

Shivaji Maharaja's An Intelligent Spy : Bahirji Naik

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Abstract – Indian history is incomplete without Maratha Empire. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaja conquered many battles due to his excellency and brave army force. Intelligence agency of Chhatrapati (Ch.) Shivaji was adventurous and was successful in many battles. Bahirji Naik was an intelligent spy, and an efficient soldier of Maratha army. There is no concrete information about the early life of Bahirji but his bravery and adventures as a spy in Ch. Shivaji's army tell us of him great contributions in Maratha Empire. Present paper will focus on the life of this spy and his contribution in the rise of Maratha Empire with reference to history of Maratha Empire and Sanskrit literature.

The Maratha Empire, also known as the Maratha Confederacy, dominated a large portion of India during the 17th and 18th century. The author of World Heritage Encyclopedia stated that, the Maratha Empire formally began with the rise of Ch. Shivaji in 1674. Maratha Empire is largely credited with ending the Mughal rule in India and is often seen as a true Indian power, as it dominated the Indian subcontinent during 17th and 18th centuries¹.

In Newworldencyclopedia, it is described as - Ch. Shivaji's conflicts with the Mughals, which started from the year 1657, served as one of the primary reasons for the hatred

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towards the Mughals. Ch. Shivaji had accumulated large areas of land through his campaigns². He had also gathered an armed force to tackle issues with various other rulers, including the Mughals. Newworldencyclopedia

Detectives are the main pillars of the governance of a nation. They should be appointed by the king. In *Mahabharata's Shanti Parva*, it is described as –

राज्यं प्रणिधिमूलम्³ detectives are the root sources of the state. In the same way, a king is also called as "Charchakshu" - it means detectives are the eyes of the king. They collect the latest informations and help the king for his future plannings. Pt. Mahadevshastri Joshi remarked a collective note of ancient sources - *Rigveda, Manusmriti, Ramayana, Shukraniti* and *Kautiliya Arthashastra*, in these ancient literary sources many references of detectives and their successful achievements are found.⁴ *Sivarajyodayam* and *Ksatrapatimahakavyam*, these are the modern Sanskrit sources where I found the references about Ch. Shivaji Maharaja's an intelligent detective, Bahirji Naik.

Bahirji Naik- A key component of Ch. Shivaji's army was his intelligence agency, which was adventures and successful to inform him about the movements of enemy. An author remarked in an article that, Bahirji Naik was an Indian spy, Chief of Intelligence in the army of Ch. Shivaji Maharaja during a time when Maratha Empire and Mughal Empire were at war.⁵ His valor bravery induced the man to perform espionage in enemy camps when the time and conditions were unfriendly and treacherous. He was so perfect in his methods that history can only infer what he did but not how he accomplished his supreme feats⁶.

Early Life Not much is known about the early life of Bahirji but his expeditions and adventures as a spy in Ch. Shivaji's army tell us of him great contributions in Shivaji's Empire. There is no concrete information available in the death of Bahirji. It was found in Burhan, that he died while espousing Bhopalgad. His tomb is now situated on

Banurgad or Bhupalgad in Khanapur taluka of Sangli district. Bahirji Naik was the native of **Hungewadi Tq. Srigonda**⁷ He was brave and adept in making any changes in fakir, Vasudev, Koli, Beggar, Saint, oldman, etc. In any way. He had the tact of stealing the words from their mouth without knowing the other person. He was very adept at copying and transmitting anybody and very smart in speaking. In *Arthasastra*, Kautilya says- a spy should be a cook, a spreader of bed, water-servant, hump-backed person, a dwarf, a pigmy(kirata), the dumb, the deaf, the idiot, the blind, artisans such as actors, dancers, singers, players, on musical instruments, buffoons, and a bard; as well as women shall espy the private character of these officers. परिचारकाः रसदाः, कुब्जवामनकिरातमूकबधिरजडान्धच्छद्मानः नटनर्तकगायकवादकवाग्जीवनकुशीलवाः स्त्रियश्चाभ्यन्तरं चारं विद्युः।⁸

Above described qualities of spy were found in Bahirji. Knowing these qualities of Bahirji, Maharaja got him involved in his secret works.

He was the chief of intelligence and Maharaja honored him the status of Sardar. Historians believe that around 3,000 detectives were operating under Bahirji. All these secret detectives were spread in Bijapur, Delhi, Karnataka, Pune and other cities. Bahirji had created a language like an Intelligence Service. The language was only heard by the detectives of him. There were voices of birds, voices of animals in it. Any message to be given was given in that code language. Bahirji was the first to know which mission will be going on today. The rocks of the place should be collected by him and reached to Ch. Shivaji Maharaja as early as possible.

Bahirji and his spouse used to be known *Sadhus, Beggar, Bairagi* and took the information about themselves in the form of text and paragraphs. By extracting information and co-ordinating information on the distant army and the fortresses, the work was accomplished by the system of Bahirji. It would not be exaggerated if Shivaji Maharaja's every triumphant victory was made by Bahirji Naik and his headlines, and saying this would not be unfair to anyone. Sri

Varnekar stated about Bahirji in *Sivarajyodayam- Suratdahanam* chapter. The discription matches clearly to Bahirji's qualities, his intelligence, and adventures.

अनीक्षितः केनचिदप्यस्माद्बहिर्जिनामा स बहिर्जगाम।⁹

Bahirji Naik was not only a detective but also a soldier. He was brave in the sword-racket, as he knew that secret spies would have to face any occasion. If he wants to spread a scuff, or wants to give wrong information to enemy, then being alert, he was cleverly working.

Bahirji's contribution in wars and covert operations found in Sanskrit Literature

Bahirji Naik was involved in every incident of Ch. Shivaji Maharaja's life as a detective. In all such incidents, Bahirji would have done half of the work of Maharaja in the slaughter of Afzal Khan, Torna fort, Surat loot, Attack on Shahista khan, Escape from Agra, etc.

- 1. Torna Fort** – An author stated about Torna fort adventure that, “Bahirji Naik, and his team observed Torna, Rohida and Murumdev forts were neglected by Adilshah. He brought all details and planned graph of fort to make attack on the same.”¹⁰ Ch. Shivaji modified his army and made attack on the same forts and succeeds.
- 2. Demoralized the Afzal Khan's army (Battle of Pratapgad)**- When Afjal Khan started his journey towards Maratha Empire with a promise to Adilshah to kill or capture Shivaji. The detective agency of Bahirji brought a lot of information against Afzal Khan i.e., his height, his family background, his past, even his food as well. Bahirji poisoned the lead flag bearing elephant on the first day of his march. Death of flag bearing elephant was considered as a bad omen by Afjal Khan, and the act of Bahirji was successful. In *Sivarajyodayam* Varnekar described this incidence such as-

भयाकुलो दुःशकुनं बभाषे मृतो महावदारि गजस्तवेति।¹¹
During the meeting at Pratapgad, detectives brought informations about Afzal Khan's cruel intensions towards Ch. Shivaji Maharaja and his planning. Ch. Shivaji Maharaja implemented on the same and killed Afzal

Khan very sharply and succeed a great war against Adilshahi Saltanate.

3. Attack on Shahista Khan- Bahirji Naik was expert in detective work, he entered in Lal Mahal to bring all plans and information of Shahiste Khan. He brought total information of Khan, his body guards, his bedroom, his kitchen, entertainment yard and so on. An author compared the army forces of Shaista Khan and Ch. Shivaji and he stated that, Lal Mahal was guarded by 1,00,000 soldiers and warriors. Ch. Shivaji Maharaja chose 300 Mavale to implement his world's greatest commando operation against Shahiste Khan.¹² In this operation, Ch. Shivaji Maharaja lost only 6 Mavale. He attacked on Khan and safely discharged from the Lal Mahal. This operation was the remarkable example for commandos.

In *Sivarajyodayam*, references are found about Shahista khan's attack. Ch. Shivaji Maharaja had sent detectives to collect the information about Khan's arm.

तस्यामेव निशीथिन्यां चराः कपटकोविदाः।

रिपुन्ध्राणि विज्ञातुं संप्रचेरुः शिवाज्ञया॥¹³

Sri. Varnekar described here about the entry of Bahirji's detectives, who entered in Shahista khan's area to find out the situations in his army.

In the same way, Sri Umashankar Sharma Tripathi stated in his "*Kshatrapatimahakavyam*" about the covert operations by Bahirji in Khan's army. Bahirji and his team entered in Afzal Khan's army in the get up of actors and dancers for their entertainment. They took the information about the food board, how many infantry, cavalcade, elephants, guns and ammunition, people close to it and the soldier's habits.

अथ सपत्नबलं समवेक्षितुं कलयितुं च रहस्यमनोरथम्।

शिवचराश्चरितारिबिडम्बनाः सविनयं विविशुः शिविरं द्विषः॥¹⁴

The credit for getting rid of Shivaji Maharaja from Panhala like Bajiprabhu and Siva Kasid also goes to Bahirji as well.

4. Attack on Surat – Twice, Shivaji Maharaja attacked on Surat, Aurangzeb's financial capital and carried away much of its wealth. Mr. Sardesai remarked that, two or three Banian merchants lost several millions, and the total loss was estimated at 30 millions.¹⁵ An author reported the opinions of some historians that Inayat Khan was the chief of the Surat city during the attack by Marathas. The city was secured by 10,000 soldiers but Bahirji and his detectives reported to Maharaja that on paper there were 10,000 soldiers. But actually city was guarded by only 1,000 soldiers. Inayat Khan made fraud of 9,000 soldiers salary for his personal expenses.¹⁶

This information was very helpful to Ch. Shivaji Maharaja to work out his Surat attack plan. This historical loot was successful and a mile stone in the victory of Ch. Shivaji Maharaja and Bahirji too. Sri. Varnekar mentioned in *Sivarajyodayam- Suratdahanm* chapter such as-

भूयः स भूत्वा बत भारवाही कोषान्तिकाद्वित्तवतां चचारा
चिक्षेप चक्षुः क्वचिदन्धुरूपी निगूढकोषेषु हिरण्मयेषु॥¹⁷

It means that, before Surat loot, Shivaji Maharaja sent Bahirji before one month to find out the secret places, the richest merchants in Surat. Being Blind, Labor Beggar he searched secret ways in forests and mountains and returned to Raigad.

Conclusion-

From all above the discussion, it may conclude that, Historians have different opinions on how Bahirji was linked to Swarajya. Whatever the differences, there is no doubt that Bahirji was with Ch. Shivaji Maharaja from the very early stage of Swarajya. The task of keeping 'know' Shivaji Maharaja in all the ways is clearly demonstrated by his manipulation. The credit for the making of a visualization of Shivaji Maharaja's conceptualisation of the film would definitely go to Bahirji Naik. By adding sharp wisdom and timing to adventure, he has played unmatched performance in the history of Maratha Empire. From the time of *Mahabharata*, the doctrine of the state government has been highlighted, the importance of the intelligence is highlighted.¹⁸

In *Arthasastra*, it is stated as the commander's arms and intelligence is the eyes and ears of the body of the state. It is the principle that, eyes and ears are as sensible, sharp as the state is secure.

Now, we know that, the *Swarajya* was calm, happy and secure state, its credit goes to Bahirji Naik. Mr. Prashant Aher, a reporter of Maharashtra Times focused this risky job of detectives in his article. He stated there as – "Whatever the laws of country cannot do in the framework of the laws of the country, the government of intelligence and intelligence is needed. For the sake of patriotism, this secret to fight enemies of the enemy is in the land of enemy nations. This work is not as risky as it is in non-nations. But, to get the right information from the right places, the detectives must have it."¹⁹

Intelligence, they are from any age but not have glamor. Because they do not challenge the enemy by taking a bare sword in hand. Their prowess does not come in front of people, because they are not a witness. The fighters fight in battle, but the detectives also have to fight in peace. This battle is mostly of patience and intellect. It is easy to disguise, but it is difficult task to get started, so that we have to study it carefully. Believe it is an extraordinary personality that Bahirji Naik is considered to be thinking a b o u t t h e a b o v e .

An author stated his opinion about the intelligence systems, their success and anonymous works of the spies. He said such as- "The research that has been studied about the intelligence systems in the 21st century has been an important form of intelligence and failure of the intelligence agencies. That formula means to remain anonymous. As long as the detective remains anonymous he succeeds".²⁰ Bahirji Naik was also an unknown. But he remained unknown because he was successful or could remain anonymous so that the answer is no more than historians or not. How old was the age of technology and without the help of technology, how did the manipulation of information collected by analysis, analyses so accurately how to get geographical knowledge and how to convey this information to the desired person at the right time is a puzzle. It is impossible to say that Bahirji Naik created an updated 'information technology' system.

It was unquestionable that Bahirji Naik and his detectives were the best monitors of that era.

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