

Bharud: The Folk Art

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Abstract: Permanence is a noteworthy quality of folk literature. The literature written by saints has this quality. It has become people's philosophy-the bent of mind. Saint Eknath was not only a saint but a social reformer also. In order to bring social awareness among the people, he advised them through his uncommon literary genre known as Bharud. It has performance quality. Bharud, a kind of narrator-chorus performance with percussion instruments, begins with satirical entertainment but ends in edification. This sugar-coated quinine dose works like teaching-learning process. In the present article, the author tries to explain the qualities of Bharud as a literary genre and its performing qualities. The article also points out the then social implications of this genre and its need in present social scenario against all pervading violence in our society.

Keywords: Folk literature, Bharud, Performance, Social awareness, Social implications.

Since times ancient, every society has its own literature, may be in written or in oral form. The literary qualities of that literature nourish the people, cater to their taste and in the course of time it becomes their philosophy of life : hence an integral part of their mental moral built up. Fortunately Maharashtra has rich inheritance of great literature. The literature written by Saint Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram, Eknath and Ramdas not only nourished and protected the people but also motivated them to fight against social and political adversity. The renowned king Shivaji and the 19th century social reformers are the noteworthy examples / products of it. Bharud is a form of Marathi Literature and Folk art. It is popular among masses and in rural area. Nowadays elites also cherish it. 'Bharud' is a kind of *Lalit* (ललित) – a performance. It is presented at the end of 'Keertan'. Since it has features of social awakening and reforming through entertainment it is presented even without a 'keertan' also, that means it is presented separately also. Bharud is a short musical poetic drama with entertainment and edification. It's name suggests its a etymological meaning - बहुरूढ - 'Bahu' means masses and 'Rudh' means popular, means popular among the masses. It is said that the word 'Bharud' has come from Sanskrit *Bharunda*. *Bharunda* is a mythological bird with two faces but one body. 'Bharud' also has two meanings, one is literal and the other is metaphorical. Most of the 'Bharuds' are metaphors. The meanings are significant and symbolical. The song 'Bharud', begins with entertainment but ends with edification. Bharud is a kind of lesson where entertainment and enlightenment go hand in hand. Bharud has one more etymological meaning which comes from Kannad. 'Bhar' means people and 'Hadu' means song. It is sung by

Bharudi people. Thus people's song, folk song. As I wrote earlier, Maharashtra is land of saints. The saints not only worked on religious and spiritual grounds but even created thorough social awakening and enlightenment among the people. They wrote Abhangs, Owees, Slokas and Bharuds. Saint Dnyaneshwar and Namdeo also wrote Bharuds but the Bharuds of Eknath are most famous. His Bharuds are almost known as Eknathi Bharuds. Saint Eknath as a social reformer did his task through the medium of his Bharuds that means there was a social urge behind the composition of Bharuds. Let us have a glimpse at the work of saint Eknath, his contemporary society and social implication of Bharud. Born in A. D. 1533, at Paithan, on the banks of Godavari, Eknath faced the tremendous task of infusing new life into his community, groaning under the yoke of a foreign rule and demoralized before the cultural onslaught of Islam. Since the beginning of the 14th Century A. D., the last kingdom of the South, at Vijaynagar had come under the Muslim power in 1565 and the last bastion of Hindu culture and religion fell to the Muslim invaders. This was the period of anxiety, violence, dissension, inhumanity and injustice. People were steeped in ignorance, superstition and confusion of castism and formalism. Sensing the challenge of the time to be the social and moral regeneration of the Hindu community, so as to enable it to oppose the material power of Muslims by its own spiritual power, Eknath set about his task with unflinching courage and great determination. Eknath aimed at building a society of self respecting and enlightened individuals imbued with a feeling of equality and brotherhood and firmly set on the path of *Bhaktimarg*. Since it was a period of inhumanity, inequality and injustice, the downtrodden, depressed and nomadic were without any protector. They had nobody whom they could call theirs'. There was a great possibility of these masses being under vicious influence and getting converted to Islam. It was necessary to bring them to the main stream of Hinduism. They were unable to understand the orthodox and pedantic teachings of religion. Hence it was necessary to instruct them with entertainment. Saint Eknath's Bharuds performed this special task of bringing the subalterns and nomadic to the main stream. The characters of his Bharuds are nomadic like Joshi, Vasudeo, Kaikadi, Kolhati (the courtesan), Acrobats, Kanjarbats, Prostitutes, Daur, Sarauda, Khelia and Patharwat (Stone breakers) and so on.... His Bharuds contain insects and animals with which people had close affinity. For example – dog, bullock, rams, cow, parrots, snake, scorpion, cock, donkey and so on.... His Bharuds are related to festivals and situations from every day life. He composed Bharuds on pastime and games like Phoogadi, Pinga, Tipari, Top, Kite, Hututu, Hide and Seek, and so on.... One thing is very noteworthy that all Bharuds have symbolical meanings. For example दंभ - *Hypocrisy* as father-in-law, मोह - *Greed*, द्वेष - Hatred as brother-in-law, and , अविवेक - Irrationality as husband. One... This can please classes as well as masses

too. Shortlivedness of body, i.e. life is transient is a recurrent theme in Bharuds. It gives importance to spirituality. Thus saint Eknath, with the help of Bharuds brought social awareness and oneness among the masses – the downtrodden, the depressed and nomadic which were in dissension then. The stage arrangement in Bharud is very noteworthy. Bharud has a main speaker or a singer – narrator who makes a learned statement which is deliberately diverted by the second speaker in order to make the point clear to the audience. Behind these two there is chorus in one horizontal line. In a corner there is a separate group of musicians who play percussion instruments like Tabala, Taal (a kind of cymbals) along with a Harmonium. The speaker - narrator and his assistant basically perform their song in a form of dialogue especially questions and answers. Bharud has a dramatic quality which gives scope to acting, body language, tone, facial expression and gestures. If need be a male dancer just takes a 'pallu' on his head and acts as a female character. At the end the effect of the song is philosophical.

Saint Eknath's "Winchoo Chawala" is a famous Bharud. It's gist reads as follows – here is a sting of scorpion of lust, desire, passion, greed, covetousness, material acquisitiveness and so on. His greed has made him 'Tamoguni', ever hungry, never satisfied. The antidote to this poison of greed is 'Satvagun' i.e. virtue, brotherhood, liberalness, affection and humanity. 'Bharuds' has social implications even in present times. In rural Maharashtra Bharuds are performed in religious functions like Ekadashi Kirtans, Chaturmaas Samapti Pravachan, religious Saptahas, Gopalkaala and Gondhal Jagrans and social functions. Its aim is to create social awareness. Social issues like dowry, AIDS, gender equality, women education, polio eradication, prohibition of liquor and drugs, and at present female foeticide are handled through Bharuds. Here is one example. The lady – mother of a bridegroom is a hypocrite. She says that she does not want any dowry as she is an educated lady. She is strictly against dowry. Her neighbour asks "Oh, really?" and her strong answer is that she would never never, accept dowry in her son's marriage. Her son is a clerk in a bank. What she could accept is only a "Laxmi" like bride loaded with hundred *Tola* gold ornaments and domestic gifts like T.V., Freeze, Car a flat with A.C. for the happiness of the bride. Thus the hypocrisy of the bridegroom's mother is exposed. At the end of stanza she admits that the virtuous qualities of the bride is the biggest dowry for her. The 'Bharud' ends with edification for all. It says that the devotion to God is the only thing in this world which can save the people from the agony of hell-fire. Hence no desire of materialistic happiness but the pursuit of spiritual joy to be achieved. Thus at the end of this Bharuds there is an edifice to the audience. The Bharud is a social satire on the greedy tendency of dowry demand.

The construction system of Bharud is based on the Rasa Theory, particularly of Hasyarasa. Humour is used in Bharud. There is lot of mimicry. The figures of speech like metaphor, hyperbole exaggeration, paradox and pun are used in Bharud. Metaphor is the formal soul of

Bharud. On the level of meaning, spirituality is the soul content of Bharud. All dimensions of drama are applicable to Bharud. Like drama, Bharud is three dimensional activity- sight, sound and action. Bharud is mimetic. It has a strong performing quality. It has combination of drama, music, poetry, philosophy and social awareness are assimilated in one. It has *Laya*, *Taal*, *Nritya* and *Natya*. All these have made the folk art of Bharud "an imperishable, un-decaying and ageless". We should be proud of this cultural heritage. In Maharashtra the famous folk artists of Bharud are Shahir Sable, Kedar Shinde, Chandabai Tiwari and Meerabai Oomap and so many others. They create social awareness through their performances of Bharuds all over Maharashtra. They perform it on the street also like street-play. Recently in an all India level function of folk arts (Akhil Bhartiya Mahila Lok Kala), the Chief Minister of Maharashtra emphasized the need of creating social awareness through folk arts as well as the sustenance of folk arts. The University of Mumbai conducts courses / training in the art of presentations / performances of Bharuds through it's Fine Arts Center. They conduct courses in it.

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