



PATNA UNIVERSITY READERSHIP LECTURES, 1926.

THE MAIN CURRENTS OF MARATHA HISTORY

BY

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FOREWORD.

Since the publication of V. K. Rajwade's first volume of Maratha historical letters in 1898, a complete revolution has taken place in our knowledge of South Indian history. An immense mass of contemporary letters, Statepapers, and legal documents has seen the light, some of which go back to the earliest period of the Maratha State, and even beyond it, to the sixteenth century. This is the achievement of a large band of poor but devoted scholars of tireless industry and unquenchable thirst for knowledge. The Peshwas' records, as taken over by the British in 1818, together with the huge mass of papers of all descriptions and every variety of use and uselessness drawn within their net by the Inam Commission, and preserved in the Land Alienation Office, Puna,—have been subjected to examination (rather scratching the surface) and publication in brief extracts which are too meagre considering the volume of these materials.

This enormous wealth of raw materials, covering over 60,000 printed pages, is in Marathi, and therefore, a sealed book to those students of history who do not know that tongue. Nor has any writer, even in Marathi, taken a broad and comprehensive survey of these materials and reconstructed the history of his nation on the basis of these sources, which were unknown to Grant Duff. There is here a great danger of our not being able to see the wood for the trees. The reader is in danger of being buried under this overwhelming quantity of unsorted, unindexed dispersed details, and the research scholar is apt to become a narrow specialist, blind to all other periods, places and aspects of life except the solitary one with which he is concerned, and therefore, failing to produce a genuine and *life-like* history of the people.

The greatest need to-day is that of a historian who would synthetize all these materials, construct his own

chart through this "Saragossa Sea" of old papers, and give the reader the net ultimate *general* result of all these materials as focussed in one mind. Mr. Govind Sakharam Sardesai, B.A., well-known in the Western Presidency, has been engaged for years now in rewriting the history of the Marathas by studying, classifying, correcting and fusing together all these newly discovered raw materials,—and also giving a new grouping of the old facts in the light of the new knowledge. With unflagging perseverance he has published volume after volume of his *Marathi Riyasal*, patiently covering the entire period from the first dawn of the Maratha State in the 17th century to the year 1773. But he has written in his mother-tongue. The wider circle of readers outside Maharashtra require a presentation of the result in English. It would, however, cost much time and money to bring out an English rendering of the five (soon to be six) volumes of his *Riyasal*.

In the meantime, it is a matter of sincere congratulation that, at the invitation of the Patna University—(no prophet is honoured in his own land!), he has delivered a course of lectures in English giving a lucid and concise account, a bird's eye view,—of Maratha history from the rise of the nation into a political unit to its absorption in the common Indian empire of our day. This book, entitled *The Main Currents of Maratha History*, supplies English readers with an orderly presentation of the *essence* of this recently quarried information and an idea of the new orientation that Maratha history must take in the light of the new facts. It is anything but a school text; it is no dry catalogue of names and dates,—but throughout a rapid survey of the *philosophy* of Maratha history,—the broad movements of the nation's fortunes under the impact of external and internal forces at different periods, ending with a very critical and dispassionate estimate of the statesmanship of Nana Fadnis and the causes of the downfall of the Maratha State.

Jadunath Sarkar.

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INTRODUCTORY

The following lectures on Maratha History were delivered by me at the Wheeler Senate House, Patna University, who had selected me as their Reader for 1926. The lectures commenced on 1st November and closed on the 10th. Professor Jadunath Sarkar, M.A., C.I.E., Vice-Chancellor, University of Calcutta, presided at the first three lectures. After being introduced to the audience, I made the following remarks, before starting the subject:—

“It gives me very great pleasure to come before you to-day to deliver a course of lectures on the History of the Marathas at the behest of the Patna University. I thank the University most heartily for the honour they have done me, and I trust, they will appreciate what little service I might be able to do in response to their call. Gentlemen, we in India are an exclusive people; our differences of language have hampered us tremendously and have prevented a full and free exchange of knowledge and views between the various nationalities of India. Your invitation, therefore, to outsiders to come and lecture at Patna in their special studies, is indeed very commendable and deserves to be imitated by the rest of India.

“A vast amount of fresh historical material has been published in Maharashtra during the last quarter of a century, of which the outside public of India who do not know the Marathi language, are more or less ignorant. It is impossible to make all this material available to readers in English, and unless it reaches non-Marathi readers, it cannot excite corresponding research in other languages. With this object in view, I thought of taking a rapid glance over the whole course of Maratha history, touching those salient points which have been recently established in Maharashtra on this new evidence, and those others which are still to some extent debatable, indefinite,

or vague. I shall therefore speak on the aims and objects of Maratha policy, explaining what it has achieved and what it has failed to achieve, what good or evil it did to India, and what place it can claim in the history of India as a whole, interpreting, in fact, to the non-Maratha world, the meaning of this documentary evidence, and the results it leads one to, as regards the past achievements of the Marathas. At the same time, I have a great desire to bring about a co-ordination of effort throughout the country between Maharashtra and the other parts of India in this important subject of national interest. In the present strife for Swaraj the memory of past achievements, as also of past failures, of every nationality, is to it and to all the rest, a great asset on which we have to build the future, and which must provide for us all the necessary inspiration to work for the goal. The necessities of the time and our situation, in my opinion, require us to give up our provincialism and accustom ourselves to thinking in terms of a united India. Remembering, therefore, that we have ultimately to build up a complete and united national History of India as a whole, I shall try to place before you the main currents of Maratha History, explaining therein what research we have been making in the south and what we expect to be done in the north. I think without such an interchange and such a supplementing from all quarters, our individual efforts in Maharashtra will for ever remain isolated and incomplete. Our past is a common property which we all have to share equally."

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.

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25th November, 1926.

G. S. SARDESAL.