

THE MAIN CURRENTS
OF
MARATHA HISTORY



G. S. SARDESAI, B.A.

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of
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Originally Patna University Readership Lectures 1926,
now greatly enlarged, rewritten, and brought up to date.

BY

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P R E F A C E

Since the first edition of these lectures was printed seven years ago, a great advance has taken place in the research of Maratha history, particularly on account of the ample selections from the *Peshwas' Daftar* published by the Government of Bombay. While editing these selections I had to wade, with the help of my staff, through the vast mass of old papers, both historical and administrative, and naturally obtained an insight into many useful topics, which I consider indeed to be more valuable than the papers actually published. I do not like to allow this experience to perish with me and am ardently seeking means to put it on record. In the mean time the demand for copies of my Patna Lectures has long been pressing, and I am now trying to meet it immediately after obtaining relief from my undertaking at the *Peshwas' Daftar*. While revising these lectures for a fresh edition, many new points have struck me for which I have now tried to make room without materially altering either the original plan or the size of the book. The main object of these lectures was to interpret Maratha history from purely Maratha standpoint, to those who cannot study the original materials at first hand owing to their ignorance of the language. This object I have scrupulously followed even now. But there were obvious gaps in the performance when it was first executed. No mention was made about the rise and career of Shivaji, or the grand successes of Peshwa Bajirao I. and his brother. A sudden jump was taken from the death of Shahu to the Maratha War with the English, thus skipping entirely over the important event of Panipat or the brilliant career of Madhaorao I. These topics I have now put in and incidentally made a few alterations in my discussion of the character and achievements of Mahadji Sindia and Nana Fadnis and of the causes of the Maratha downfall which form the subject of the last chapter.

My readers will bear in mind that I have by no means attempted to write herein a full history of the Marathas. My purpose is to supply a running constructive criticism and a reasoned interpretation of the salient features involved in that vast subject, more or less following the lines of Sir Alfred Lyall, in his brilliant work, *The British Dominion in India*, although I do not claim to possess his critical powers or his sound judgment. Having purposely avoided entering into minute details and thereby making

the treatment cumbrous, I have tried to explain the aims and objects, the strong and weak points, the motives and general nature of the Maratha power, correcting and adding what appeared necessary from a personal study and experience, and removing the misconceptions and wrong views which I happened to notice during the course of my reading. Readers may judge how far I have succeeded in this rather ambitious design. All I can claim is that the views herein expressed are entirely my own, as any presentation of historical topics is bound to be. It would be absurd in an undertaking of this kind to try to please this or that school of thought. But I know I have tried to avoid partisanship and to give out an impartial reading of the old Maratha days. If history is to be of any practical use, an unbiassed and fearless criticism is, in my opinion, most essential, and, in this respect, I feel I have tried to meet the educational needs of all students so far as the Maratha period of Indian history is concerned.

I cordially repeat what I wrote in the first edition, viz. that, "the Patna University have laid me under deep obligations, by undertaking to have the lectures printed promptly and under my personal supervision at Calcutta. I cannot also omit to thank my valued friend Prof. Sarkar for the kind and ready help he has rendered me in this task, shewing thereby what a keen interest he takes in Maratha History."

Kamshet,
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G. S. SARDESAI

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"All Empires, all states, all organizations of human society are in the ultimate, things of understanding and will."

—H. G. WELLS
Short History of the World.

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