana and Vikramāditya. But neither their identity nor their contemporaneity has been established.

The oldest available chronicle is *Mahikāvāfichū ūrpha Māhimchū Bakhar*. This is a tome of six chapters written by Keshavacharya, Bhagwan Datta and others at different times. The oldest are the second and the third chapters written in A.D. 1448 by Keshavacharya. The Bakhar seems to have been finalized in book form in the seventeenth century. It deals with the events from the arrival of Pratap Bimb in A.D. 1138 to the arrival of the Portuguese in A.D. 1538 and deals with the reigns of seven successive dynasties in the North Konkan region. It is written partly in prose, partly in words. Although it has some historical inaccuracies as regards time (for example, the fall of Deogiri in A.D. 1288 instead of 1294) and events (for example, the murder of Ramdeo Rao Yadav instead of his defeat by

2. V. K. Rajwade, *Altiḥāsik Prastāvana*, (Poona 1928), p. 348.

Ala-ud-din Khalji), it is the only authoritative socio-political history of the Konkan during the Mediaeval period. Nevertheless its references to the Silahars, the Sultans of Ahmedabad and the Portuguese have been corroborated by references in copper plates, *tawārikhs* and other documents. The distinguishing features of this chronicle are its recording of specific dates and frequent use of Persian words. What is historically important is that it contains the description of the administration, systems of land measure, units of the army and lists of forts, rivers and towns. Incidentally, this bakhar contains the first historical reference to *Mahārāshtra-Dharma* (the duty of the people of Maharashtra to oust foreigners) which later became a political tenet in Shivaji's days and remained so throughout the Maratha supremacy.

The next chronicle is the Bakhar of Rākshas Tāgadi or of Talikot. It deals with the history of the fall of Vijayanagar, the 'forgotten empire.' S. Krishnaswami Iyengar refers to it as the abridged Marathi version of the Kannad original by Ramaji Tirumal. He points out that Ramaji attended the court of Vijayanagar on the eve of the battle of Talikot.³ The Marathi manuscript was prepared by Venkaji Narayan Kulkarni in A.D. 1614 from a copy of the original by Venkatādri of Hubli. Ramaji's name is clearly Mahratta and the language is a popular form of Kannad, very far from pure literary Kannad. It contains a mixture of foreign terms which shows that the writer is a stranger writing the language owing to official exigencies. According to Dr. Iyengar, Akbar Padshah Jalaldin, who is referred to in the Kannad and Marathi versions as an emperor, was really a feudatory prince of Bijapur.⁴ The account of Ram Raja's dream of his future death can safely be rejected as unhistorical. The chronicle does not give the date of the battle, but only mentions the date of Ram Raja's death, namely, 23 April 1565. The date of the battle is a matter of dispute. *Burhān-i-Māsir*⁵ and *The Cambridge History of*

3. *Indian Historical Records Commission*, VIII (1925), p. 24.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

5. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. L (1921), p. 146.

6. *The Cambridge History of India*, III (1928), p. 448.

India⁶ put it as 4 and 5 January 1565 respectively, while *Tārīkh-i-Muhammad Kulubshāhi*⁷ and G.S Sardesai⁸ give it as 23 and 22 January 1565 respectively.

Some of the earlier pages of the chronicle are missing. A post script mentions the date: 25 April 1686. It is the first chronicle to use the word 'bakhar.' Krishnaswami prefers to call it 'The Bakhar of Rama Raja.' Its language is Marathi which shows distinct influence of Kannad. The Kannad document *Ramarajānā Bakhairu* is lodged with the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras (vide *Mackenzie Collection*, Vol. 177, Folios 3-36 and *Local Records*, Vol. 24, Folios 54-87).

Rajwade refers to the *Yadav Bakhars* of Singhan and others and also *Hemād Pantāchi Bakhar* of the later Period.⁹ These are no longer available. According to him *Hemād Pantāchi Bakhar* is a treatise on education rather than history. These bakhars of the pre-Shivaji period are important, because they throw light on less known historical aspects of that age.

Bakhars about the Shivaji Period

The real history of Maharashtra begins with the rise of the Maratha power under Shivaji. It is known as Shivashahi. There are about twelve bakhars dealing with the life and achievements of Shivaji. Krishnaji Anant Sabhāsad's Bakhar, a contemporary chronicle, was written by a person closely associated with Shivaji. Rajwade opines that *Sabhasad* means "Counsellor in the royal court."¹⁰ The bakhar was written at Jinji under instructions from Raja Ram in 1697. It narrates only 71 incidents of Shivaji's life as against 243 recorded by *Jedhe Shakāvali*, a prominent source of information about Shivaji. As an original source, Sabhasad's Bakhar is important. The only dates mentioned in the work deal with episodes of Shivaji's coronation and death. The events are described chronologically. The men-

7. *Indian Antiquary*, op. cit., p. 146.

8. G.S. Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas*, I (Bombay, 1946), p. 29.

9. V.K. Rajwade, op. cit., p. 349.

10. *Ibid.* p. 217.

tion of Shivaji going to Delhi instead of Agra is obviously a mistake. The references to the goddess Bhavāni's appearance during Shivaji's spiritual trances and her guidance in times of danger cannot be considered historical, but may be taken as Sabhasad's interpretation of Shivaji's extraordinary powers (inner voice) to come to a correct decision.

The author presumes that Shivaji was an incarnation of Shiva, and unconvincingly reports omens, such as earthquakes, joint rainbows, at the time of Shivaji's death. This may be attributed to his hero-worship and perhaps to his sentimental reactions to stirring events so close to him. At any rate, this certainly has enhanced the appeal and readability of the chronicle. In spite of these shortcomings, Sabhasad as a politician and a pioneer of historical writing can be called the Sir Thomas Moore of Maharashtra.

Two contemporary Persian chronicles merit our attention here. One is *Bundelyāchī Bakhar* (written after 1707) recording a part of history from Shivaji's birth to Aurangzib's death. It is known as *Nakshe-Dil-Kushā* and was written by Bhimsen Burhanpuri, a courtier, at the behest of Dalpat Rai Bundela, an ancestor of the rulers of Datia State. It brings out Shivaji's greatness vividly as Dalpat Rai was physically present at Aurangzib's campaign against the Marathas. The work was translated into English by Scott in 1794.

The other chronicle is the history of the *Ghorpades* of Mudhol State written by a Muslim scholar of Bijapur in c. 1709. It traces the descent of the *Ghorpades* under the Adil Shahs and the Bhonsales in Maharashtra, both from the Sisodia family of Mewar (Rajputana). The data was supplied to the author by Shivanand, the record-keeper of the Ghorpade family.

These two chronicles have been now translated into Marathi in 1920 and 1924 respectively.

Chitragupta's *Bakhar* (1761), a biography of Shivaji, is an enlarged version of Sabhasad's *Bakhar*. The chronicler has his own elaborate poetic style and has drawn out the original short sentences into long ones in the ratio of one to four. Full names of persons like Moro Pant Peshwa,

Annaji Datto and a long list of sardars, which are not given by Sabhasad, are found here. The episode of Sindhudurga appears to be original. The style is creative par excellence.

The chronicler draws freely on Sanskrit and Hindustani vocabulary and seems to prefer high-sounding words and long-winded sentences which reflect his individuality. His prose can rightly be described as prose run mad, mixed occasionally with poetry. Chitragupta is the pen-name of Raghunath Yadav, who was at the court of Sambhaji II at Kolhapur. According to Rajwade, the author was the descendant of Balaji Avaji Chitnis alias Chitre, the personal secretary of Shivaji and the chronicle was written after Sambhaji II's death sometime between 1760 and 1770.¹¹

Bhonsalvamsha Charitra (1803), the history of the Bhonsales of Tanjore and Maharashtra, is an epigraph in the Brihadishwar temple at Tanjore. Its author is Babu Rai, court-writer of Serfoji Bhonsale, the ruler of Tanjore, who commissioned it. It narrates events from the time of Ekoji, Shivaji's step-brother, to that of Serfoji and also deals with the life of Maloji till the reign of Shahu II of Satara. Jija Bai, the first wife of Shahaji, has erroneously been referred to as his second wife. As is well known, Tuka Bai was the second wife of Shahaji. The reference to Shahu's release by Aurangzib is also not correct. It was Azam Shah, Aurangzib's son, who, on his way to Delhi after his father's death, set him free.

The account of Shivaji is remarkable for its extensiveness, particularly in view of its being written far away from Maharashtra. Two incidents show the author's keen eye for history. In one he points out how Aurangzib commissioned an artist to paint a picture of Shivaji secretly. In the other he relates how Shivaji entered and departed from Ekoji's fort at Tanjore incognito and then sent him a message to send back the tuft of his head-dress which had been deposited in a shop in return for another head-cover he had bought. The relation of Shivaji's ancestors to the mythological persons, referred to in the beginning, cannot be taken as historically correct. The language of the chronicle shows some influence of the Tanjore dialect of Marathi. Though an epigraph, the chronicle must have been originally a manuscript.

11. Ibid. p. 217.

Malhar Ram Rao Chitnis wrote the *Bakhar* of Shivaji at Shahu II's bidding in 1811. It is popularly known as *Sap-taprakaranātmak Charitra*. A biography in seven chapters of a much later period, it gives the detailed life-history of Shivaji. The chronicle refers to various sources, such as diaries, heroic accounts and other traditional records. He begins his *bakhar* in the traditional mythological style by giving the genealogies of ancient kings down to the times of Shivaji. Shivaji's conquest of the Deccan (Karnatak) and his coronation are described in the sixth and seventh chapters respectively but chronologically misplaced as the former event followed the latter. The references to *gārdīs* (guards), artillery, *dakshinā* (gifts to Brahmins) in the month of Shravana are anachronisms as they relate more appropriately to the later Peshwa period. The writer states that Shivaji was absent from Maharashtra for as long as 22 months and that he returned by a devious route—Mathura, Gaya, Prayag, Benares, Haridwar, Ayodhya and the Telangana regions. Modern research shows that Shivaji completed the journey in six months; the return journey from Agra by the same short route by which he had gone taking 25 days. Aurangzib has been mentioned as the son of Alamgir. In fact both the names are of the same person. Making due allowances for its weak points, Rajwade considers the work very useful for the study of Shivaji.¹² Grant Duff has termed the biography "voluminous." Biographies of Sambhaji, Raja Ram, Shahu I, Ram Raja and Shahu II have also been written by Chitnis and are valuable sources of history. Chitnis's style is clear, expository and not without a touch of humour. Its picturesqueness makes the narration dramatic and interesting.

The *Shiva Digvijay* (1818) and *Shiva Pralāp* (1829) *Bakhars* are obviously written to glorify Shivaji. They differ in historical details and are poetic rather than historical. However, Rajwade prefers the former to the latter from a historical point of view.¹³ The *Shedgaonkar Bakhar* (1854) deals with the lives of the Satara Chhatrapatis including Shivaji. It is believed that more than one person has written it drawing on various old sources.

12. Ibid. p. 219.

13. Ibid. p. 220.

Another chronicle that deserves mention is *Jāvalīkar Moré Yānchi Chhoti Bakhar*, which deals with the history of the Mores of Javali (Jorkhore) in the Murhe province of Maval region. The chronicle states that Chandra Rao is not a personal name, but a title conferred by the Adil Shah on the rulers of Javali, and the personal name of the ruler who opposed Shivaji was Krishna Rao. These are points which no other bakhar makes. The authors of these bakhars are unknown. They seem to have been written in the early British period.

The bakhars concerned with the Shivaji period outnumber those of pre-Shivaji period and they deal mainly with Shivaji. Sabhasad's Bakhar is the only contemporary chronicle. It is, however, useful to study Shivaji in the light of various details in the chronicles by different writers. Each has its own merit. *Ekkṃyānnav Kalmi Bakhar* divided into small paragraphs or distinct passages making for brevity is free from glorification of the hero and is devoid of any references to supernatural elements in Shivaji's life unlike as in the other bakhars. That it is a translation of the *Tārīkh-i-Shivājī* in Persian, as some scholars believe, is a moot point. Its date of composition is also controversial. It was written by Dattaji Trimal Wakenavis who accompanied Shivaji to Agra. His name appears in the *Ashta Pradhāns* (eight ministers) of Shivaji. Sabhasad's Bakhar seems to be the main source of the other Shivaji chronicles. Practically all the bakhars about Shivaji, except the *Bhonsalvāmsha Charitra*, record his birth year as 1627. This has been rejected by modern research. The year suggested by a majority of scholars is 1630, as mentioned in the *Jedhe Shakāvali*. However, the historical importance of the bakhars about Shivaji and his times cannot be underestimated.

Bakhars about the Peshwa Period

The Peshwa period begins from the arrival of Shahu I in Maharashtra (1708) and ends with the surrender of Baji Rao II to the British at Dhulkot in the vicinity of Narnada (1818). However, the following period up to the annexation of Satara, the seat of the Chhatrapati (1849), has also been

considered here. It was an event of outstanding importance in the annals of India.

The Peshwa period was the age of Maratha supremacy in the political field. It was also an eventful period that witnessed the end of Muslim rule, the fall of the Maratha empire and the foundation of British power in India. A large number of bakhars were composed on the significant events of the Peshwa period. The battle of Panipat is the main subject of these bakhars. It was a national disaster like Flodden Field.

The *Sāshīchī Bakhar* (1742), apparently a contemporary document, deals with the capture of Bassein by the Marathas on 16 May 1739. Chimaji Appa, brother of Baji Rao I, and Gangaji Naik, a local leader of Anjur in Thane District have been described as the heroes of this battle. The chronicler in the introductory part graphically describes the religious persecution of the local people by the Portuguese, which was the main cause of the battle. The actual fight is certainly historical, but not the story that Gajanan, the family deity of Gangaji Naik, appeared in a dream, inspiring the devotee and forecasting his success. The Anjur edition of this chronicle (1742) may be considered reliable regarding contemporary events, when compared with the *Kāvyetihāssangraha* edition (1782). Since these editions differ in style and contents, their anonymous authors might have been different.

The *Bakhar of Shahu Maharaj* was written by Govind Khande Rao Chitnis, an associate of Shahu I. It traces the history of all important events,—how the hero established himself as Chhatrapati at Satara and how the Peshwas became supreme commanders of the Maratha army. Shahu's easy and carefree life at the Mughal court and the tragic scene of his death are described very feelingly and with remarkable narrative skill.

There are ten bakhars which narrate the Panipat incident. The *Kaifiyat of Bhāu Sahib* (1762), the *Chronicle of Bhāu Sahib* (1762) and the *Bakhar of Panipat* by Raghunath Yadav (1762) are contemporary records about the battle of Panipat. The *Kaifiyat* is believed to be original and written by Trimbak Sadashiv alias Nana Purandare the Maratha

Sardar, after his return from Panipat, while the *Chronicle of Bhāu Sahib* is its enlarged account not only in content but also in language. The writer of the *Kaifiyat* states that the massacre of the Marathas was due to their giving up of the usual guerrilla tactics and resorting to the alien method of fighting on an open battlefield. He also sarcastically remarks about the folly of his people in digging a trench round the camp. He glorifies Bhau, the hero, by calling him a divine incarnation. Raghunath Yadav is not correct in saying that Surajmal, the Jat, who feigned friendship with the Marathas, was responsible for calling Abdali to Delhi. In fact, the Jat preferred to be a real friend of the Marathas, although they insulted and treated him with contempt. The author fails to record the extraordinary self-sacrifice of Dattaji Scindia, which resulted in his death in the Battle of Barari-ghat on 10 January 1760. This, however, does not detract from the authoritativeness of the chronicle, particularly because the author claims that his account is based on the contemporary records of both the sides. The *Chronicle of Bhāu Sahib* excels the other two in style. The siege of Kumbheri, including the magnificent role of Malhar Rao Holkar, the self-sacrifice of Dattaji Scindia, the diplomacy of Najibkhan, the Ruhela Chief, the Peshwa's firm decision to rout the enemy, the loyalty of Ibrahim Khan, Gardi Chief of the artillery division, are the main highlights of this work. It pathetically narrates the sufferings of fugitives and also how Surajmal, though insulted, helped the Marathas even after their overthrow. The chronicler, though his name is a matter of dispute, possesses a modern journalist's facile pen and eye for the picturesque descriptive power. But for this chronicler, Panipat would have remained a lesser event.

The *Autobiography of Nānā Phadnavis* and the *Holkarāchi Thaili* are also contemporaneous with this great event. The former describes how the Marathas, including the writer, were stranded after the battle and the latter defends Malhar Rao Holkar for leaving the field at the peak of the battle, because he was entrusted with the responsible task of escorting the Peshwa family from the field away to safety. Gen. Briggs, translator of Nana's autobiography, calls it

"one of the most remarkable productions of oriental literature." Another contemporary document is the translation of Kashiraj Pandit's *Chronicle of the Battle of Panipat* (1780). Kashiraj Shivdev, a Deshasth Brahmin, was the secretary of Shuja-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Oudh and was present with his master throughout the campaign and the battle. His Persian account has long been recognized as by far the fullest and best source of that momentous struggle. The colophon suggests that the book was entitled *Karzar-i-Sadashiv Rao Bhau Wa Shah Ahmad Abdali*.¹⁴ He highly praises the Marathas for their bravery and describes how he personally searched for the corpses of Bhau Sahib, the Peshwa and his nephew Vishwas Rao and cremated them with the military honours. He finally states that it was God's will that Abdali should defeat the Marathas. This chronicle has been translated from the English version of the original by Lt. Col. James Browne of Dinapur in 1791. The English version first appeared in the *Asiatic Researches*, III (1799) and finally in a book form. The fifth edition (1810) was used for the Marathi translation.

Peshwyānchi Bakhar (the Chronicle of the Peshwas) (1818) by Krishnaji Vinayak Sohani narrates the full history of the family from Balaji Vishwanath to Baji Rao II. The chronicle is believed to have been composed orally and later written from the hearsay material based on the oral version. However, the contents cannot be totally rejected as untrue, unless proved so by authentic documents. The author Krishnaji, was a Subahdar (Governor) under the last Peshwa, and hence has some claim to credibility. His method is one of elaboration, yet he is admirably clear and he sticks to the point. He also reveals a sense of humour. The *Chronicle of the Bhonsles of Nagpur* (1822) and the *Holkar's Kaiyyat* (1827) were written in the early British period. The writers have availed of the court records of the families concerned and thus have included every incident of historical importance to support the claim of family for pension from the British. The method of the former is that of compression. This was perhaps because the first, we feel,

14. Jadunath Sarkar. *Indian Historical Quarterly*, X, 2 June (Calcutta, 1934).

was written for laymen, and the latter for fellow historians. Both are at home with their subject. The difference we can feel is that of some one telling us something and some one showing us something. The *Chronicle of the Angriars of Kolaba* and the *Kaifiyats of the Sardars of the Deccan* were also prepared for family pension.

Grant Duff's *Marathyañchi Bakhar* (1829) is the translation of the original, *A History of the Mahrattas* in three volumes (1826). Rajwade has pointed several misstatements in this chronicle. To give just one or two instances, the Ahmedabad invasion by the Peshwa Raghoba is stated to have taken place in 1755 instead of in 1753, Grant Duff is mistaken in mentioning the year of Jayappa Scindia's death as 1759 instead of 1755 (30 June). Rajwade has also pointed out that Duff has completely omitted the invasions of Gujarat and Khandesh by Raghoba in 1750, 1751, 1752, 1753, and 1756. He, however, compliments Grant Duff's *Chronicle* for being more systematic than the other chronicles of Maratha history.¹⁵

Harivaṃshāchi Bakhar written in 1842 is a family account of the Patwardhan Sardars, particularly of Purushottam Daji, who was noted for his loyalty, bravery, diplomacy and self-respect. The writer Balkrishna Rao Harihar alias Balkrishna Anna errs in stating that Nana Phadnis was the chief administrator and Sakharam Bapu, his assistant, when the Peshwa regime continued in the name of Ganga Bai, Narayanrao's widow. In fact the opposite was true. It must be said to his credit, however, that he frankly admits, that he was not sure whether the thread ceremony of Purushottam Daji was performed. He narrates dramatically the events leading to the murder of Peshwa Narayan Rao. Lucidity and forcefulness are the two main characteristics of this bakhar. *Patwardhani Wakā* (1850) describes briefly the battle fought between the Patwardhans and Haidar Ali on the plains of Savsi Kundgol in 1777, while *Khadyāchyā Swārñchī Bakhar* (1878) deals with the history of the war between the Peshwa and the Nizam in 1795. The war marks the last victory of the Marathas. The *Chronicle of the Murder of Narayan Rao* gives

15. V.K. Rajwade, Op. cit., 22-23, 29.

picturesque details of the event. The chronicler holds Anandi Bai, wife of Raghoba, responsible for the tragic event, but this has not been corroborated by contemporary records. On the other hand, selections from the Peshwa Daftar No 4—Reports about Anandi Bai—dealing with her daily life proves the total ignorance of the happenings.

During the Peshwa period bakhar-writing was rich in subject matter and style. It became so popular that writers treated non-political subjects as well in them, for example, *Samarthānchī Bakhar* (1793) is a biography of Ramdas. It is full of miracles and the supernatural. Though written in the old mythological style, it records the meeting between Shivaji and Ramdas as having taken place on 11 April 1649. This date has been accepted by many but not all scholars. The bakhar is of a particular sect.

Bakhars were also composed in the early British period. They were puranic. The aim of these bakhars was to popularize mythological stories containing supernatural elements, for example, *Krishnāchī Bakhar*. The missionaries wrote the history of their activities as bakhars, for example, *Christimandalichī Bakhar*. All these are non-political.

Though the bakhars had their origin in the pre-Shivaji period or in the true sense in the Shivaji period, they fully developed as a form of literature in the Peshwa period. Wide range of subjects and appropriateness of right penmanship made bakhar-writing significant, both as literature and as history during the period of Maratha Supremacy.

III

Dynamics of the Bakhar Literature

What is literature? The answer to the question would probably be in the words of St. Augustine once used in reference to other matters—"If not asked, I know; if you ask me, I know not." A certain taste for literature we all have; but to explain it in exact language seems rather difficult, if not impossible. Let us, nevertheless, make an attempt in that direction.

What is Literature?

Literature relates to all the activities of the human soul in general, expressed through the medium of language. It, therefore, embraces all forms of writing, including poetry and prose. The subject-matter handled therein is of general human interest and awakens in us pleasurable feelings—the beautiful, the sublime, the pathetic or the ludicrous and so on called the aesthetic emotions.¹ Literature, instead of being an accessory, is the fundamental *sine qua non* of complete living.² The synonym for literature in French is *belles-lettres* meaning beautiful or refined letters. Though literature consists of books, it is more than books. Literature is "memorable words." A classic primarily stands for a work of admitted excellence.

The Elements of Literature

Since literature is an expression of life and personality,

1. Anthony X. Soares. *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*, (London, 1938), p. 17.
2. Arnold Bennett. *Literary Taste*. (Penguin, 1938), p. 15.

the elements furnished by life itself, that is, the personal experiences as individual, as man in relation to his fellow-men, constitute its raw material. The writer's genius—the power of the mind—is capable of penetrating into all things within his reach and knowledge, and of distinguishing their essential differences³ Along with this, there are the elements of intellect, emotion and imagination of the writer combining to furnish the substance and the life of literature. Lastly, there is the element of composition and style moulding and fashioning the matter leading to order, symmetry, beauty and effectiveness.⁴

The term literature is also used in a technical sense, to specify the rules of literary writing or literary technique and the narration of the literary history of a language. This would help to know the literary achievement of the writers and forms invented in different periods.

The Function of Style

The personal side of literature is style or expression which is a real index of personality. A good style consists of intellectual elements such as the precision arising out of the right use of words, lucidity, propriety or the harmony between the thing expressed and its expression. Force, energy and suggestiveness are its emotional elements and music, grace, beauty, and charm are its aesthetic elements. Style being a personal quality is, as Carlyle says, "not the coat of a writer but his skin", or as Buffon puts it "style is the man himself." Style is the direct expression of an individual mode of experience.⁵

The Structure of Bakhar

The structure of the bakhar, since it is an historical story, is built up of various essential parts like fiction. They are the characters, the incidents, the action as story, the time and place of action, the end or purpose, and lastly the view of life

3. N.C. Starr, *The Dynamics of Literature*, (New York, 1945), p. 77.

4. W.H. Hudson, *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*, (London, 1932), p. 16.

5. J. Middleton Murry, *The Problem of Style*, (London, 1952), p. 11.

it unfolds. There are some basic demands from these parts that would justify the form as a fine art yielding aesthetic pleasure. The characters shall be true to life and be adequately and accurately presented. The incidents skillfully put together should grip the attention of the reader. The well-knit action should be proportionate to the incidents and characters. The scenes involving time and place of action must be real, that is, in accord with historical fact. There should be a clear aim or purpose like depiction of some period in the history upon which the degree of its success depends. Lastly it should unfold some philosophy of life of the writer in the interpretation of thoughts, character and action depicted in the narration.

The bakhar deals mainly with events and actions, with things suffered or done by people called historical personalities. These constitute its narration or story. The dialogue of the characters form an integral part of it. Success in characterization depends on the graphic description either directly or indirectly resulting in making the characters and incidents live before us. Social setting is indispensable in bakhars as history is their basic theme.

The Literary Aspect of the Bakhar

As a matter of imperative need, we will here delve into the bakhars to discover, if possible, the dynamics or the operating forces that have been responsible for the production of this specific form of Marathi literature. Depicting the feelings of the time, bakhars are an example of powerful emotive prose. The principal aim of the authors of the Marathi chronicles was imaginative reconstruction of the historical events. This involved selection and had to be presented as communication. Thus they fulfilled the cardinal conditions of literature as an art. The present investigation is based on the accepted theories about the minds of the creative writers and, in a way, therefore it is an analysis of the minds of the chroniclers, with special reference to the four fundamental elements of literature, namely, The Outer, The Inner, energy and balance.⁶

6. H. Norman Hurst, *Four Elements in Literature*. (London, 1936).

The Outer

The Outer is the objective attitude of the mind of the individual author. This element has a wide range of meaning and application. It is closely related to the environment, or the reality, which reacts on man and is expressed in his thoughts and conduct. As it is dominant in biography, so it is dominant in history, for the latter records facts. The past is a fact. So it is interested in the past. Likewise it is interested in the present or the contemporary events which are also facts. The Outer determines the theme of the writing and more often the mood of a literary work. Seriousness and gravity are its virtues. Being objective, it is straightforward. Prose is the natural medium of the outer. Being the language of exact thinking, it is the language of exact description also.

Every historical writing is an artistic process of interpreting facts. While dealing with facts as an historian, the bakhar-writer examines and connects them together. In a sense, they intensely vibrate in his mind which is ultimately relieved in his writing. This is of course, subject to the objective attitude of the historian which is mainly responsible for his respect to the tradition and convention.

Descriptions of persons, things and events in the bakhar literature fall under the Outer. They are the very soul of this element. The best works in common use are selected and are strung together artistically, producing a good style. Nevertheless, the chroniclers have their eye on the subject—the facts.

In Sabhasad, the Outer is particularly marked. A contemporary of Shivaji, Sabhasad bases his writing firmly on facts. He drives towards the actual incidents in Shivaji's life, as he was a knowledgeable witness to them. His work is determined by his period and the nature of his assignment. He seems to have a special affinity for facts as well as for the form he has chosen. He paints a very faithful picture of Shivaji and his times.

It would be interesting to compare how bakhar-writers approach the description of persons. We may cite the example of Sabhasad's description of Shivaji. Shivaji prepares to meet Afzal Khan as scheduled. This is how the bakhar reads in translation.

"His Majesty put on a cuirass of giltwire. He covered his head with a helmet and hid it under a turban. He put on a Pyjama and strongly tied his waist with a long piece of cloth. He carried a *bichua* (scorpion-like dagger) and a *waghnakh* (weapon resembling tiger-claws)."⁷

Sabhasad's simple but direct description of Shivaji in a realistic mode is the expression of the Outer in exalted style and treatment. His simplicity in writing is cumulative in its effect as it imposes its own atmosphere. He writes in a plain manner which is probably the highest he could achieve.

The *Chitragupta's Bakhar*, an enlargement of the *Sabhasad's Bakhar*, has a conventional poetic style. The chronicler, while narrating this incident, describes Shivaji as *Dinamani* (Jewel of the Day), his weapons as the thunderbolt and his sword as the second lightning.⁸ Although his style is ornate making his prose run away with him, his metaphors are vivid in their effect and make a sharper impact on the mind. Malhar Ram Rao Chitnis describes the same scene in a different way. According to him Shivaji wore an iron-cuirass on which he had a long robe hanging easily. He had an armour-cap above which he wore a turban. He donned a pyjama which was tied to his loin by a piece of cloth, the end of which was tucked into the pyjama. He carried the Bhavani sword in his right hand, while he had a *bichua* and a *waghnakh* in his left hand and a shield on his back. Chitnis says that Shivaji appeared very fierce and extraordinary to all.⁹ The chronicler through his prose portrays perfectly Shivaji as a great warrior. Sabhasad, Chitragupta and Chitnis have their eye on the same object—Shivaji, and in their own ways describe emphatically the state of affairs leading to the next event—the liquidation of Afzal Khan. The plain and ordinary words in their hands do not degenerate into a tediously dull and heavy formalism. Here the Outer reveals its affinity for the fact and therefore it is consistent with the established form of a bakhar.

Description of action like the description of people and things falls under the Outer. For example, the description in

7. *Shiv-Chhatrapatilchē Charitra*, Ed. R.V. Herwadkar, (Poona, 1986), p. 20.

8. *Shivaji Maharājānchi Bakhar*, Ed. K.N. Sane, (Poona, 1888), p. 23.

9. *Saptaprakaranātmak Charitra*, Ed. R.V. Herwadkar, (Poona, 1967), p. 78.

the Chronicle of Bhausahib that Kutub Shah, the *guru* of the Rohilas, took out the dagger tied to his waist and after kicking Dattaji Scindia who fell on his stomach, killed him by cutting off his head.¹⁰ The minute details of an actual happening, such as this one, impregnate the style with high seriousness. It appeals not only to the eye of imagination, but also to the physical ear with the onomatopoetic words used therein.

The *Outer* thus gives a wholesome objectivity which is essential to this type of literature as history.

The Inner

The Inner is the attitude of the mind looking within things or the inside of things. It is more related to the feelings or the inner life with its reactions, the character or the mental make-up of man. Its appeal is to the emotions and imagination. It looks at the past dreamily and romantically and even mystically. It finds new light in the memories of past or the far distant ages, which form the subject-matter of historical writings. The retrospective glance of the Inner towards the past inspires the historian to glorify the characters and events and also to raise them to sublime heights of imagination which is a component part of the Inner. It is accompanied by sensitiveness rather than by sensual experiences. Characterization in historical writings, therefore, has a solid base in sensitiveness. Unlike the *Outer* which is expressed in a direct and explicit manner, the Inner seeks fulfillment through suggestion. The characterization in historical writing is, therefore, suggestive rather than forthright.

The *Holkar's Kaifiyat*, the family history of the Holkars, pulsates with life, both in narration and characterization. The dramatic flowing style of narration in the chronicle determines its form, its division of events, the characterization and the various details of structure and setting. The writer says:

"Granted that Ahilya Bai was a woman after all; yet, though of the Sudra caste, in her ablutions and worship and in her conduct in society, she was like the Brahmmins. She

10. *Bhāu Sāhibānchi Bakhar*, Ed. K.N. Sane, (Poona, 1932), p. 82.

carried no mark of her (low) caste. Secondly Malharji Holkar, who was a terror to the whole world, had implicit faith in her. He would drink not a drop of water more than she would bid—so deep was the allegiance he owed her. His son Khande Rao Holkar, was killed in action at Kumbheri and his wife would immolate herself on his funeral pyre. Nestling close to his daughter-in law Malharji Holkar Subahdar pleaded, 'Why do you want to turn the world into a desolate desert for one without you? If you back me up, I shall feel that my Khandu is (still) alive and Ahilya is no more.' At this, decision to commit Sati was cancelled."¹¹

Ahilya Bai Holkar and Malhar Rao Holkar had the deepest love and respect for each other. Nowhere in the passage of the bakhār cited here, is there a direct mention of these qualities. They seem to grow and evolve without the reader being aware of their presence, until towards the end of the passage, they burst upon him in the pleasantest way and lead him to think he has discovered them himself. Such is the subtle suggestiveness of this passage. The suggestion of their divine qualities strikes the reader without any artificiality. The whole description makes the figures vivid. The contrast and the comparison between them spread a magic spell, which is ruled by the Inner. The style here gives strength to the narration by its deep suggestive power of words.

The same element can be observed in the *Kaifiyat of Bhāu Sāhib*. The bakhārnāvis analyses the causes of the destruction of the Marathas in the Battle of Panipat (1761) as follows:

"The forces joined the battle at daybreak and the fighting continued up to the evening. The earth drank blood. The Hindus had never before fought such a battle and such slaughter had never been experienced before. There will (it is hoped) never be a repetition of this in future. But God's will had to be done—people were led away (from homes) for being massacred. The Marathas were created (only to be killed). Is there any instance of such obstinate disposition of the armies before? Did they ever stay but in one place before

11. *Holkaranchi Kaifiyat*, Ed. Y.N. Kelkar (Poona, 1954), p. 47.

with trenches all round? To give battle, if it is to your advantage, otherwise to make good your escape. This is the usual practice (strategy) of the Marathas. They conquered the world by dint of this. (This time) the Marathas gave up the age-old policy and embraced the alien art of war. This resulted in the annihilation of all the foot and horse soldiers. There is no going against God's will."¹²

This narration is a fine example of the chronicler's objective outlook as an historian, but also of his personal sensitivity which is typical of his individual Inner. Here the Maratha army's blunder is very subtly suggested and at the same time the writer's personal sensitivity to the catastrophe is emphatically and unmistakably intimated with profound sadness.

The Inner is so intense with the writers, as is evidenced by the illustrations given here, that they do not confine themselves only to the Outer. In the illustrations, sensitivity and imaginativeness are combined to promote the Inner unity of the whole. Surrender to the will of God is the highest wisdom of the Inner. The suggestive depth, the organized form and the sensitivity raised to sublimity are all the outcome of that subjective attitude—the Inner—which is closely related to the human emotions and the human spirit and is the essential element in literature as well as life.

Energy

Energy the third element is, in fact, the principle of Intense Self-expressive Energy. It is the power of creation. It is, in other words, the intrinsic ability in a creative art such as literature. It is always present in the type of literature that flourishes in the particular age. It expresses itself through the individuality or the self which is the central source of ideas, thoughts and feelings of the writer. At times it is so forceful that it compels him to self-assertion. Energy is mostly interested in the past for recreating it. Faith and hope are its chief characteristics. It reaches out towards the higher good to which it aspires intensively and untiringly. In a sense it is a sublime mode of expression which gazes at eternity.

12. *Shrinant Bhāu Sāhib Yānchi Kaiḥiyat*, Ed. K.N. Sane (Poona, 1887), p. 26.

Raghunath Yadav is a typical example of Energy. His Chronicle of Panipat is a forceful revelation of himself. It expresses his own ideas, prejudices and enthusiasm. He describes the battle thus:

"The battle was no ordinary one. At that time the gods and Indra, the Lord of heaven, arrived in the sky in their planes to watch the battle. Glory to the height of valour! Sadashiv Pant brought the dead body of Balvant Rao in his camp after a great struggle. The Iranians were completely disillusioned. In the thick of the battle as many as seven-hundred fifty warriors who were perfect match one to the other from the armies of Sadashiv Pant, the Iranians, the Emperor of Delhi, Shuja-ud-Daula, Mansur Ali(?) and the residents of Has-tanapur laid down their lives. The Marathas massacred the Iranians and the Durranians. It was the climax of the bravery of the heroes! There was no sign of treachery or violation of faith, although it was a fierce battle !! Therefore, the Iranians and the Durranians being depressed began to say to themselves, 'These Marathas from the south are a treacherous lot! They defy our swords! We too on our part shall not lose ground without capturing the throne of Delhi! It does not matter, if we are all put to the sword to a man.' No sooner did they advance on the Marathas than Sadashiv Pant, exerting to the utmost, put them to rout and beat them back into their camps."¹³

Energy, in this illustration, gives an inspired personal touch to the writer's narration. The general tone in it is one of vigour. His use of the words *jirtā* (disillusioned), *Moharam kelā* (massacred) and *dāmtun ghātīe* (beat into) are remarkable for the effect. His hatred of the Iranians and the Durranians expressed in the strong deprecatory tone is equally characteristic of his partisan spirit. The violence of his indignation and of his blazing invectives throughout is observed in a fine form here.

Energy is very striking in the chronicler of Bhau Sahib in all its vigorous, impetuous style. The writer describes the gloom in the camp of Scindias that followed Dattaji's death. He says:

13. *Pānīpatchi Bakhar*, Ed. R.V. Herwadkar. (Poona, 1972), p. 28.

"The ladies had no idea about Dattaji Scindia's fate until Jankoji (his nephew) arrived. As soon as the news spread in the camp Bhagirathi Bai (wife of Dattaji) and Kashi Bai (wife of Jankoji) both forgetting the Maratha etiquette (*purdāh*) came out running. They saw Jankoji on a cot, lying wounded. When they uncovered Jankoji's face, he thus addressed his aunt, with tears in his eyes, 'Oh lady, where is uncle?' This fully brought home to Bhagirathi Bai that the Patel (her husband) was killed in action. She was overwhelmed with grief. But afterwards she controlled it with the thought 'The grain in the mill weep, while those in the hopper laugh.' He (the Patel) had met his end in the way known already and this one is wounded and is in a precarious condition. The Durranian is exerting great pressure. If under these conditions, I give way to grief, whom should he (Jankoji) look up to? There is a couplet on this point: 'I propose something in my mind. The Maker proposes something quite different. Madhav (Lord Krishna) says to Uddav (devotee) that the galloping of the mind is vain.' So saying she gulped the grief like a glass of poison and made this reply to Jankoji Scindia, 'My lad, why do you weep like a (helpless) widow? Jayaji Scindia (father of Jankoji) has four daughters. If you were also a daughter (instead of a son) to him, it would have been a gain, for he would have secured one more son-in-law. What did the Patel carry with him (to the other world)? He has left to you the whole world, his wealth, his palaces, his territory, his treasury, his elephants and his horses. You should be equal to the occasion. What can now be achieved through crying?' At these words of courage, Jankoji Scindia was pacified!"¹⁴

The writer has set the burning intensity of his philosophical faith in this narration. He suggests that the cheap and the meretricious should be hated. To him duty is noble and as sacred as religion. He has the gift of the gab which exhibits in the grand style. Here the style of the creative artist with its emphasis, power of building up of forceful sentence-structures and the prodigious vocabulary, is arresting in its far reaching effect. The illustration makes lively reading

14. *Bhāu Sahibanchi Bakhar*, op. cit., (Sane Ed.), p. 28.

because of the chronicler's 'eloquence' which is a manifestation of his blazing energy.

This element being most dynamic, inspiring and invigorating, has a special contribution to the Bakhar literature. Energy is the essence—nay, the vital part—of the bakhars which have survived despite their being essentially of the time.

Balance

Balance is the element of mind which is concerned with relationship of things or people. It is the essence of qualities like contrast, harmony and proportion. Unity in duality is a characteristic of Balance. Like scales of a balance it produces equilibrium either by working against or working together. It has an architectural quality of arrangement, or, in other words, a sense of structure of pattern. It aims at order which results in system and coherence. This element is particularly in evidence in dialogues, wherein all points of view are presented. Clarity is the key to Balance. Balance is concerned with the writer's way of thought and his general outlook. In sublime state it keeps to the middle course between the visible and the invisible one. Symmetry and proportion are its great means.

Raghunath Yadav's prose is an illuminating illustration of Balance. The chronicler narrates the events that followed the fall of Govind Pant Bundelé at Panipat. Bhau Sahib was in great difficulty as his army was starving; even the horses could not get their fodder. In this context the chronicler says:

"Then a large number of Sardars, great and small, including Malharji Holkar, Jankoji Scindia, Damaji Gaikwar, Yeshwant Rao Pawar, Antaji Mankeshwar and Santaji Atole came to Sadashiv Pant to hold consultations. At that time Sadashiv Pant and Vishwas Rao were sitting in a small tent. They came up to the office in the large tent for discussion. Then everybody present spoke his mind in the following way:

"We all have put up with hardships for the last month and a quarter. Men and beasts are dying of hunger and thirst. We look up to you for further directions. Our limbs have swollen for want of food. How can we wield the sword now?

Your Lordship has defeated the enemy and won great success. Now, however, you have started ruining the whole kingdom. There is no other way of describing what is happening. The impending doom has perverted your mind. You will bring about the destruction of all of us along with your own. The Iranians carry away our women and children with impunity. Such is the present juncture. You don't listen to anybody for your mind is warped. Your obstinacy has borne (evil) fruit. In short, if after accepting the advice of all and making peace with the enemy, we returned to our province, we shall not be set down as impotent cowards. This obstinacy of yours has led to destruction all round. Whatever has been saved will also be lost. There is no telling what God wills. . . ' Upon these words of frustration the Chief made answer 'Who can remedy what is already ordained by Fate? Nobody deliberately digs his own grave. Who can successfully pit his strength against Fate? The ultimate end, be it success or failure belongs to the Chhatrapati. What lies in us is to be faithful to our swords looking upon our own physical bodies no better than blades of grass and never giving up the will to win. . . .'¹⁵

The element of Balance shapes the quick exchange of words between the Maratha sardars and Bhau Sahib through opposition and not through harmony. The depth of relationship between the sardars and Bhau Sahib in its sublime form is seen in the diversity of the means. They are not merely harmoniously related but are necessary and complementary to each other. The logic and the argument in their expression proceed by the weighing of pros and cons. The matching of one statement by another is worth noting. The general result is order, system and coherence.

The same element is very marked in the Chronicle of Bhau Sahib. Its writer is outstanding for his use of contrast and surprise. He describes the incident that happened after the fall of Dattaji Scindia as follows:

"Returning to the tent (Malhar Rao) gave himself up to grief. His wife Gautama Bai reprimanded him in these words: 'Subahdar, you have grown old. Compared with you Scindias

15. *Pānīpatchi Bakhār*, op. cit., (Herwadkar ed.), p. 36.

are but children—mere sucking children. Nevertheless, they laid down their lives not before killing the enemy. This after all is the world of mortals. Whosoever is born must die. But it is rare to find one achieving fame on this side of grave and security of life in the next world. Jankoji Scindia is just a stripling but how great is his valour. Your days are numbered. So summing up courage you should meet your death on the battle-field, putting your enemy to the sword. This lamentation is womanly. It does no credit to the man. The urgent thing for you is to meet and console the wounded and the children who have been recently brought near here.' Wounded to the quick the old man sadly replied, 'You wish me to die.' Upon which Gautama Bai retorted, 'What woman is so wretched that blessed with husband she would aspire for widowhood? All women hope to die while their husbands are still alive and while their foreheads are adorned with kumkum-tilak. But the Law of Karma is inexorable. You have achieved great fame. Had you been weaving blankets after the accustomed occupation of shepherds, the desire to save yourself from death would have been quite natural. The life of a warrior is of your choice. Just as a woman must keep her marriage vows—that is what the religion ordains.' At these words of his wife he mounted his horse in a fit of anger."¹⁶

Balance may be seen in the general design of this narrative prose. The chronicler makes two persons—Gautama Bai and her husband Malhar Rao—hurl at each other conflicting statements. Besides this, the two persons make an exactly balanced pair harmoniously related and complementary to each other. Each has a characteristic tone. The writer's general philosophy and way of thought have been finely expressed. The argument advanced in the narration is a clever one. The contrast shapes both the idea and the form. Balance in idea and feeling transforms the narration to reflection. The writer draws a parallel between the sublime and the low. This ability of the writer is an essential part of his genius. Among other chroniclers he is outstanding in Balance.

16. *Bhau Sahibanchi Bakhar*, op. cit., (Sane ed.), p. 94.

The element of Balance in the chroniclers of Maratha history lends to their creativity a deep appeal, the setting of which is woven into an exquisite scheme.

The elements of the Outer, the Inner, Energy and Balance have now been discussed separately in relation to their chief modes of expression. Although each element has its own sphere, it is a part of the whole mind. It is possible that they invariably work in combination. They may harmoniously be related in different permutations and combinations. The study of the chronicles of Maratha history, both in themselves and in comparison with one another, with the objective of finding out how these elements are blended, should be a most interesting and rewarding pursuit.

Other Elements of the Bakhar

Let us now proceed to consider certain other elements contributed by the author in his fashioning of the raw material into a specific form of art. They express his personality and also give his work permanent interest and consequently literary quality.

The Emotional Element

Emotion is the characteristic and distinguishing element of literature. The moment emotion enters language the personality of the speaker begins to express itself. Literature expresses the feelings of the author and stirs those of the reader, and thus makes it the truest and the deepest record of human life. The entire range of human feeling is open to literary appeal. The permanent value of the emotional effect of literature may be measured by its propriety, power, steadiness, variety and quality. The highest literature being ethical, excites healthy emotions. Moral sanity and what Mathew Arnold calls, high seriousness are essential for a great literature.

The chronicler of Bhau Sahib narrates the plight of the Marathas after the battle of Panipat as in the following extract:

"Some found the way to Delhi. The others followed them and from there to Bhindi. On the way some were

slaughtered, while some escaped after being looted and robbed of their property. Those who missed the way to Delhi roamed about in other routes and finally their number swelled to about thirty to forty thousands. But some, about twenty-five to fifty gangsters robbed them of their horses and mules. In such a disaster the honoured men had to stand on their own legs and many could not find food and so together they moved to Mathura and rested there for a day. Thus thousands of men of status and rank had to wander in tatters, looking pale like starving beggars and survive on leaves and raw vegetables on the way."¹⁷

Here the emotional element is certainly deep and exciting, the hush and silence brought upon our spirits are as compelling as any more aggressive or passionate type of feeling could be.

The Imaginative Element

The element of imagination (including its higher form 'fancy') is really the faculty of strong and intense vision, quickening a similar power of vision in the reader. As a condition of emotion, it is an important element in literature, particularly in the highly emotional forms of literature.

The imagination depicts objects, as if they were real and thus excites the emotions. The power of imagination holds the key to emotions. It is the most essential faculty in the equipment for any form of literature. Ruskin opines that the imagination, though utterly mysterious and inexplicable, is to be recognized in its effect only. The creative imagination spontaneously selects among the elements given by experience and combines them into new wholes (The arbitrary combination is *Fancy*).

Here is a passage in which the chronicler of *Saptakamātmak Charitra* describes the meeting of Shivaji and Afzal Khan.

"After exchanging glances on all sides, the Khan inquired with the emissary, 'Is this the King?' Whereupon Krishnaji Pant said 'Yes' in confirmation. The King also asked Krishnaji Pant, 'Is it the Khan only?' Having corroborated the

17. Ibid, p. 160.

respective identities, they moved forward to greet each other. The Khan was physically tall and strong in stature. The King was only like the moon after the second phase. The Khan while meeting pulled the King by hand crushing him under his left arm and he attacked him with the small sword in his hand. At that time the King had an armour on his body. Skillfully dodging himself, he averted the striking sword. In this manner clearly the Khan alone started the foul act of treachery."¹⁸

The cumulative effect of the above, though formed of varied elements, seem to spring into existence in the reader's mind spontaneously.

The associative imagination, as in the Sabhasad's Bakhar, will afford another example:

"On the day of the demise of the King the earth quaked, a comet appeared in the sky and shooting stars left a trail in the sky. In the night there appeared a double rainbow. The eight directions looked as if on fire. The waters of the Shri Shambhu Mahadeo lake were blood-red. The fish jumped out of water, leaving a void in it. Thus the calamities occurred."¹⁹

Every image in the passage, that the chronicler's *imagination* associates with, heightens the effect.

The Intellectual Element

The intellectual element is the thought, which the writer brings to bear upon his subject and which he expresses in his work. It serves as the basis of all writing. Sometimes it forms the very purpose of writing. History comes under this element as it aims at giving fact and truth. The basic requirement, therefore, is that it must be copious, accurate and perspicuous, combined with emotional interest. The broad facts or truths which underlie human life are familiar enough to all of us. In good literature the underlying intellectual conceptions invariably correspond to the truths and laws of human life. The author selects and combines the facts in accordance with the laws of beauty and in fidelity to

18. *Saptaprakaranātmak Charitra*, Ed. Herwadkar, op. cit., p. 79.

19. *Shiv Chhatrapatiché Charitra*, Ed. Herwadkar, op. cit., p. 131.

the essential truth of human nature—the inner truth of human life.

The following example, as in *Saptaprakaranātmak Charitra*, is characteristic of this element.

“At that time (of Sambhaji's return from the enemy's camp) sitting all alone, Shivaji advised him ‘You are from a noble family. Why such a large kingdom was conquered by me for your sake? You are the master of it. All the subjects should be considered as children in the family. The Prince you are, could marry many hundreds of women, or with vigour permitting could possess hundred of mistresses, maintaining a harem (if you so desire). But with recklessness to commit illicit sexual intimacy and rape of others' women are both crimes which bring disaster to the glory. In old times many kings of great merit like Ravana and others, by these very vices, were responsible for the destruction of their kingdom and dynasty. Anything that leads to destruction is reprehensible’.”²⁰

The above illustration makes us feel the broad truths which underlie our life, realize them in our imagination and so experience. The concomitant emotions they are fitted to produce. The chronicler gives us a sympathetic comprehension of the widest section of human life.

That these elements combine to furnish the substance and life of literature is evident.

Linguistic Aspect of the Bakhars

The first contact of Marathi with Persian in India was in the fifth century, when Iranian traders came.²¹ The impact of Persian on Indian languages began with the arrival of the Arabs and subsequently the Turks, the Afghans and the Mughals. In Maharashtra particularly, it started after the fall of the Yadavas in 1312 and the establishment of the Mohammedan rule in 1325. Persian was the official language of the divided Bahamani kingdom, namely, Bidar, Berar, Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golkonda. Rajwade points out that on an average only fourteen per cent of words in Marathi existed

20. *Saptaprakaranātmak Charitra*, Ed. Herwadkar, op. cit., p. 238.

21. *Asiatic Researches*, IX, pp. 147-155.

In 1628, sixty-two per cent in Shivaji's Swaraj (1677) and ninety-three per cent, in the reign of Shahu in Maharashtra (1728).²² According to him interjections like *albat*, conjunctions like *sabab*, prepositions like *be* (*dīl*) and *bājat* (*barsāt*), adverbs like *vagaire* and pronouns like *khudda* (*khud*) came into usage. The Persian language had two-fold influence, namely, the external and the internal. The external one appears in the pronunciation and word-derivation, while the internal one contributes to the change of meaning, extension of meaning and the shades of meaning. The Persian words for ornaments, measures of time, eatables and the technical words in administration enriched the Marathi language. The *modī* (a cursive script) like the Persian *Shikastā* was already introduced by Hemadri (Hemad Pant), the Chief Minister of the Yadavas, before the Muslim rule in Maharashtra. The *bakhars*, as already observed, were written in imitation of the *tawārikhs* at the royal court.

In the Yadav period Dravidian languages, particularly Kannad and Telugu, had an impact on Marathi. The pronunciation of *é* at the beginning of the words are *yé* in old Marathi. This Dravidian tendency was the impact of Kannad. During the times of Bahamani and Shivaji, Marathi came in contact with the Portuguese. That is why Portuguese technical words associated with navy and names of weapons were absorbed in Marathi. Rajwade has listed some hundred and three Persian words in the second chapter *Raj-vamshāvali* of the *Mahikāvālichū Bakhar*. In the Bakhar of Rakshas Tagadi words like *honu* (Kannad) are found. In Shivaji's time the Perso-Aryan feature got a little set back by the self-conscious nationalism. However, Marathi could not completely check the Persian and the Portuguese influence. It continued even in the Peshwa-period although Marathi literature flourished. Hindi *doharās* are used in the Chronicle of Bhau Sahib. The language of Chitragupta's Bakhar, Chitnis Bakhars and the Autobiography of Nana Fadnavis is Sanskritised, while that of the Chronicle of Bhau Sahib, the Bakhar of Panipat, the Chronicle of the Peshwas (Sohani) is in chaste Marathi. Therefore, there is ease with

22. V.K. Rajwade, *Aitihāsik Prasāvana*, (Poona, 1928), p. 384.

clarity in them. In the early British period construction of sentences on the English pattern, marks of punctuation, etc., were introduced.

To sum up, from pre-Shivaji period Marathi language evolved and branched out in different ways till the early British period. It had kept its identity after assimilating Sanskrit, Persian and other languages. It successfully challenged the powerful impact of Persian. Marathi flourished in the political environment. Magnificence and maturity in style became its chief features. The style of the bakhars proves its living dynamic force.

Bakhars hold a special position in Marathi literature. Depicting the feelings of the time, they paint their characters artistically through situation and dialogue. While reconstructing the historical events, they set them out in pictorial language. To this end, their authors draw on whatever sources they can. Innate clarity, eloquence, downrightness, vehemence, serenity, sense of balance and euphony are all used for the purpose. The style of the chroniclers is not only the living product of their personality, but is also an organic product of vital forces—a transparent record of their intellectual, spiritual and artistic growth. In fine, the authors stand before the reader in their true Maratha guise, in their strengths and weaknesses. The bakhars will retain their place as a developed literary form of emotive prose and the one best adapted to the historical times. They have greater breadth than most other forms. The *bakhars* abound in images which find a mirror in every mind and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo.

IV

·Historicity of the Bakhars

What is history? This question can be answered in many ways, but E.H. Carr's pointed answer is that it is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past. He further suggests that "all history is the history of thought", and "history is the re-enactment in the historian's mind of the thought whose history he is studying."¹ Of course, the reconstitution of the past in the historian's mind is dependent on empirical evidence which in itself is not an empirical process, and also cannot consist in a mere recital of facts. The past is not a dead one, but in some sense is still living in the present.

The Meaning of History

The Greek word *istoria* meant "That which we come to know as a result of the enquiry" and the English word 'history' has almost the same meaning. The German word *Geschichte* has a wider meaning suggesting the things that have happened; the activity by which we can come to know them; and also the narration of what we have come to know.² History signifies the course of human events as well as the record of that course.

History is a science and also an art. It is akin to architecture in being a science out of which art can grow. It is a science in the arrangement of events, while it is an art in narrating them. Science is finding things out. Since history is a kind of research or enquiry in this sense history is a science. History finds out *res gestae*; actions of human

1. E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (Penguin, 1968), pp. 22, 30.

2. K.B. Smellic, *Why We Read History*, (London, 1947), p. 7.

beings done in the past.³ The historian is interested in what is not and the scientist in what is. The scientist seeks the law in the details, while the historian uses the law in the details. It is the function of history to exhibit the oneness of humanization in all its stages and under all its varieties. History is concerned with what happened, why it happened and the way—how it happened. 'Geography and Chronology' as old Vico, one of Europe's first philosophical historians, said 'are the two eyes of history.'

Historical Writings

The manner and the style of writing history will vary with what the historian wants to do. The very word 'history' which is related to story, proves that narrative, as a vitalizing element, is the backbone of history. Nearly all the great historians have been masters of narration, which demands art, craftsmanship and long labour. Historical appraisal does not in any way conflict with aesthetics. Aesthetics, in fact, complements it and fills it out. Historian's business is, like the novelist, to render life in its proper terms through knowledge of human nature from experience, understanding through sympathetic insight and imagination leading to creative interpretation. While writing and reconstructing history, the historian supplies the intelligence and the organizing ability, but he can interpret and organize only within the limits set by his evidence. And those are the limits created by a true and independent past. Historical writing involves both learning and imagination, both knowing what exists and understanding the complexity of the missing materials within which it exists. Above all the dignity of the matter treated must be observed.⁴

The Scientific Approach

The modern concept of history is that accuracy and impartiality together with the scientist's openness of mind to the facts become the varietal common places of the

3. R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, (London, 1946), p. 9.

4. G.R. Elton, *The Practice of History*, (Collins, London, 1969), p. 148.

historical work amid the wealth of original sources. History has a power which scarcely falls short of commanding the whole field of knowledge. Passionless history would be the ghost of history.⁵ The historian needs imagination to ensure the truth of his work; he needs still more the ability to give that work interest and lasting literary value. Truth is the criterion of history. The path of truth is paved with critical doubt and lighted by the spirit of objective enquiry.⁶ History is an essential part of the mind of cultivated men. As Carlyle puts it, "history is the essence of innumerable biographies."

The Use of History

Reading history ever opens out fresh limitless fields and thus creates expanding horizons to the imagination. While reading history, we travel in time and such travel has a quality which travel in space does not have. It gives a more philosophic sense of how time and chance have dealt with men. The pleasures of history, as Macaulay says, is analogous, in many respects, to those produced by foreign travel.⁷ We are transported into a new society. The purpose of history is to impress general truths on the mind by a vivid representation of characters and incidents.

Facts and Methods in Bakhars

Since bakhars are the records of past events, they are presented with that finality and consciousness which go with the statement of facts. The chroniclers of Maratha history are simply telling us historical facts; yet when we look more closely, we see that they are doing far more than reporting them. They colour them by literary means, so as to give ideas or feelings of the time and make them enlivened. They colour history with their own personalities. Thus the bakhars are science and art combined.

The chroniclers write under the orders of their masters. Hence they cannot be detached. Their uphill task is wonderfully carried out. They write honestly; as they

5. R.H. Gretton, *History*, (London), p. 62.

6. B.H. Liddell, *Why Don't We Learn from History?*, (London, 1946), p. 11.

7. J.B. Macaulay, *The Miscellaneous Writings*, I (London, 1880), p. 102.

narrate what they actually know. They do not purposely conceal the truth of the popularly known facts. They are proud of their subject and they try their best to make their writing readable. The chronicles were written at the royal courts, that is in the political environment. The bakhar-writers were more or less connected with the events of the times. This is more true of the contemporary bakhars, for example, Sabhasad composed his Bakhār of Shivaji under the orders of Rajaram at Jinji. He did so as he was associated with Shivaji and his times. It is reported that, as some scholars believe, he was an adviser in the administration of Shivaji. The contemporary chroniclers such as Sabhasad, Raghunath Yadav, the writers of the *Kaifiyat* of Bhau Sahib and the *Chronicle* of Bhau Sahib and Kashi Raj Pandit write from their personal knowledge. Their writing is adjudged as authentic. There is another class of chroniclers who wrote with the help of traditional records, and are to some extent reliable but, of course, not as those referred to above. For example, Malhar Ram Rao Chitnis, while writing the biography of Shivaji after the hero's death, mentions his sources. The third type of the chroniclers fall into another category as their material is based on the gossip and hearsay such as legends, for example, the major portion of *Peshwanchi Bakhār* (Sohoni).

Whatever class the Maratha chronicles belong to, being partial narrations, they pose bristling controversial issues as history. Let us discuss them chronologically.

Chandra Rao Moré

The Morés of Ategaon Jāvli (Jorkhore), in the Murhē area of Maval at the western foot of the Mahabaleshwar hill, were an ancient Deshmukh family of respectability and high Kshatriya pretensions. Owing allegiance to the Adil Shahi of Bijapur, from whom they had received a grant of the Jāvli State, the Morés had made the claim good by their sword. They had conquered the petty chieftains around, and by their position as independent rulers refused to come under Shivaji's standard. They barred the path of Shivaji's expan-

sion in the south and south-west. They formed an alliance with Afzal Khan against Shivaji when the former was a *subehdār* of Wai in 1649. The fort of Rairi, a large and lofty plateau, belonged to the Morés. The annexation of Jāvī by Shivaji on 15 January 1656, after suppressing the Moré family, brought a very important accession to his strength.

The Chronicle *Jāvalīkar Moré Yānchi Chhoti Bakhar* poses the problem as to who exactly was Chandra Rao Moré and his identity thereof.

The head of the Moré family bore the hereditary title Chandra Rao conferred by a Bijapur King in recognition of the founder's personal strength and courage. Various names of Chandra Rao are ascribed in the bakhars as following:-

- (i) Chandar Rao—*Sabhasad Bakhar*, *Saptaprakaranātmak Charitra*, *Shédgāonkar Bakhar* and *Shiva Digvijay*.
- (ii) Chandra Rau—*Ekkyānnau Kalmi Bakhar*.
- (iii) Chandra Raja Jayavallinagar—*Bhonsalavamsa Charitra*.

It is obvious that the above names are the corrupt forms of Chandra Rao found in the *Jāvalīkar Moré Yānchi Chhoti Bakhar*. This bakhar narrates in detail how Shivaji killed Krishnaji Raje Moré at Chakan. The *Shivabhārat*, a contemporary document, refers to Krishnaji. Shejwalkar opines that the above references suffice to prove that Krishna Rao Moré was a contemporary of Shivaji. Krishna Rao's escape to Rairi after Shivaji's encircling Jāvī, the siege of Rairi by Shivaji and thereafter the treaty between Shivaji and Chandra Rao are referred to in the *Jédhé Shakavali* and Moré's Bakhar. Hence they are reliable. However *Jédhé Shakavali* does not record what happened after the treaty. Therefore, Moré's Bakhar cannot be taken as authentic in the absence of any other corroborative evidence.⁸

It is rather difficult to ascertain the truth, as the bakhar-writers have different interpretations or versions

8. T.S. Shejwalkar. *Shri Shiva Chhatrapati*. (Bombay, 1964), p. 396.

regarding the other members of the Moré family, their names, their mutual relations. *Shivabhārat* narrates that Krishnaji Moré, his brother Baji Moré, their father and their minister were all killed in the battle and afterwards all the relatives of the family met with the same fate. Out of them Pratap Rao survived. His relations with Shivaji were not cordial. When Jai Singh marched against Shivaji, Pratap Rao (Pratapvarman) joined him.⁹

The *Shiva Charitra Sāhitya* Vol. 3, letter No. 639 refers to Balaji, Daulat Rao and Yesāji Sur Rao Chandra Rao as the prominent personalities of the Moré family. That Jāvli was administered by Hanmant Rao Moré is recorded in the *Sabhasad's Bakhar*, the *Chitragupta's Bakhar*, the *Ekkjānnav Kalmi Bakhar*, the *Saptaprakaranātmak Charitra*, the *Marāthi Sāmrajyāchī Chhoti Bakhar*, the *Shiva Digvijay* and the *Shédgāonkar Bakhar*. Grant Duff refers to Himmat Rao. The *Ekkjānnav Kalmi Bakhar* and the *Saptaprakaranātmak Charitra* name Baji Rao and Krishna Rao as the sons of Chandra Rao. G.S. Sardesai opines that Yeshwant Rao, the adopted son of Daulat Rao's wife, was none other than Chandra Rao, the chief offender, and he was killed by Shivaji. He further states that Baji and Krishnaji Moré, the sons of Chandra Rao, were also killed by Shivaji at Poona as they turned traitors and joined Adil Shahi rulers against Shivaji.¹⁰ The *Bhonsalvarsha Charitra* narrates the escape of Chandra Rao. The Shivapur Yadi reports Baji's escape, while Jadunath Sarkar writes on the basis of *Haft Anjuman Paris* MS 113, 123 and 120 b that Baji and his kinsman Ambāji Govind Rao joined Jai Singh in response to his invitation in March, 1665.¹¹

In view of the above, it can be concluded that Krishna Rao was the same as Chandra Rao of Jāvli.

Shivaji-Afzal Khan Confrontation

The affair of Afzal Khan bristles with three problems. First, what was the correct name of the Khan? Secondly,

9. G.S. Sardesai, *Shaka Karta Shivaji* (Bombay, 1935), p. 44: cp. *Shivabhārat*, 18-7, 8.

10. Ibid.

11. Jadunath Sarkar, *Shivaji and His Times*, (New Delhi, 1973), p. 43.

who was he? And lastly, whether he was killed treacherously by Shivaji?

The Khan has been named Afzal Khan in most of the contemporary records, the *Sabhāsad Bakhar*, the *Jédhē Shakāvali*, the *Shivabhārat*. However, the name Abdulla Khan occurs in other contemporary sources like the *Nakshe Dilkushā* (Bhimsen), while the Dutch Records at the Hague (Col. Archives, No. 1123) refer to him as Abdul Khan (Abdulchan). The contemporary ballad by Ajnyān Das also refers to him by the same name.

The most important contemporary *firmāns* (official letters) issued by Muhammad Adil Shah dated 30 January 1642 and a later *firmān* issued by Adil Shah II to Shahji dated 30 January 1658 refer to him as Afzal Khan.¹²

In view of this, the argument advanced by Rajwade that the original letter No. 11 in his Vol. 8 and the eleven *firmāns* (*Hukumnāmās*) of the Khan in the Chitrav Daftar at Wai, show clearly the name Afzal Khan, and the other names such as Abdul, Abdala, etc., occurring in the bakhars and the ballads are the corrupt forms of the original¹³, is sound. This can also be corroborated by the two letters dated 7 October 1659 and 11 February 1661, respectively, in S.R. Hangandikar Desai's collection.

The Khan has been spoken of as *Wazīr* by Ajnyān Das and the *Sabhāsad Bakhar*, while the Dutch records at the Hague mention him as a noble lord. The *History of the Ghorpades of Mudhol* tells us that he was an Amir. According to Rajwade, that he is referred to as *Wazīr* in the bakhars, is not convincing, as he was never at Bijapur between 1649 and 1659 to be a *Wazīr*, when he was the Governor at Wai.¹⁴ Jadunath Sarkar points out that in Bijapur, as in the Ottoman empire, the title *Wazīr* was not reserved for the prime minister, but was conferred on every high official (*Encyclo. Islam*, IV, 1135).¹⁵ He further informs that Abdulla Bhatāri surnamed Afzal Khan was a noble of

12. Jadunath Sarkar, *House of Shivaji*, (Calcutta, 1955), pp. 77, 81.

13. V.K. Rajwade, *Atitihāsik Prasāvana*, (Poona, 1928), pp. 277, 444.

14. *Ibid.* p. 278.

15. Jadunath Sarkar, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

the first-rank who had risen to power and honour under the late Sultan of Bijapur.¹⁶

The opinion as to the slaying of Afzal Khan—a treacherous murder or an act of self-defence on the part of Shivaji—is divided. However, if Shivaji wanted to murder Afzal Khan, he would not have taken the greatest risk of meeting him personally, lightly armed and with few men on his side. It is reasonable to suppose that Afzal Khan expected to repeat his previous treacherous *coup de main* with equal success. Afzal Khan “was confident . . . in his own courage” (Khafi Khan) and he, therefore, tightened his clasp, holding Shivaji’s neck (Sabhasad). The Khan’s murder was only what Burke calls “a preventive murder.” It was “a case of diamond cut diamond”, as Jadunath Sarkar suggests. The weapon used by Shivaji to kill him was *Kripānikā*—a little sword (*Shivabhāra*) and not *Wāghnakh*—a weapon resembling tiger-claws (Sabhasad). It is pertinent to note that no exact answer can be ascertained on the point, who struck first.

The Ashta Pradhan System

It is debatable whether the Ashta Pradhān System or the Council of Eight Ministers consisted of eight ministers only and whether it was borrowed from the Muslim practice or it was an Indian tradition having its origin in *Shukranīlī*.

Sabhasad records the eight ministers as Chief Minister, Senapati, Amātya, Sachīv, Mantri, Sumant, Pandit Rao and Nyāyādhīsh. However, the official Register of the coronation dated 21 June 1674 sets down eleven numbers as Chief Minister, Amātya, Sachīv, Mantrī, Chitnīs, Senāpati, Pandit Rao, Nyāyādhīsh, Sumant, Baxī and Senādhurandhar and names them as Ashta Pradhāns. Malhar Ram Rao Chitnis in his *Thorale Rāja Rām Charitra* puts down the nine ministers as Pratinidhi, Chief Minister, Amātya, Sachīv, Pandit Rao, Sumant, Mantri, Nyāyādhīsh and Senapati. In Shahu’s reign the name Pant Rajādnyā is substituted for Pratinidhi. This proves that the term Ashta Pradhān did not imply exactly number eight, but it was a title loosely

16. Jadunath Sarkar, *Shivaji and His Times*, (New Delhi, 1973), p. 58.

used. According to Rajwade the system does not connote a definite number, but it stands for a collective one.¹⁷ Shejwalkar opines that the origin of Ashta Pradhān was in the appointment of persons for the administration of jāgir by Shahji. He further adds that the number was seven till Shivaji's coronation and one more Pandit Rao (the ecclesiastical head) was included afterwards and the post continued till his death.¹⁸

It is certain that Shivaji did not devise this system as it is analogous to the ancient Indian and Muslim prototypes. Sardesai presumes that it was introduced with a specific purpose and probably followed the old tradition as in *Shukranīti*. In the ancient Indian administrative codes the number of ministers vary from seven to twenty (seven, eight, ten, twelve, sixteen and twenty). In fact, they were not all introduced on the occasion of the coronation, but they were added according to the need of the time.¹⁹ Shejwalkar's view point is that the number of ministers at the time of *Shukranīti* was ten or eight.²⁰ Therefore, Shivaji introduced the same. Jadunath Sarkar believes that the number of ministers rising gradually had risen to eight by 1674, which number continued till his death. He further adds that the council of eight ministers, called Ashta Pradhāns was in no sense a cabinet. The eight Pradhāns mere acted as secretaries. Shivaji's state policy, like his administrative system, was not very new.²¹

According to Rajwade because Peshwā, Mujumdār, Wāknis, Surnīs, Dabīr, etc., have their origin in Muslim administration, Shivaji followed the Muslim system. He simply substituted the parallel Sanskrit names for the Muslim ones.²² The view that the Marathas had a model of Muslim administration before them and that the Sanskrit names were introduced at the time of Shivaji's coronation and not before, shows that the system was an imitation of

17. V.K. Rajwade, op.cit., p. 104.

18. T.S. Shejwalkar, op.cit., p. 535.

19. G.S. Sardesai, op.cit., p. 226.

20. T.S. Shejwalkar, op.cit., p. 536.

21. Jadunath Sarkar, op.cit., pp. 362, 372.

22. V.K. Rajwade, op.cit., p. 104.

the Muslim administrative system. This is consistent with the point that the bakhars were written in imitation of the *tawārikhs* written under the Muslim potentates.

Sambhaji's Character

Sambhaji, the violent, was the curse of Shivaji's old age. The father was deeply distressed at heart for the evil habits of his son, particularly his addiction to sensual pleasures. Sambhaji's joining the enemies led to the rapid decline of Shivaji's health. It was too much for the father to bear. There was no repentance, no change in Sambhaji.

Nearly all the bakhars, the *Basātin-us-Salātin*, the authentic Persian source and Manucci record Sambhaji's vices more than his virtues. He is termed as hot-tempered (*ugraprakriti*).

There is another side to the above picture. V.S. Bendre²³ and Kamal Gokhale²³ praise Sambhaji and refute the charges against him by remarking that they are all imaginary. They support *Paramānand Kāvya* or *Anu Purān*, a contemporary work. No doubt Sambhaji possessed some good qualities as he was brave, courageous and self-willed too. He was an expert hunter. He had received the traditional education in reading and writing accounts and sportsmanship and in addition became well versed in Sanskrit also. The many official papers relating to his administration and judgments prove his will and ability to impart impartial justice and also his love of the public good. His respect for others and the liberality of his heart are worthy of note. The pinnacle of all his good qualities is his fearless attitude. He was the author of *Nakh Shikhā* and *Naika Bheda*, both in Hindi and Buddha Bhushan in Sanskrit. His tragic but heroic death throws light on his glorious and noble self-sacrifice.

Nevertheless, the sad picture of his life is too dark to justify the positive aspects of his conduct and behaviour. *The English Records on Shivaji* Vol. II, letter No. 139 narrates a significant incident a year and a half, that is,

23. V.S. Bendre, *Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj Yanche Charitra*, (Bombay, 1960), p. 677; B. Kamal Gokhale, *Shivputra Sambhaji*, (Poona, 1971), p. 492.

end of 1675, after Shivaji's coronation, that Sambhaji came down the Raigad fort at night to meet a young girl of one of the Brahmin councillors of Shivaji and had an illicit relation with her. Shejwalkar finds no reason to doubt this reference as it appears to be not deliberately calumnious. He further adds that Sabhasad, the chronicler of Shivaji, may not be correct literally in this respect, but the implication therein appears to be probable.²⁴ Jadunath Sarkar comments on this point: "Shambuji (was) a grown-up youth notorious for his violent temper and self-indulgent character. . . Shambuji's own conduct brought matters to a crisis. For having violated a beautiful Brahmin woman who was visiting the palace on a religious festival, the prince was removed to Parli (*Sajjangad*) to be placed under the moral teaching of Shivaji's guru Ramdas. . . . The recent rebellion of Shambuji (his joining the Mughals) had revealed the serious danger that threatened the newly founded Maratha kingdom. The character of his eldest son—Shambuji—filled Shiva with the gloomiest anticipations of the future. A profligate, capricious and cruel youth, devoid of every spark of honour, patriotism or religious fervour, could not be left sole master of Maharashtra. . . . Shivaji must have soon perceived that his sermons were falling on deaf ears, and hence his last days were clouded by despair (*Sabhāsad*)."²⁵

Bendre's view, that Sambhaji was not at Raigad at the time of his misconduct with the woman as Malhar Ram Rao Chitnis reports in his the *Saptaprakaranātmak Charitra*,²⁶ cannot be accepted as Sambhaji's *alibi* has not been proved. Therefore, the point raised carries no weight.

In view of Manucci's report, the Persian and the English contemporary records and also the bakhar-writers' estimate of Sambhaji as violent and profligate, his murky image remains unredeemed and the arguments unchallenged.

Bhau Sahib's Death

The defeat at Panipat (1761) proved a great set-back to

24. T. S. Shejwalkar, op.cit., p. 157.

25. Jadunath Sarkar, op.cit., p. 331.

26. V. S. Bendre, op.cit., p. 76.

the political ambitions of the Marathas. However, "Even the battle of Panipat," as Major Evans Bell writes, "was a triumph and a glory for the Marathas. They fought in the cause of 'India for the Indians', while the great Mohammedan Princes of Delhi, of Oude and the Deccan stood aside, intriguing and trimming. And though the Marathas were defeated, the victorious Afghans retired and never again interfered in the affairs of India."

It is well known that Bhau Sahib, the supreme commander of the Marathas, personally fought bravely as a true warrior against the Durrani in this battle. His capture of Delhi forms a turning point in his career. It was he who had restored the prestige of the Maratha army, which had been ruined by the fall of Dattaji Scindia and the rout of Malhar Rao Holkar early that year.

There are two divergent opinions about Bhau's fate in the battle. The *Kaifiyat of Bhau Sahib*, the *Chronicle of Bhāu Sahib*, the *Autobiography of Nana Phadnavis*, the *Chronicle of the Peshwas (Sohoni)*, the *Holkar's Kaifiyat*, *Purandare Daftar* Vol. III, letter No. 209, *Rajwade* Vol. VI, letter No. 409 and *Mirate Ahmadi* (1761) are all silent on this issue. They simply report or rather suggest that Bhau disappeared during the battle.

On the other hand Kashi Raj's the *Chronicle of the Battle of Panipat*, the *Holkarāchi Thaili*, the *Bakhar of Panipat* (Raghunath Yadav), Abdali's letter to Savai Madhav Singh and also his proclamation, *Shrimant Dhācate Rām Rāje Yānche Charitra* (Malhar Rao Chitnis), *Dabhāde Senapati's Account*, the *Shēdgāonkar Bakhar*, the *Chronicle of the Bhor-sales of Nagpur*. Grant Duff's *A History of the Mahrattas*, the *Biography of Najibkhan* (Sayyad Nuruddin Hasan, 1771), *Shah Nāma-yē Ahmedia* (1776), *Khaṣnā-yē Amira* (1763), *Tarikhe Faizābaksha* (1776) and *Panipat's Ballad* (Sagan Bhau) concur in their views of Bhau's death in the battle.

The most important and authentic records in this respect are Kashi Raj Pandit's letters, dated 24 February and 3 March 1761, addressed to Nana Sahib Peshwa²⁷ and Nana Purandare²⁸ respectively regarding the performance of the

27. *Selections from the Peshwa Daftar*, 2.148.

28. V.K. Rajwade, Vol. VI-408. (Kolhapur, 1905).

last rites of Bhau Sahib after his death. Moreover, Anupgir Gosavi's letter, dated 21 February 1761, addressed to Nana Sahib Peshwa²⁹ confirms the same view. Kashi Raj Pandit was personally present in the battle as he narrates how he cremated Bhau's body according to the rites with the permission of Abdali. Shejwalkar remarks that we take Kashi Raj's account of the finding of Bhau's trunk first and his head afterwards as true.³⁰ It appears that the Marathas had no knowledge of Bhau Sahib's end, and this ultimately resulted in the revolt of Bhau's Impostor in Poona after the battle.

Malhar Rao Holkar's Departure from Panipat

There are many hearsay reports regarding Malhar Rao Holkar's general behaviour and particularly his departure from Panipat. Rajwade opines that since the Battle of Kumbheri (1754), Malhar Rao began to hate Scindia and the Peshwa. He also played a dubious role in the treachery against Jayappa Scindia. Apart from this, he protected Najib Khan in view of the Peshwa's growing strength. He also unhesitatingly instigated Dattaji and Jankoji Scindia against the Peshwa. He purposely delayed in helping Dattaji, which led to the latter's death. He was afraid of the Peshwa's growing power which made him weak and suspected that the Scindias were responsible for it. That is why he was against the Peshwa and the Scindias.

Malhar Rao had a special affinity for Najib Khan, Shuja-ud-daulah, Suraj Mal Jat. Bhau Sahib wrote to Shuja, "Threaten Abdali with great strength. Do not doubt Malhar Rao in this matter. He is also on this mission." It can be inferred from this that Shuja had reason to doubt that Malhar Rao had not decided or not wished to threaten Abdali. In fact, Malhar Rao had long before thought of supporting Najib. It was clear that the threat to Abdali meant threat to Najib. It can easily be guessed from the earlier behaviour of Malhar Rao and the suspicion of Shuja

29. Ibid. 407.

30. T.S. Shejwalkar, *Panipat: 1761*, (Poona, 1946), p. 96.

referred to above that this man may not have been sincere in the Panipat campaign.³¹

In addition to this, the Chronicle of Bhau Sahib, Abdali's Proclamation, *Khajāna-e-Amirā* and the Autobiography of the Poet Mir support this view.

The other side of this issue is that being insulted by Bhau Sahib, Malhar Rao was rather displeased and therefore, he left the battle-field as recorded in the *Marathi Rajyāchi Chhoti Bakhar*. The *Holkarāchi Thaili* and the *Bakhar of Panipat* (Raghunath Yadav), the contemporary documents, narrate that Malhar Rao was entrusted by Bhau Sahib to take his family to Poona and report to Nana Sahib and Gopika Bai, his wife. The *Chronicle of the Peshwās* (Sohoni) and the history of the Vinchurkar family clearly absolve Malhar Rao from the charge of negligence in his duties and his so-called treachery.

Sardesai's view is that in spite of the difference of opinion between Malhar Rao and Bhau Sahib, it is rather hard to believe that Malhar Rao played a treacherous role in the execution of his duties as a loyal servant. That he was too old and had lost all the enthusiasm of Baji Rao's time must also be taken into account in judging his actions. Naturally he was inclined to remain aloof from active politics and maintain his dignity any way. If Malhar Rao, being twice as old as the untutored Bhau Sahib, treated the young Peshwa a trifle condescendingly, it would not be inconsistent with human nature. But it is self-evident that he did not intentionally commit any breach of trust.³²

Shejwalkar writes, "We have no faith in the widely expressed belief that Malhar Rao had an understanding with Najib who allowed him to escape unscathed. Malhar Rao's whole philosophy was based not on honour and prestige but on profit and escape. The Marathi adage which says that 'If the head remains whole, one can have eighty-five turbans to wear', seems to have been old Malhar Rao's guiding principle which he naturally followed at this juncture.

"Malhar Rao Holkar was neither charged by Bhau with

31. V.K. Rajwade, *Atithāsik Prasāvana*, (Poona, 1928), p. 52.

32. G.S. Sardesai, *Peshwa Balaji Rao*, (Bombay, 1953), p. 373.

the special defence of Parvati Bai nor did he himself of his own accord do anything to escort her out of the field. Only casually and accidentally they met thirty miles to the south of Delhi (Malhar Rao and Nana Purandare), a circumstance of which Malhar Rao took full advantage in preparing his apology.³³

Jadunath Sarkar says, "The only division of the Maratha army that returned from Panipat in a tolerably large and compact form was Holkar's (about 1500 men). If he was the officer selected by the Bhau to lead the retreat, he would certainly have kept touch, throughout the fight, with the ladies whom he had been ordered to save and he should have gone up to them immediately after leaving the field. But in fact he met Parvati Bai on the way, some 20 hours after the end of the battle, which shows that their junction was purely accidental.

"...The weight of evidence is irresistible that Malhar thought only of saving himself, and by a secret collusion with Najib (and through Najib with Shah Pasand Khan, his opposite number) that neither party would molest the other, he remained inert during the critical stage of the battle...but as soon as the Bhau's defeat appeared certain, though still an hour before the end of the struggle, Malhar fled away westwards, thus utterly unconcerning Jankoji's right flank."³⁴

It may be concluded that having honest differences with Bhau Sahib and being dejected at the worst moment of the battle against the Marathas, Malhar Rao set out from Panipat. He executed all his responsibilities. However, Parvati Bai returned of her own accord and by herself. Malhar Rao did not at all lead her back.

The Murder of Narayan Rao Peshwa

The internal conflict in the Peshwa family in the later period resulted in Narayan Rao's murder. That Raghoba and Narayan Rao were not on good terms was the root cause of

33. T.S. Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, p. 98.

34. Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. II, (New Delhi, 1971), p. 264.

the tragic event. In fact, Raghoba and his wife Anandi Bai, the movers behind the plot, wanted to remove their nephew Narayan Rao and usurp the Peshwaship. The gārdīs (guards) took interest in the matter and murdered Narayan Rao on 30 August 1773.

Most of the bakhars narrate that Anandi Bai changed the order to arrest Narayan Rao originally issued by Raghoba. The word 'kill' was substituted for 'arrest' (*mārāvā* for *dharāvā* in Marathi). The knotty point of the problem is whether Anandi Bai was really responsible for the tragedy. *Marathi Sāmrajyāchi Chhoti Bakhar*, *Peshwyānchi Bakhar* (Sohoni), the *Holkar's Kaiḥiyat*, Grant Duff's history, *Harivamshāchi Bakhar*, *Shédgāonkar Bakhar*, the *Chronicle of Narayan Rao Peshwa* and the *Ballad of Narayan Rao's death* accuse Anandi Bai as the chief offender in the crime. However, Anandi Bai's defence as in the *Selections from the Peshwa Daftar* No. 4, dealing with the daily routine of the lady, detained at Kopargaon under the orders of Nana Fadnavis, goes in favour of her. Her main argument was that there was no investigation against her. She even challenged that either a letter in her own hand-writing or her message in evidence should have been produced to support the charge. In the absence of this procedure, it is rather difficult to come to the conclusion that she was really guilty of the offence. Besides this, Mohammad Yusuf, the gārdi and an associate of Sumer Singh, the prominent killer, confessed to Hari Pant Phadke, the head of the army, and in turn to Nana Fadnavis that nobody had thought of killing Narayan Rao at first, but Sumer Singh did it at the eleventh hour.³⁵

Sardesai opines that Anandi Bai is wrongly implicated in the offence as there is no direct evidence against her.³⁶ It is just possible that Narayan Rao was killed during his arrest. The bakhars cannot be totally accepted or totally rejected. Contemporary documents should have helped in corroborating the statements in the bakhars. Till then, the bakhars cannot be totally accepted as true. In this particular case, it

35. *Itihās sangrah*, Book I. *Ātithāsik Charcha*, 2.2.

36. G.S. Sardesai, *Marathi Riyasat, Madhyavibhag*, Vol. 4, (Bombay, 1925), p. 346.

is reasonable to give Anandi Bai the benefit of doubt in the absence of any other contemporary evidence confirming the contention of the bakhars.

Bakhars as History

The bakhars were originally written from an historical point of view. If narration is the backbone of history, they excel in this aspect. Within the compass of history as an art, the Maratha chroniclers, like Gibbon, offer us a stately procession of characters marching through the ages, all in courtly attire and yet all individual. It is not correct to say that detachment and not attachment is the historian's first virtue. In the words of W.K. Hancock, "Distance rather than intimacy is the chief cause of historical error."³⁷ The historians often miss the chance to talk with the person who prepared the documents. The bakhars can claim to be real history because their writers made themselves closely intimate with the people and the things they were trying to describe. They had had their own feelings about them and had imagined what it would be like to be in those times. They have written with lively fancy and not merely recorded facts known to them. Admitting that intimacy has its own dangers, honesty of purpose can save it to a great extent. The historian is surely neither a prophet nor a priest; but he is the creator of that dynamic power which produces a certain temper of mind, a certain way of thinking and feeling to understand Man, the strange product of evolution, as Bertrand Russell puts it.³⁸ In my view, the chroniclers of Maratha history belong to this cult.

If a writer constantly keeps in his mind a consciousness of the necessity of linking his material together, he will be a better historian as well as a better writer. Historical interpretation is to find out and establish the correct relationship between facts; of restoring sequence of cause and effect. In all these, the sense of form and structure is of equal importance to the historian. Style in history-writing

37. W.K. Hancock. *The History of Our Times*. (London University, 1951), p. 14.

38. Bertrand Russell, *Herman Old Memorial Lecture*. (Aldington, Great Britain, 1954), p. 22.

is an index to the mind. The chroniclers of Maratha history are rarely without this natural gift. Their good writing is almost a concomitant of good history.

In short, the bakhars are not merely a valuable source of Maratha history, but like Carlyle's *French Revolution*, are themselves a kind of history. Being a connected narration, they can easily fill in the *lacunae* of historical letters which often fail to throw light on details. Indeed, it may be said that historiography in Maharashtra is to be found in the bakhars alone.

Mediaeval English Chronicles

A parallel form of the bakhars, chronicles and annals existed in English literature from the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon period, that is tenth century to the fifteenth century. Its origin was in the Christian monasteries.

The nomenclature chronicle is derived from 'Chronicon' suggested by Jerome, as in the Hebrew Canon, meaning events of the times, while 'Annals' originated much earlier from Latin *annus* meaning narrative of events year by year. Chronicles are the impersonal accounts of a universal character, while annals relate either to a locality or to a religious community in a limited sense.³⁹

The primary authority for old English history is the series of annalistic compilations known collectively as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The most important problems in the history of the Chronicles relate to its Alfredian Section. Most of the mediaeval chronicles were compiled by monks, specially by the Benedictines, who usually began their story with the creation of the world. In their statement of facts they in general knew little distinction between the fabulous and what is true history, were not inclined to question much either visions or miracles and were accustomed to dwell as long on unimportant as on momentous events.⁴⁰ Froissart states that the chronicler was an unwearied traveller picking up information, and often no doubt muddling it up in his head, from the roadside and tavern stories of many persons of all ranks whom he encountered

39. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 5. (1945). p. 648.

40. *The Encyclopedia Americana*. (1944). p. 636.

on his wandering. The monastic chronicler lived year in and year out in a home of his own where the passing traveller readily sojourned and told his stories of adventure.

The chronicle was never in its essence a literary form, for in the Dark Ages few men had interest in or care for letters. Most chroniclers wrote badly, some from natural stupidity and carelessness, some from indifference to anything approaching canons of style. But some wrote well and achieved literary success, without much conscious effort to secure it, while many had that style which comes from directness, sincerity, clarity of vision and strength of imagination, but their object in general was not a piece of composition but the fulfillment of a practical need to supply information or to prove some case. Sometimes, indeed, the information they sought to convey was not exactly the fact as it happened. They wrote for many other reasons besides a pure love of truth. The chronicler had to defend his patron, his abbey, his country, his government, his party, his class or himself. There was the motive of religious edification.

The Mediaeval chronicler had very poor opportunities of dealing adequately with the history of any distinct period. He had too few books, he had too little criticism. He was content to copy out what he found in the old book which happened to be accessible to him. His want of aptitude for the comparative method which lies at the basis of criticism, becomes painfully obvious. Yet many chroniclers had good means of information and made good use of them. The good chronicler was shrewd, circumspect and judicious.⁴¹

It is certain, however, that mediaeval authors were not conscious of any clear distinction between annals and chronicles; indeed they often apparently employed the terms indiscriminately. In any case, chronicles and annals have points of great similarity. Chronicles are accounts generally of impersonal character, and often anonymous, composed of passages copied from sources which the chronicler is seldom at pains to indicate and of personal recollections, the veracity of which remains to be determined. Original and borrowed accounts as well as facts and

41. T.F. Tout, *The Study of Mediaeval Chronicles*, (London, 1922), p. 14.

falsehoods are so much mixed in these compositions that it is difficult to establish the evidential value of each piece.

The titles by which the mediaeval chronicles are known are the works of transcribers and editors and not of the authors. If at all any author wanted a particular title, he chose fanciful titles such as *Flowers of History*. Of course, there was no copyright in titles. In the Chronicles of the Crusades the approach of future destruction was foretold by diverse events such as famine, earthquakes and frequent eclipses, both of the sun and of the moon.⁴² The chronicles are always valuable as an illustration of the spirit of an age and the sentiments of a people. It is through them that nearly all the earlier traditions in verse, genealogies of kings and occasional memoranda of the ecclesiastical persons and also the full history of the Middle Ages have been preserved in the source-material based on personal knowledge, common gossip and the correspondence of great men. King Alfred (A.D. 849-901) deserves to be remembered as an outstanding personality in English history because he conceived the idea of a national history out of the notes of events kept by the monasteries, and this for a time was achieved in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

It should be enlightening to compare and contrast the bakhars with the English Chronicles. Anachronisms, exaggeration and mythological elements and occasional anonymous writing are some of the common features of these forms. The titles by which both are known are the works of transcribers and editors and not of their authors. The point that the bakhars and the English Chronicles had to praise or defend their patrons or parties is also noteworthy. Both contain material from older works which are now lost. The number of copies that were prepared automatically became an index of their popularity. Their common motive was edification of their respective subjects. Although they are not histories in a true sense, they preserved the earlier scattered traditions in a compact form to a certain extent.

The contrast is still significant. The chronicles had their origin in the religious environment, while the bakhars

42. *Chronicles of the Crusades*. (London, 1848), p. 70.

appeared in the exclusively political encompassment. The English Chronicles never attained that literary height which the bakhars by their very nature had the privilege to develop into a full-grown literary form with its own technique. The English Chronicles had before them the ideals of Greek and Roman historians. That is why they were considered as national histories. From the fifteenth century with the renewed study of Greek and Roman literature, the traditional chronicles and annals were replaced by the models of antiquity known as historical compositions combining skilful presentation and elegance of style. Though the basic concept of the bakhars was foreign in origin, they being an imitation of the Muslim *tawārikhs*, evolved independently into fine literary specimens of Marathi literature. However, the acceptance of the bakhars as history, though qualified, had to wait till the rise of the British power early in the nineteenth century. Rajwade opines that the Marathi bakhars are more systematically written than the English chronicles.⁴³ Notwithstanding their variant nature, the bakhars in Marathi and the chronicles in English have remarkably contributed to the history of prose literature of their respective countries. Being a specific national literature, they equally stand as a landmark in the literary histories of the periods concerned.

C.V. Wedgwood sternly proclaimed that literature and history were joined long since by the powers which shaped the human brain: We cannot put them asunder.⁴⁴

43. V.K. Rajwade, op. cit., p. 349.

44. C.V. Wedgwood, *Literature and the Historian*, (London, 1956), p. 15.

Social Aspects of the Bakhars

The literature of an age is a body of work expressing a common spirit under many diverse individual forms. The domain of literature is not isolated, keeping strictly to the literary phenomena themselves, but it is extended to the life by which it is fed. Behind the literature of any period lie the combined forces—personal and impersonal—which made the life of that period, as a whole, what it was. W.H. Hudson insists that literature is only one of the many channels in which the energy of an age discharges itself; we have the same energy overflowing into other forms of expression. The age in question grows out of that which preceded it; that its own spirit and ideals are in a continuous process of transformation which is a revelation of the thoughts and feelings, the aspirations and ideals, the doubts and struggles, the faith and hope of a complex period in history.¹

History — A Social Process

Generally the literature of any period is the portrait—nay, the representative of the contemporary social life. The author is the spokesman of the school of thought of that period. He is moulded by the society to which he belongs. Both language, a social acquisition and environment, as E.H. Carr remarks, help to determine the character of his thought; his earliest ideas come to him from others.² Being a social phenomenon and also the product and mouthpiece of the society, he approaches the facts of the historical past. In

1. W.H. Hudson. *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*, (London, 1932), p. 49.

2. E.H. Carr. *What is History?* (Penguin, 1968), p. 31.

other words he is a part of history. The point in the course of history, 'a moving procession', at which he finds himself determines his angle of vision while dealing with the past, no matter how remote. In this capacity he selects and interprets the facts and ultimately actualizes them. It is evident that the men of action, who play their significant roles in history, were not set apart individuals acting in a vacuum; in fact, they acted in the context of historical incidents and under the impulse of a past society. Thus the facts of history are the social facts of the periods concerned. Historians consciously or unconsciously reflect in their writings succession of different social orders forming the arena of the relevant society of a particular historical epoch.

Dual Function of the Bakhar

Being court-writing, the bakhars were written from the historical point of view. Hence political history, as we have already seen, is the determining factor of a bakhar. Although political events have a prominent place in it, they are not without any particular social setting of the times. It includes traditions in the field of religion and culture which affect the general conditions of life of the people, the way of life and also the view of life. Even when the political panorama undergoes change, the fabric of traditional and other social features and practices is retained though with some inevitable changes.

Though ordered by his master, the bakhar-writer, wrote only when his vision of the past was illuminated by insight into the subject proper. To appreciate his work we have to grasp first the standpoint from which he himself approached it. Secondly, that the standpoint was itself rooted in a social and historical background. Thus he is the product of history, that of society. It is in this two-fold light that the reader of the bakhar has to learn to regard him. This explains why, though political history, the bakhar reflects the social conditions of the times.

Bakhars as Sources of Social Conditions

For the study of social life contemporary bakhars would prove very useful. The bakhar-writer, being an eye-witness,

sees the happenings personally or may even be closely associated with the events. Though partial, contemporary bakhars are adjudged as authentic, not only from the historical point of view, but also from the social one. Unfortunately such bakhars are very few, and what is worse, contemporary bakhars like *Sabhāsad's Bakhar* and the *Chronicle of Bhāu Sāhib* are only of the untraceable originals and that too of the later period. Particulars which are often absent in historical letters are supplied by the bakhar in the compilation of history. As against the contemporary bakhars, the later ones had an added advantage in the process of compilation in that they could have resource of traditional records and other sources as has been stated earlier. Let us find out the social aspects revealed in the bakhars which are extant.

Pre-Shivaji Period

The period under consideration begins from the Satavahana dynasty (first century B.C.) to the birth of Shivaji (sixteenth century A.D.)—a span of about one thousand five hundred years. In spite of the anarchy and the confusion prevailing during this period affecting the general conditions of life in the country, society in India retained most of its traditional features, especially of religion and the caste system. Orthodoxy in religion lead to gross superstitions, a child-like faith in rituals, idolatry, necromancy and in astrology. Ceremonial rites and rituals in the name of religion were too common, particularly in the Yadav period. Ultimately the noble and sublime religion had been supplanted by notions of fatalism responsible for the invasion of Maharashtra by northern Muslim powers.

Religious Beliefs

Shālīvāhanāchi Bakhar is a typical example of extreme religiosity. This chronologically first bakhar is overloaded with supernatural element, for example, Shālīvāhan's birth from the serpent Shesha. Shesha's appearance as a Brahmin when Shālīvāhana's mother remembered him at the time of King Vikram's invasion of Paithan, and giving Shālīvāhana a

cup of nectar. Shālīvāhan's clay-soldiers coming alive and also the prophesy from the heaven about the 'Shaka era' after Vikram's death.

The other aspect is the faith in the happenings of a dream. *Mahikāvañichī Ūrpha Māhimchū Bakhar* records the appearance of Nayako Rao's family deity in his dream and giving him the message of *Mahārāshtra-Dharma*. Similarly the *Bakhar of Rākshas Tāgadi* narrates Rajbhavar's plight on losing his throne in a dream he saw.

Religious Customs

The customary practice like receiving blessings from the Brahmins for any great cause and honouring them with gifts at that time and atonement for sins committed, are also reported, for example, Brahmins receiving gifts from Shālīvāhana, would be the 'maker' of Shaka era, Nagarsha's off-taking the sacred threads of the people who dined with fishermen as in the *Mahikāvañichī Ūrpha Māhimchū Bakhar*. Besides, Rajbhavar's starting for the battle at the auspicious moment, as in the *Bakhar of Rākshas Tāgadi*, is also worthy of note.

Other Practices

Moreover the references to Devsha as the son of Pratapsha's illegitimate wife (*Mahikāvañichī Bakar*) would suggest that the practice of having illegitimate children was not uncommon and Ramdeo Rao Jadhav bidding farewell to Jiwan Nayak Savkhedkar by giving him betel leaves appear to be the customary practice of the period under reference.

Shivaji Period

In this period, while the earlier religious faith practically remained unchanged, it was supplemented by the values of patriotism and loyalty to the master owing to the prevailing spirit of realism. The period was characterized by the concept of hero-worship. Bakhars which were written under master and servant relationship are significant pointers in this direction. the sentiment of believing Shivaji to be an incarnation of God Shambhu was the mediaeval *puranic* flight of fancy.

Shivaji, the founder of Swaraj, inculcated a new political consciousness among the people. However, the common man was far away from the new situation, as he still followed the old traditional way of life. Even the people who moved in the political field outside family held firmly on to the religious habits in their private life. But the new ideals referred to above gave impetus to the spirit of Maharashtra-Dharma. It continued during the reigns of Sambhaji and Raja Ram.

Religious Beliefs

Majority of the bakhars during this period deal with Shivaji's life. *Sabhāsad's Bakhar*, as stated earlier, is the only contemporary one. Others are more or less reproductions of the same. Supernatural element is very common in them as we have seen previously. *Ekkṃyānnav Kalmi Bakhar* is, of course, an exception so far as Shivaji's life is concerned. Goddess Bhavani, the patron deity, bestowing auspicious floral blessing on Raja Ram at Pratapgad, the floral favour from the *pādukā* (stony feet) of Ramdas at Parali, the monkeys and the bees thwarting the siege by the Mughals of Parali-fort, the Sarnobat losing his sight and gaining it again at the time of Ambika Bai committing sati, the stories of the previous births of Shivaji and Aurangzib (Chitnis—*Raja Ram Charitra*) clearly indicate how religious faith of the earlier period, still continued to persist in the Shivaji period.

Religious Customs

Shivaji's thread-ceremony before his coronation, his performance of *gondhal* (invocation to the Goddess Bhavani) after Afzal Khan's murder as a sign of victory, (Sabhāsad), Aurangzib's making Jai Singh swear by the Koran before commissioning him against Shivaji (Chitrugupta), the meeting of Shivaji and Vyankoji in Lord Shiva's temple (*Ekkṃyānnav Kalmi Bakhar*) are some of the examples of religious customs observed in that period.

Other Practices

Similarly Shivaji visiting Sambhaji Mohite of Supa for the reward of Holi festival (Sabhāsad). Shivaji lifting the shoes

of Shahaji at their meeting (*Bundelyāclū Bakhar*) and Shivaji applying blood of the slain Afzal Khan to his forehead (Chitragupta) appear to be the customary practices of the period concerned.

It may be remarked that during the Shivaji period, while the impact of the earlier Muslim rule was evident in the outward accoutrements of life, the essential culture of Maharashtra remained unaffected.

Peshwa Period

The Peshwa period starts with the arrival of Shahu in Maharashtra (1708) and ends with the Third Maratha War (1818). Though an age of Maratha Supremacy, it was an eventful period that witnessed the rise and fall of the Maratha Empire. In spite of the Bhakti movement of the middle ages which had a general liberalizing influence on society and creating a healthy social atmosphere rare elsewhere, the general mass of the people during the period was ridden by superstition and the religious priests did little to discourage queer ceremonies and strange rites. No doubt under Maratha rule, the union of Church and State was very close indeed. The main inspiring principle in this respect, initiated by Shivaji and carried on by his successors, the Peshwas, was the preservation of religion against foreign aggression. In view of the laxity in traditional rules which had commenced long before, it may be suggested here that the prevailing conditions even in the days of Peshwa rule, were too strong to shake the domination of religious and social rules which had had their birth under quite different conditions.

Religious Beliefs

The appearance of the deity Gajanan (in a Brahmin's disguise) in Gangaji Naik's dream (*Sāshfīchū Bakhar*), the river Jamuna parting its waters to give way to the enemy Durrani (The *Kaifiyat of Bhāu Sāhib*), the sudden flowing back of the river water when Ahmad Shah threw a sheet of paper with the Koran-hymn written on it (The *Chronicle of the Battle of Panipat*—Kashi Raj) and ill-omens at the birth

of Baji Rao II (*Peshwyānchi Bakhar*—Sohani) confirm the existence of blind religious faith in the period.

Religious Customs

The exchange of 'tulsi' and 'bet' leaves between Ramchandra Mahadeo and Gangaji Naik at the time of taking a vow (*Sāshlichī Bakhar*), Dattaji Scindia's distribution of sweet-sesame seeds on Sankrant Day (*The Chronicle of Bhau Sahib*), performance of one lac sacrificial offerings in the month of Magh (*The Autobiography of Gangādhār Shāstri Patwardhan*), Scindia sending Viru Bai, the daughter of the maid servant, a gift on the occasion of Shahu's marriage (*Shāhu Charitra*—Chitnis), the throwing of dead bodies into the river Ganges (*The Holkars' Kaifiyat*) are instances of religious customs of the time.

Other Practices

There were diverse general customs during the Peshwa regime, for example, Tara Bai offering milk and boiled rice to the Commander Jadhav Rao as a token of friendship (*Shāhu Mahārājānchi Bakhar*—Govind Rao Chitnis), Chhatrasal bidding farewell to Baji Rao I by offering betel leaves to be chewed (*Ibid*), the exchange of turbans between Suraj Mal, the Jat and Scindia as a sign of friendship (*The Chronicle of Bhāu Sāhib*), Baji Rao I honouring the Portuguese ladies with sari and bodice and allowing them to go (*Peshwyānchi Bakhar*—Sohani) and Mashrul Mulk stripping his head-dress and wrapping it on his hand as a mark of surrender after the battle (*Khardyāchyā Swārichū Bakhar*). The shocking practice of Sati (women burning themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands) was still in vogue, for example, Laxmi Bai, the wife of Balvant Rao Mehendale, a Maratha Sardar, committing Sati after his death (*The Chronicle of Bhau Sahib*). The Marathas after they acquired paramount power specially in the Peshwa period, had by wise neglect and indifference, which neither encouraged nor provoked, rendered this despicable practice very rare.

In conclusion, the religion-bonded society of the pre-Shivaji period was gradually changing into a free social

atmosphere through a process of evolution, not only in the Shivaji period, but in the later Peshwa period as well. A case in point, *Māhārāshtra-Dharma* which had its origin in the pre-Shivaji period, had practically brought about the memorable achievement of Swaraj in the Shivaji period. It had a wider domain in the Maratha empire of the Peshwa period. Thus the slowly evolving and changing social norms and the process of liberalization, in a sense, paved the way for the more healthy social atmosphere and the percolation of Western ideas as a concomitant of British Rule that was waiting in the wings.

VI

Epilogue

The arguments which have been advanced so far in the preceding chapters on bakhar-writing as an unbroken and continuous flow, with the bakhar-writers as the guiding spirits, seem to commit me to some reflections on the position of research-study of the bakhars and the conclusions to be drawn from it. The first thing that strikes one is the fact that the history of bakhar-scholarship is virtually the history of the genesis and evolution in Maharashtra of historical study itself. The second is that even the employment of the strictest of modern scientific historiographical methods do not warrant the writing off of the bakhars as unhistorical. Consequently, though the bakhars as a whole may not be construed as history proper, they are now firmly accepted as invaluable source material for history. And finally, what the bakhars lack as history, they more than make up as deeply felt and expressed literature of the Marathi speaking people of the period.

We shall now proceed to survey the research in this field beginning with the rise of British power in India on the assumption that history will continue for the widening horizon in this special branch of knowledge.

Dawn of the New Age

The early British period of the nineteenth century found this country in a process of change, probably more profound and sweeping than any other, which has overtaken it since the mediaeval period. It led to systematic studies and the foundation of modern research in the eighteen thirties. The most conspicuous aspect of the change was a widespread application of methods in historical studies as an upshot of

the New Age. But the change has two aspects more relevant to our theme—what may be called a change in the manner of publishing the chronicles of Maratha history and a change in their study.

Let us attempt to touch briefly on both these aspects.

The change which came about in this field may be said to begin with the European scholars who first wrote the history of the Marathas. Attempts were made by historians like Cosme da Guarda (1730), Capt. James Kerr (1782), Robert Orme (1782) and M.C. Sprengel (1785) earlier, but Edward Scott Waring was the first historian proper who wrote history of the Mahrattas (1810). He was attached to the Poona Residency for seven years and therefore had an easy access to the Peshwa library. He emphasised the importance of Marathi sources, particularly the bakhars, as against the Persian chronicles. He eulogizes the bakhars as follows:

"Not so the Mahratta histories. Their historians (some will deny them the name) write in plain, simple and unaffected style, content to relate passing events in apposite terms, without seeking turgid imagery or inflated phraseology. . . no attempt is made to make the worse appear the better reason. Victory and defeat are briefly related; if they pass over the latter too hastily, they do not dwell upon the former with unnecessary minuteness. They do not endeavour to bias or mislead the judgement."¹

James Cuninghame Grant Duff wrote *A History of the Mahrattas* (1826), the first comprehensive history in three volumes. It was an advance over earlier projects. He was the first Political Agent at the court of the Chhatrapati of Satara. The circumstances and the nature of his duties, especially his attachment to the Marathas, inspired him to undertake this arduous work. He consulted all possible source-materials between 1819-1822, after which period he retired. Though no specific approach or viewpoint was adopted, his only aim was to offer an orderly presentation of the facts of Maratha history. His writing was not an ideal one, yet he had done a pioneering and monumental work which contributed to ushering in an Age of Historiography. The Marathi version

1. Edward Scott Waring, *History of the Mahrattas*, (London, 1810), Preface pp. ix, x.

of Duff's history was *Marāthyānchi Bakhar* (1830) the choice of which name shows the popularity of this form.

Afterwards an interest in history sprang up in Maharashtra on account of Western education in this country. Nilkanth Janardan Kirtane, a student of the Deccan College, Poona, read an essay *Marāthyānchyā Bakharīvar Tikā* (Criticism on Grant Duff's Bakhar), under the chairmanship of the noted scholar Krishnashastry Chiplunkar. The meeting was organized by the Poona Young Men's Association in 1867. Among the audience was the distinguished scholar Shankar Pandurang Pandit. The essay was subsequently published in *Induprakāsh* (1868), a reputed periodical. The author pointed out errors in Duff's Bakhar. However, the love for history got a fresh impetus from an essay on history in *Nibandhmāla*, a prominent periodical of Vishnushastry Chiplunkar (1874).

Age of Bakhars

Vishnushastry Chiplunkar and his associates S.T. Shaligram, K.N. Sane and J.B. Modak started a monthly named *Kāvyétihās Sangraha* (1878). It proposed to publish old poetry and also to make known the unpublished sources of Maratha history. Rao Bahadur Sane edited the historical material. Sixteen pages were reserved for this section. Sane edited the bakhars very carefully with keen interest. Later he also wrote critical prefaces and notes when the bakhars were published in book form. *Kāvyétihās Sangraha* ran for eleven years and ceased publication in December, 1888. During this short period it had published twenty-two historical works, both big and small, five hundred and one historical letters and petitions, etc. The editor rightly remarked in his valediction:

"This work marked the revival of the national spirit in Maharashtra after the set-back and despair following the disaster in 1817. . . A feeling of national pride was kindled with the result that there awakened the keen desire to publish old historical works and letters."

Thus, this periodical had been a revelation of how vast the historical material lay unknown in Maharashtra. The

Kāvīyētiḥās Sangraha died but its spirit lived. Chitnis Bakhar and Kashi Raj's Bakhar (Marathi version) were also published simultaneously in *Vividha-jñāna-vistār* by N.J. Kirtane.

Sane, a scholar-cum-editor in the field of bakhars, was a pioneer. He collected the greatest number of manuscripts of every bakhar he could lay hands on and presented it as a model of textual criticism. The Sabhāsad and the Chitnis bakhars are marked by his minute accuracy in giving variant readings and accurate concordance with the original. His Bhau Sahib's Bakhar contains a map and a Persian dictionary to its credit. Orderliness, method and meticulousness together with admirable precision were the canons of scholarship which was ready to examine and accept any new idea, as Jadunath Sarkar adjudges him.²

After the cessation of the *Kāvīyētiḥās Sangraha*, D.B. Parasnis and H.N. Apte brought out the *Bhāratvarsha*, a monthly devoted to the sources of history, under the patronage of the Deccan Vernacular Translation Society in 1895. The monthly continued for about six years. The editorial announced that out of sixty-four pages, thirty-two pages would be utilized for historical or literary treatises, twenty-four pages for old bakhars, historical notes and the remaining eight pages for readers and their letters.

Justice M.G. Ranade's *Rise of the Maratha Power* (1900), a research work, removes all the misunderstandings resulting out of Grant Duff's writing. Therein his creative talent and scholarship go hand in hand to achieve the desired aim. "Ranade", observes D.V. Potdar, "was a prophet of the Maratha history."

After the closure of *Bhāratvarsha* Parasnis brought out in 1908, another valuable and better magazine named *Itiḥās Sangraha*. In this venture he got full support from Purushottam Vishram Mavaji, a lover of Maratha history. He helped Parasnis to secure important historical documents, specially from the Chhatrapati of Satara and the descendants of Nana Fadnavis at Menavali in Satara District. The periodical, in spite of its short life of eight years, had published historical

2. Jadunath Sarkar, *House of Shivaji*, (Calcutta, 1955), p. 298.

correspondence relating specially to the Holkar's Maheswar Durbar and Tanjore's royal family. It also published some bakhars including the chronicle of Javlikar Moré. In the words of Jadunath Sarkar, "The publications of Parasnis form his enduring contribution to Indian History."³ He was a real benefactor of all serious students of history.

A typical but significant contribution was by Justice K.T. Telang who read a paper "Gleanings from Maratha Chronicles" before the Deccan College Union on 17 September 1892. It brought into focus the salient features of the social and religious progress in Maratha history.

Age of Documents

Historical research took a new turn during 1895-1900. The Age of the Bakhars was replaced by the Age of Documents during this period. Contemporary correspondence in the form of original letters relating to Maratha history had naturally secured their superior position over the bakhars, a secondary source comparatively speaking. At this juncture there came forward a scholar, V.V. Khare, who published fifteen volumes of historical short articles, and thereafter *Harivamshāchī Bakhar* (1909) throwing light on the history of the Patwardhan Sardars of the Maratha confederacy.

With his tireless patience, Khare made his way through the mouldy mass of old documents—state papers, despatches, reports, private letters and accounts. His systematic arrangement, judicious spirit combined with strong common sense, and terseness were the most striking characteristics.⁴ These constituted his work a model in the field of research. His hard work in the old history serves as his monument.

Another discerning scholar who deserves notice in that period was V.K. Rajwade. The greatest discoverer, the lifelong searcher, the exclusive devotee without a second love, the most fruitful collector of the raw materials of Maratha history, and at the same time the most painstaking editor, and the most speedy and prolific publisher as he has

3. Ibid. p. 308.

4. Ibid. p. 304.

been called, published to his credit twenty-two volumes in the series *Marāthujānchya Itihāsāchī Sāadhanēn* (Sources of Maratha History). He left plenty of material for yet another four volumes which were subsequently published after his death. He wrote critical prefaces to these volumes formulating historical theories. The third volume comprises the *Chéulchū Bakhar* and the *Holkarāchū Thaili*. The fourth one covers the *Peshwajānchi Bakhar* (Balaji Ganesh Karkun), *Peshwichyā Akherchi Akhbar* (Venkat Ballal) and *Shake Satrāshe Adatisātil Hakikat* (a history in the Shaka era seventeen thirty-eight). It has a scholarly introduction on bakhars. The sixth volume likewise embodies his observations on the same subject. Besides, Rajwade published a critical edition of *Mahikāvāñchī ūrpha Māhūnchū Bakhar* (1924). His analytical approach and deep study are the intrinsic merits of this work. Thus he researched with a patriotic zeal and missionary spirit for nearly three decades as a wandering scholar and a penniless collector as has been described and proved his ability to the title of *Itihāsāchārya* (The Master of History). Jadunath Sarkar rightly remarks that "he alone revolutionised historical methodology in the Deccan and—by that example—in other parts of India as well... He was our pioneer *par excellence*."⁵

V.L. Bhawe, the author of *Mahārāshtra Sāraswat* (History of Marathi Literature) brought out the *Shédgāonkar Bakhar* (1917), the *Kaifiyat of Sardār Gokhale* (1922) and *Bhat Peshwé Gharānyāchī Hakikat* (1922). *Autobiographies of Gangādhār Shāstri Patwardhan* (1922) and *Malhār Ganesh Khāndekar* (1943) were published in the research journals of Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal (Poona), founded by V.K. Rajwade. Besides these, *Shiva Digvijay* and *Shivaji Prafāp Bakhars* both published at Baroda (1895), *Bundelyāchi Bakhar* (1920) published by P.N. Patwardhan, *Sāshñichī Bakhar ūrpha Vasaichā Durdhar Dharma Sangrām* (1935) published by the Prabhu community of Bombay, *Samarthānchī Bakhar* (1950) published at Dhulia, *Sanpurichī Bakhar* (1950) published at Hyderabad and *Bhonsal vānsha Charitra* (1951) published at Tanjore are worthy of note.

5. Ibid, p. 277.

Historical research was started, of course, in Maharashtra by the Europeans. However, Justice M.G. Ranade, Justice K.T. Telang, Rao Bahadur N.J. Kirtane, V.K. Chiplunkar, K.N. Sane, V.V. Khare, V.K. Rajwade and D.B. Parasnis set up a conspicuous tradition of historical study. It was pioneering work. The selfless and excellent work of these scholars was a model for others.

Authenticity of the Bakhars

Most of the bakhars were handwritten in *modī* (a cursive script) long before printing came in India. Naturally the existing bakhars are copies of the original manuscripts, which in almost all cases, are now no longer extant. These copies were also used for improving handwriting as prototype. It is difficult, therefore, to ascertain how far the existing copies are faithful reproductions of the originals. There must have been quite a few interpolations, transpositions, deletions, to which were added other shortcomings when the bakhars were later transliterated and printed by editors who could not read *modī* correctly or who interpreted it according to their personal tastes. It was only towards the end of the nineteenth century that the bakhars were placed in their right perspective—that of qualified acceptance.

The Role of the Bakhars

The bakhars reveal a glorious tradition of history-writing in Maharashtra. Though the view-point of the chroniclers is one-sided, they are the mouth-piece of the people whom they represent and can, therefore, be counter-balanced against the versions of the Europeans and the Muslims. If not history in a true sense of the term, still they are its sources. The traditional and the underlying canon of history hinted at by them would be a great asset for historical construction. They have popularized history by fostering noble feelings about the nation and religion. Besides, they are useful for the comparative study of the history of the Marathas.

The bakhar is, in every sense, genuinely a prose song. The bakhars proceed as by a chant. Their depth, rapt passion and sincerity make them sonorous and go deep enough to

invite aesthetic response. A true inward symmetry—an architectural harmony—reigns supreme in them, proportionates them all. Sincerity, here too, we find to be the measure of worth. It came deep out of the authors' heart of hearts, reaching out to those of long generations coming down to us. Intensity is the prevailing character of these Maratha chronicles. Their greatness, in every way, concentrated itself into fiery emphasis on morals. Above all, morally great, we must call them. And so in these chronicles, as we may say in the words of Thomas Carlyle, had three centuries, in a very strange way, found voice.⁶

Conclusion

The Bakhhar-writers are the spokesmen of the Maratha empire. Much had they not spoken, would have been dumb; not dead, yet living voiceless. They have given us the faith to live by and soul to cherish for. Maharashtra produced its chroniclers; Maharashtra can speak! Hail to them!! They are the heroes as Historian and Litterateur pouring their full hearts in profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

6. Carlyle on *Heroes, Hero-Worship and The Heroic in History*, Ed. Archibald Macnechan. (Boston, 1901), p. 112.

Appendix I

*Sāshfichī Bakhar**

In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, while the Peshwa Baji Rao I was overrunning Northern India, the Konkan region, the fertile land between the Ghats and the sea, still remained unsubdued. The Angrias of Kolaba, the Siddis of Jinjira and the Portuguese of Salsette were the rival powers in this area. Although the Portuguese power of the sea was already declining, their activities were running counter to the interests of the Marathas. The Portuguese took interest in the family disputes of the Angrias. Moreover, the Inquisition, active in Goa and Salsette-Bassein long before, resulted in strained relations between the rulers and the subjects so far as religious freedom was concerned. When Kalyan, the adjoining land, was under the Marathas in 1719, the popular discontent found expression. The local leaders sought the help of the Peshwa to restore their freedom. The Maratha army under the command of Chimaji Appa, the brother of Baji Rao I, captured Thana, the southern gateway of the Salsette Channel, on 27 March 1737. The Portuguese had fortified their defensive posts. The English were reluctant to help them. A formidable force of the Marathas attacked the Portuguese stronghold. Another one invaded Goa and cut off regular supplies to Bassein. After two days of heavy fighting, Bassein fell on 5 May 1739. The treaty of 7 September 1740 completed the conquest of the North Konkan by the Marathas. The Salsette-Bassein campaign is one of the shining episodes of Maratha history.

* A paper read in the Historic Bassein and Its Future Seminar 1987, Heras Institute, Bombay.

The Chronicle

Sāshlīchī Bakhar. The Chronicle of Salsette, is a historical document in Marathi dealing with the Salsette-Bassein Campaign by the Marathas in 1739. The word *Sāshti* is derived from the Marathi word *Sahāsashta*, meaning a group of sixty-six villages. Originally an adjective, it is used here as a proper noun. One of the areas in Goa is also so named. The term *bakhar* is the metathetical form of the Arabic word *khavar* (pl. *akhbār*), which means news or a report. In Marathi this term is used in a limited sense, namely, political history or the history of the times. Rajwade opines that the Marathas wrote the *bakhars* in imitation of the style of the *tawārikhs* written under the Muslim potentates in India. In spite of their shortcomings as a partial view, *bakhars* focus our attention on the events of the time and are, therefore, useful as a source of Maratha history.

There are two different versions of *Sāshlīchī Bakhar*. The first is *Sāshlīchī ūrpha Thānyāchī Bakhar* edited by Rao Bahadur K.N. Sane. He published it in his *Kāvya-tihāssangraha* periodical (1882) which was devoted to the original historical sources of the history of the Marathas including *bakhars*, letters, news reports, etc., and also old Marathi poetry. The periodical which lasted for about twelve years (1878-1890) had done a great service to the scholars by placing at their disposal source material of the history and poetry of Maharashtra. It was in a way a reaction to the writings of the European historians like Robert Orme, Scott-Waring and Grant Duff, who had written the history of the Marathas from a particular angle, that is, the European one. Sane informs that he received the script of the *Sāshlīchī Bakhar* from Rao Bahadur Mahadeo Govind Ranade. It was written in *bālbodhī*, a popular script, akin to *devanāgarī* in Sanskrit. He further adds that it was the copy of the original which is believed to be with Sarnaik Inamadar of Anjur in Bhiwandi Taluka (District Thana).

The Sane edition records the events up to the treaty of Salbai on 17 May 1782, after the First Anglo-Maratha war

in 1776. The edition obviously seems to have been prepared by many additions of the events of the later period, as it refers to the Article IV of the said treaty, providing that the territory of Salsette of three lacs shall forever thereafter remain in the possession of the British. This reference may be taken as a date of its composition, that is, after 1782 (Shaka era 1704). The title *Sāshfichū Urpha Thānyāchi Bakhar* appears to have been inserted by the copy-writer himself.

The second one is *Sāshfichū Urpha Vasaichā Durdhar Dharmasangrām*, edited by G.G.Naik of Anjur-Bhiwandi and published in Bombay in 1935. This edition narrates the last event that Gangaji Naik, the local participant in the campaign, dug a water-pool named *dekale* in memory of his mother Devaki (Naik) at Kambe in the Ambarnath area of Kalyan District. It was according to his vow taken before Gajanan, the family deity, to get his hereditary rights restored. The death of Chimaji Appa in 1740 in the Bakhar may be taken as the date of its composition. The title *Sāshfichū Bakhar Urpha Durdhar Dharmasangrām* has been given by Naik, the editor.

The original bakhar was probably written immediately after the event in *modī* (a cursive script), the popular one, long before printing came to Maharashtra. Naturally the existing bakhars are copies of the original manuscript, whose whereabouts are no longer known. It is rather difficult to ascertain how far they are faithful to the original. Moreover, interpolations, transpositions, deletions, etc., must have crept therein, adding to their other defects. It may be agreed to, as Naik suggests, that the original was written immediately after the event, but the copy is of a later period. It is suggested that the date of the composition of the original may be about 1742 (Shaka era 1664).

The authorship of the original or its copies is not known. However, the author, says Naik, may be a Pathare Kshatriya person, as the manuscript used by him was available with Rane, the head of the community at Thana. Though it is presumed to be a contemporary document, the language with its style differs in these versions (Sane and Naik). Hence their calligraphers may be different ones.

Historical Aspect

The two versions under reference narrate practically the same incidents with slight variations. The Sane edition describes in short the part played by Gangaji Naik, the local leader, and his brothers and also other men of heroic proportions. On the other hand, the Naik edition gives the details of their actions. Here Gangaji Naik, the stalwart figure, rises before the readers in heroic dimension almost from every page. The full account of how the campaign was Gangaji's inspiration and aspiration simultaneously working, how he induced the Peshwa and his Maratha Sardars with his great noble idea, and often and again, how he stirred the latter forth from their apathy, apprises the readers of the critical situation. Both the versions state that the religious persecution by the Portuguese was the chief cause of the Maratha-Portuguese conflict. G.S.Sardesai in his *Marathi Riyāsat* (Bombay 1942), supports this view. The actual fight is certainly historical, but the story that Gajanan, the family deity of Gangaji Naik, appeared in a dream, inspired the devotee, and forecast his success (Naik), cannot be considered historical.

The Sane edition reports that the Peshwa Baji Rao I and Chimaji Appa had consulted Mahadaji Scindia prior to the battle. This appears to be a slip of hand for Moroji Scindia in the Naik edition. In fact, the Sane edition also refers to Moroji Scindia elsewhere. Rajwade confirms Moroji Scindia. The time of the various incidents are vaguely referred to in the Chronicle like the other bakhars, such as *mag* (afterwards), *hikadé* (to this side), *témvā* (then), etc. However, it refers only two dates 27 March 1737 (Shaka era 1661)—The fort of Thana surrendered—and 7 May 1739 (Shaka era 1661)—the fall of Bassein. The Naik edition mentions 1740 instead of 1739. The editor has drawn attention to this.

The approach to the Bassein Campaign by the Marathas was mainly determined by the geographical conditions, namely, the narrow coastal strip with its inland channels made by the sea and also the historical background and political realities. Large scale movements of cavalry were not practical, hence they used infantry, as the chronicle

indicates (Sane). The Anjurkars and the Kavles of the local population furnished the secret information regarding the knowledge of fords, their control and also the strength of the Portuguese defence works which became the important factor of the military strategy of the Marathas in the area. Though the policy of war of the Peshwas was the legacy of the guerrilla warfare of the earlier period, the infantry of the Marathas, at this juncture, was the whole army, the cavalry having been relegated to the background. Moreover, mines for explosion and escalade played a significant part in this war game, as is attested to by the chronicle. The *bakhar* proves beyond doubt that the Portuguese power was on the decline, and they clung to their outposts with difficulty.

The credit of the campaign is ascribed to Gangaji Naik as compared with Chimaji Appa (Naik). This may raise a controversy.

However, a considered view leads us to the conclusion that both being equal matches to their counterparts of the opposite side, one could not be totally successful in his undertaking without the other. In truth, one was the necessary supplement to the other. It may also be noted that *Marathi Sāmrajyāchū Chhoḍi Bakhar* and *Peshwānchi Bakhar* (Sohani) name Chimaji Appa as the hero of the battle.

A salient point in this episode is that the Marathas chivalrously allowed the garrison to march out with the honours of war, and a safe-conduct to Goa or Daman, while those who preferred to remain were promised complete religious freedom. A thorough historical investigation is necessary to settle the various issues involved with the aid of contemporary records of both the parties.

Literary Merits

The chronicler in the earlier part graphically describes the religious persecution of the local people by the Portuguese. Not only the fight itself, but other historical events like the meetings and consultations of Gangaji Naik and his associates, as also their organization for war in the

name of *Mahārāshtra-Dharma* (the duty to their homeland, Maharashtra) including their strong determination to challenge their opponents, are reconstructed in an imaginative way and set out in pictorial language. The movements of the Maratha army are systematically narrated in detail as compared with those of the Portuguese. The terms *Firang* and *Firangān* are used for the Portuguese and Portugal respectively. *Firang*, the Persian word, is derived from the original Frank of the Old High German family, meaning one of the Germanic nation or coalition that conquered France in the sixth century.

The chronicle deals mainly with events and actions with things suffered and done by the historical personalities such as the Peshwa Baji Rao I, Chimaji Appa, Gangaji Naik and others. They are painted artistically through situation and dialogue, making them alive. The emotional element gives the chronicler's work permanent interest, and consequently literary quality. Every image that the chronicler's imagination associates with it heightens that effect. Here the writer selects and combines the facts under the laws of beauty, in fidelity to the essential truth of human nature—the inner truth of human life which is embodied in them. History comes under the intellectual element, as it aims at giving fact and truth blended with emotional interest, for example, Ramchandra Mahadeo, the Subahdar of Kalyan, who solemnly promised help to Gangaji Naik on behalf of the Peshwa.

The author writes in plain, simple and unaffected style. Pithy and pointed sentences arising from the right use of the right words add to the beauty of the style of narration. The language is replete with foreign technical terms like *pegām* (Persian), *mukābala* (Arabic), *damdamā* (Persian), *sai* (Arabic), *barkandāz* (Persian), *galbat* (Persian), *tamām* (Arabic), *nishān* (Persian) *amal* (Arabic)—which enhance the remarkable literary production. It may be noted that some corrupt forms of the original like *soldād* (soldiers), *jarāl* (general), *barel* (barrel), *renol* (recruit), *Pedre Damel* (Pedro de Mello) are prolific without being obscure. The Sane edition contains correct grammatical forms, while the Naik edition does not. But it must be said to the credit of the

Naik edition that it is a good piece of emotive prose. The style of the chronicle proves its dynamic force. A case in point. The appearance of the deity Gajanan (in a Brahman's disguise) in Gangaji Naik's dream, the exchange of *tulsi* and *bel* leaves between Ramachandra Mahadeo and Gangaji Naik as a sign of vow, Gangaji Naik's performance of *gondhal* (invocation to the goddess Bhawani) etc., are all indications of the socio-religious condition of the period.

Sāshīchī Bakhar holds a special position in Marathi literature. Depicting the feelings of the time, it is an example of powerful, emotive prose. Being a connected narrative, it is not merely a valuable source of Maratha history, but is itself a kind of history.

Appendix II

*Rajwādē on Bakhars**

It is now sixty years since Vishwanath Kashinath Rajwade passed away. His reputation remains undiminished. He dealt with equal felicity such varied branches of knowledge as history and religion, philosophy and literature, grammar and philology, palaeography and epigraphy. His entire life was devoted to the pursuit of knowledge. Few others could boast of similar efforts or attainments. He collected original source-material bearing on Maratha history, and his editing of these materials reveals a critical acumen that is almost without a parallel. He was a great admirer of Swami Ramdas and chose the life of a begging mendicant in the pursuit of the mission of his life of putting historical studies on a scientific basis. His example inspired not only scholars from Maharashtra but also from outside the region. The motive force behind Rajwade's effort was undoubtedly the national spirit he had imbibed. As pointed out above, he dealt with a very vast field. It is proposed to touch up here only one aspect of his varied researches, namely, the *Bakhars*.

Scrutiny of Bakhars

Rajwade has critically examined the *Saptaprakarnātmak Charitra*, *Shiva Digvijaya*, *Shiva Pralāp* and the *Rāiri Bakhar* translated into English by Forrest. He has also taken into account the *Sabhāsad Bakhar*, the *Chitragupta Bakhar* and the *Bakhar* of Dalpatrai Bundela, known as *Bundelyāchī Bakhar*. The reason for this choice seems to be two-fold. In the first place, these bakhars refer to the period when the Maratha power was taking shape and secondly, nobody had

* Adapted from the article in *Rajwade and his Thoughts*, (Poona, 1990).

discussed them previously. Rajwade's observations regarding these works may be summed up as under:

Although all these bakhars are useful only to a degree, among them the *Sabhāsad Bakhar*, the *Chitnis Bakhar* and the *Shiv Digvijaya* have special importance. Like all other bakhars, these three are also replete with errors like wrong dates, omissions of important events and lack of reliable detailed information. It is not that the bakhar-writers deliberately indulged in giving false information. But they are definitely somewhat guilty of making irrelevant, vague and unreliable statements. Consequently, we have to scrutinize these statements in the light of contemporary trend of social thinking, contemporary lack of scientific knowledge and the degree of honesty in the writers' attitude towards their writings. To accept such apparently unhistorical statements without their minute scrutiny is not only unscientific but also dangerous. On the other hand, it would be an injustice to bakhar-writers if we hold them entirely responsible for vague and contradictory statements. Some share of this responsibility also goes to the credit of later copy-writers and editors of the bakhars.¹

Errors of Grant Duff

Rajwade has meticulously pointed out with evidence numerous errors committed by Grant Duff in the *History of the Mahrattas*, especially his gross misstatements relating to the period of Maratha history from 1750 to 1761. Duff has completely omitted some significant battles and has faltered in giving dates of some others. Had he prepared a chronology of historical events, the value of his work would have enhanced. Rajwade is convinced that there is not much difference between Duff's book and the bakhars, because the book is also full of wrong dates, displays ignorance of important expeditions and lacks understanding of more or less relative importance of historical incidents.

While discussing the above shortcomings of Duff's work, Rajwade expresses a view that an ideal way of writing a

1. V.K. Rajwade, *Āitiḥāsik Prastāvana*, (Poona, 1928), pp. 2, 104.

history of a country from all aspects is to combine two standard methods of writing—empirical (*bhautic*) and psychic (*ātmic*). He severely criticises Duff for following only the first method. His criticism in this respect is worth frank and humble admittance in his preface that he had neither the desire nor the necessary educational qualification to deal with the psychic aspect of Maratha history.

In the opinion of Rajwade, Duff's motive in writing the book was to furnish generally satisfactory information regarding the Marathas to his fellow countrymen. Duff's writing is certainly more systematic than that of the bakhars. But it is mainly based on the Marathi bakhars, the Muslim *Tawārīkhs*, the *Kaifiyats* of different historical families and similar other secondary source-material. As most of the bakhars, *tawārīkhs* and *kaifiyats* are more or less unreliable, Duff's work has also lost much of its credibility. It does not deserve to be called even a history of Maratha campaigns because he has given them very short treatment. A work, resembling a history, giving some information regarding the Marathas, is the correct description of Duff's book.²

Rajwade has suggested following tests for determining the authenticity of the bakhars : (1) If the day, the month and *tithī* etc., given by a particular bakhar are found to be correct in all details, the bakhar should be regarded as reliable insofar as that date is concerned. (2) If there are errors or inconsistencies with regard to historical places and personalities in a bakhar, external evidence of other authentic sources should be utilised to correct these errors or inconsistencies. (3) A bakhar is generally not considered to be a first grade historical source. But if it is found to be authentic in parts, this partial authenticity is also to be proved by means of external corroborative evidence. (4) Ballads (*Powādāas*) are more reliable than the bakhars. (5) Statements or descriptions based on unanimous or majority support of the bakhars are not necessarily authentic. (6) Even a single small contemporary original historical paper is enough to disprove anything unanimously supported by

2. Ibid. pp. 23, 28-29. .

the bakhars.³ This last statement of Rajwade regarding contemporary historical papers is only partially true. Because, a historical paper contains a particular kind of information and that also of contemporary significance only. Often this information is too brief and short. Contrary to this, the chief merit of a bakhar lies in its ability to provide detailed information on different aspects—political, social, religious and domestic. Occasionally, a bakhar supplies information not known to historical papers and this information is also presented continuously and exhaustively. If information in a bakhar is not disproved by historical papers, it should be considered as reliable. Not only this, even doubtful facts in a bakhar should be accepted as historically true until they are proved to be otherwise. We also cannot overlook the possibility of the original source of a bakhar being first grade and authentic. Of all historical sources, the bakhars are the most useful sources for the chronological arrangement of historical events.

Concluding Remarks

Rajwade was the first scholar in Maharashtra to go to the root of historiography and discuss various aspects of history such as its nature, method of writing, subject-matter, relation to philosophy etc. He personally collected a vast mass of original historical records and then objectively scrutinized merits and demerits of the bakhars. He also suggested practical tests to judge the authenticity of the bakhars. While indicating the defects and shortcomings of the bakhars, he also brought to our notice that bakhar-writers were not guilty of twisting the historical facts. In comparison with other contemporary authentic sources like historical papers and letters, Rajwade clearly showed limitations of the bakhars. However, we should keep in mind that the objective test of external evidence on which Rajwade heavily relied, is itself not perfect. Of course a comparative study of the bakhars and contemporary his-

3. *Ibid.* pp. 2, 298.

torical papers will bring out more fruitful results. The bakhars have two-fold value—firstly as a source of Maratha history and secondly as a branch of old Marathi prose literature. As new historical sources and new literary principles will come to light, the study of the bakhars will receive great impetus. In this study, the way shown by Rajwade and variorum editions of the bakhars prepared by him will be most helpful.

Appendix III

Marathi Bakhars

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Appendix IV

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Glossary

Dakshinā — *Dakshinā* is a gift to Brahmins at the completion of a religious rite. In the Peshwa period Brahmins from distant places used to come to Poona for receiving gifts from the Peshwas. An enclosure called *Ramanā* was specially constructed for them to assemble. They came by one gate and left by the other after receiving gifts.

Gajānan — *Gajānan* is the epithet of Ganesh, the God of Learning. He is the son of Lord Shiva and Pārvati. It is said that he wrote the Mahabharat as the amanuensis of Vyāsa who secured his services from God Brahma.

Gārdīs — The word *gārdī* (sing) is derived from Portuguese *gardā* and English *guard*. *Gārdīs* were in the service of Peshwas and the Sardars. They were mostly foreigners, particularly Muslim Arabs.

Goddess Bhavāni — *Bhavāni* is the wife of Lord Shiva. She protects her devotees and destroys the sinners. *Bhavāni* temple at Tuljāpur in Maharashtra is even today a place of pilgrimage. She was the family deity of Shivaji. According to a legend, *Bhavāni* often appeared to Shivaji in his trance particularly in times of danger, foretelling and assuring him of safety. He had also received the *Bhavāni* sword from her.

Gondhal — *Gondhal* is a special kind of dance performed in honour of *Bhavāni*. Her devotees are called *Gondhalis* who perform *gondhal* singing religious and historical songs. They invoke her for the welfare of the people. The performance usually starts in the evening and lasts till day-break. At the beginning of the 17th century this cult of *Bhavani* had spread.

Shaka era — The Hindu Shaka era used in religious rites, is ascribed to Shālivāhana according to tradition. However, modern research has proved that the paramount sovereign Kanishka was the 'maker' of Shaka era. He reigned in 78 A.D. Epigraphical records show that Havishka and Vasudeva his successors, continued the era.

Shéshta — Shéshta is the name of a celebrated serpent, the king of serpents. He is said to have one thousand heads and represented as forming the couch of Lord Vishnu and supporting the entire world on his heads. He is one of the nine serpents (*nāgās*).

Tawārīkh — Tawārīkh (feminine) is the plural of the Arabic word Tarikh which means date. It is a date-wise (chronological) history or the chronicle of the Muslims. Muslim records seldom fail to give a wealth of dates.

Uddhava — Uddhava was a member of the Yadav family. He was uncle of Lord Krishna. On realizing the destruction of the Yadavas to be inevitable he was bewildered. Krishna gave him practical advice and asked him to go to Badarikāshrama to practice penance and to seek salvation.

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