A Descriptive Study Of Shatha Pasha Of Mahasuvi Region

Joginder Singh Habbi
Director,
Habbi Maan Singh Kala Kendra,
Sirmour, Himachal Pradesh, India

Abstract: The presented research paper describes the Shatha-Pasha tradition that has been going on for centuries in the Mahasuvi region. It depicts the life of Shatha-Pasha. In this, the facts of the impact of the war between Kauravas and Pandavas on Shatha-Pasha have been clarified. The research paper describes the journey of Shatha-Pasha from deep hostility towards each other to the emergence of mutual brotherhood between these two. Research has shown that these Shathads-Pashads reached Mahasuvi area on both sides of the Giri River and gradually their population increased and many Khash Kanat communities came into existence here, in which some Shathad Pashad communities were considered very brave. The four main communities among them have been described in this research paper under the name of four “Gedu Khashiyas”. These Shathad-Pashads also used to attack each other and in order to protect themselves from these attacks, they built Tharas. There was a competition between both the groups to capture each other's land; hence there was a great fear of war during that period. Gradually, as awareness increased in the society, efforts were made by the intellectuals to end this animosity between Shatha-Pasha. Khumlis (meetings) were organized at many places in this land of Shatha-Pasha in which the chiefs and deities of both the parties also participated, as a result of which this conflict of Shatha-Pasha gradually came to an end. Now it was decided to present the war of Shathad-Pashad in the form of “Thoda” in Bishu's Jubdi (ground). Here also, for a long time, there was some feeling of animosity between the two parties, but in today's times, the feeling of hatred between the two parties has ended and both the parties play “Thoda” with each other with the feeling of brotherhood.

Keywords – Shatha-Pasha, Mahabharata, Thoda, Giri, Mahasu.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ever since human civilization came into existence, human evolution has been going on. Along with development, human ambitions also kept increasing. To fulfill those ambitions, a person wants to subjugate others. The typical causes of wars are that either one party is being oppressed or a war is waged to avenge the atrocities. Apart from this, wars also take place to subjugate someone else. If we talk in the context of Mahabharata, the reason for this was that Dhritarashtra became a victim of love for his son and Duryodhana himself also wanted to deprive the Pandavas of their rights. As a result, a fierce battle of Kurukshetra took place in which great warriors participated. Shri Krishna himself also guided the Pandavas by becoming the charioteer of Arjuna. It was in this battlefield that Lord Krishna preached Geeta to Arjuna. The Mahabharata war took place and in this war the Kauravas were killed and all the soldiers were killed. This destructive war of Mahabharata was over but who knew that a spark of the fierce flame of this Mahabharata would also fall on the land around Giri river where for centuries the supporters of Kaurava Shathad and supporters of Pandava Pashad shall be following the war traditions of Kauravas and Pandavas will continue.
2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

According to Saraik VN, Thoda 2012 Thoda has been described in detail but complete light has not been thrown on Shatha-Pasha.

According to Sharma Anita, Kyonthal, 2022 there was a subtle discussion on Thoda in but Shata-Pasha’s side remained untouched.

According to Bhardwaj Arun, Pathak R. K., Sinha A. K., 2017 in Fairs and Festivals of the Hatti Community of District Sirmaur, Himachal Pradesh: An Anthropological Investigation published in Asian Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities Thoda dance which belongs to Solan has been included but there is nothing about Shatha-Pasha.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The tradition of Shatha Patha has a special connection with the areas on both sides of the Giri River in theMahasuvi region of Himachal Pradesh. While the study of this tradition reveals the animosity in the past of Shathad Pashad, it also reveals the ending of enmity between the two parties with the passage of time and the emergence of a feeling of brotherhood in the society. The essence of this study also emerges that having enmity with each other in the society leads not to development but to destruction. Therefore, for development it is necessary to give up enmity and create a feeling of brotherhood. This study presents the fact that the invaluable trinity like “Thoda” also originated from Shatha-Pasha.

4. MEANING OF SHATHA PASHA

Shatha is related to Shathad Khash Kanait Rajput who is considered supporters of Kauravas. Some people believe that the origin of the word Shatha is from “Shat Putra” i.e. Kauravas because Dhritarashtra had hundred sons. Pasha is believed to mean Pashad. Pashad Khash Kanait considers themselves supporters of Pandavas. Similarly, some people believe that the origin of Pashad is “Panch Putra” or Pandavas.

5. BEGINNING OF SHATHA PASHA

Shathad Pashad is believed to be related to Kauravas and Pandavas. When the Mahabharata was going on in Kurukshetra, it is believed that some soldiers of Kauravas and Pandavas, chasing each other from this battlefield, continued moving towards Yamuna and further settled in the areas on both sides of the Giri River. They kept attacking each other here also. After coming here, these Shathad Pashad Khash Kanait Rajputs started establishing their dominance over the castes like Kol, Kirat, Gandharva etc. settled here and by subjugating them, they started ruling them. Some people also believe that Shatha Pasha is influenced by the ideology of Kauravas and Pandavas because ancestors might have been directly or indirectly associated with the Mahabharata. Due to their influence, their descendants still consider themselves supporters of the Kauravas and Pandavas. During the exile of Pandavas, they came to this land of Shathad Pashad, evidence of which is found in ancient temples of Pandava style at many places. Evidence of this can also be seen in the historical site Balag situated on the banks of Giri river. All these facts indicate the relation of Shadad Pashad with Kauravas, Pandavas and Mahabharata. Gradually the population of Shadad Pashads increased and the animosity also increased. Whenever one group got a chance, they used to attack people of the other group. One party used to try to dominate the areas of the other party and due to such incidents this enmity increased further. Whenever people or animals of one group went to the area under the control of the other group, they were made captive. Sometimes even the head of a person from the other group was cut off. People of both the groups were always wary of attacks from each other. People even kept weapons hidden in their fields and at the place of daily work so that they could be useful to them when the time came. If ever suddenly one group overpowered the other group, then the people of that group were forced to leave that village and take shelter with the people of their group in another village. To avoid such attacks, Tharas were created.

6. CONSTRUCTION OF THARAS

After Shathad Pashad came into existence, due to increasing animosity, Tharas were also constructed. The Thara was constructed by the inspiration of a fort. These were built approximately seven, nine or eleven stories high. When Shathad Pashads used to attack and enter deep inside each other’s village borders, then all the people of the village used to gather in these tharas with their valuable property, grains, water and animals etc. and the only gate of it was closed. To attack the enemies from inside to outside, a special place was made which is called munhari. When enemies from outside came near the thara and tried to break the main gate or set the thara on fire, they were attacked through the munhari with kanaru or sharp arrows. Because the situation of attack could continue for a long time, food, water and wood were stored inside these tharas so that the people gathered inside them would not remain hungry and thirsty. When there was apprehension of an attack, people from the nearby villages were informed by going to the
upper floor of the thara to gather inside the thara. Apart from this, to convey important messages were also given from the height of these towers from one area to another.

7. **Kanait**

Shathad-Pashads are khash kanat rajputs only. In the local dialect, these warriors have been named Kanait. Kanait means one who shoots arrows with his bow drawn up to his ears. These are also called Khaush or Khashiyas. The Shathad-Pashad Kanat community spread here from Dak Paththar to Khada Pathar and even today their descendants are present here in various parganas (Sub Devision) on both sides of the Giri river with the name of Shathad-Pashad. Shathad-Pashad of this region is famous by the name of eighteen Kanaits & “Char Gedu Khashiye” which are sung in the folk song Harul.

8. **Rise of Gedu Rajputs**

Gradually four brave communities came into existence among the Shathad Pashad Rajputs. These four communities were named Gedu Khashiya. Gedu means brave. As Shatha Pasha came into existence, some Shatha Pasha Khash Kanait community became brave. Among the four Gedu Khashiyas, there are Habban and Manjigangvi in district Sirmaur on one side of Giri river and Janhena and Fagena Rajput communities in Shimla district on the other side. Other communities recognized bravery of these Gedu Khashiyas. Even today these communities are carrying on the Shatha-Pasha war traditions.

9. **Thaud**

Whenever Shathad Pashad Khash Kanait attacked each other, they would cut off the enemy's head and bury it in a pond. Later, their pandits or priests would consecrate it and give it the form of Kali. It was worshiped in the form of Thaud. Thaud is considered the clan goddess of Shathad and Pashad. Shathad Pashad Kanait Rajputs have their own thoad. Some people believe that Thaud refers to the goddess for whose honor eighteen sacrifices were made. Its meaning is that only when at least eighteen heads were buried in the pond, Thaud Mata was respected. Whenever these Shathad Pashads went to attack each other, they used to worship their Thaud Mata ritually and seek her blessings and when they killed their enemies in battle, they used to cut off their head and offer it in the temple of Thaud Mata. Today, even though the enmity between Shathad Pashad has reduced, they are still worshipping Thayd Devi as their clan goddess.

10. **Shatha Pasha’s Relation with Kaurav Pandav War Traditions**

Although, Shathad and Pashad Khash Kanait Rajputs consider themselves supporters of the Kauravas and Padvas, and if seen, the traditions of Shathar Pashad are quite similar to the war traditions of the Kaurava Pandavas. Kauravas and Pandavas, despite being from the same clan, became enemies and had enmity with each other which resulted in the Mahabharata war. Similarly, in the Shatha Pasha tradition, there were two groups in the same community, Shathad and Pashad, in which there was a lot of enmity. Just as in Mahabharata one person used to fight with another person, in the same way in Bishu's Jubdi also it was already decided which person from Shathad group would fight with which person from Pashad group. These pairs were made considering the height and physical ability of the people of both the parties. After this, whenever these Shathad Pashad parties went to the battlefield i.e. Bishu's Jubdi to fight with each other, only the pre-determined pairs used to fight among themselves. Untill some one of them died, both of them used to fight with each other all their lives whenever they went to the Jubdi of Bishu. Just as in Mahabharata, the war started with sunrise and ended at sunset, in the same way Shathad Pashad also used to go to Bishu's Jubdi with sunrise and kept fighting among themselves till sunset. Mahabharata war used to start with the sound of shankh, similarly Shathad Pashad also used to enter Bishu's Jubdi to the beat of Dhol along with the sounds of Ranasingha and Karnal.

11. **Weapons of Shathad-Pashad**

11.1 **Dhonu-Kaneru**

The reflection of the bow and arrow used in wars is also seen on the weapons of Shadhad Pashad. Just like bow and arrow, Shathads and Pashads used Dhonu-Kaneru for mutual war. The shape of Dhonu resembles a bow which is made of bamboo or chaon wood and the string is also made of bamboo wood. Kaneru is also like arrow. In this, the back part was made of wood and the front part was made of pointed iron or wood by sharpening it. Poison was used on Kaneru to cause more injury to the enemy. Dhonu and Kaneru were especially used for striking from a distance.
11.2 dangru
Dangru has been the special weapon of Shathad Pashad. The reason behind its adoption was that there is a holy place of Renuka ji and Parashuram on the banks of river Giri and Lord Parashuram used to keep Kandasa. The same has also affected the shape of the Dangru of these Shathad-Pashads settled around Giri river. Dangrus were mainly made of iron and brass. Shathad-Pashad considered it a convenient weapon to attack each other.

11.3 sword
Just as swords were used in wars, in the same way Shathad-Pashads also adopted swords as weapons. In big battles, swords were used by Shathad-Pashads.

11.4 khukri
Shathad-Pashad also used Khukri to attack the enemy standing in front. Khukri is especially considered the weapon of Gorkhas. The reason behind the use of Khukri by Shathad-Pashads is that people also believe that in ancient times, many places in Mahasu region were attacked by Gorkhas. Probably for this reason Shathad-Pashad also adopted Khukri as a weapon.

11.5 shobal
Shobal was used to attack one's enemy from a distance. The shape of the shobal is like a spear in which the front part of the wooden stick was either made pointed or iron was sharpened in it.

12. BISHU'S JUBDI: THE BATTLEFIELD OF SHATHI PASHI
With time, Shathad Pashad chose Bishu's Jubdi as the battlefield to show their bravery, where both the parties started showing their bravery. Both, Shathi and Pashi enter the Jubdi of Bishu in their respective groups with the rhythm of dhool, Karnal, Ranasinga and sounding shvahalas on Rathevala taal, singing folksongs and dancing. The place earmarked for Bishu's Jubdi is never plowed nor can crops be sown. If a person violated this, he would be blamed by the gods which is known as Dosh and he would be punished for this. Most of the Jubris of Bishu are also known by the name of deities. In this Jubdi, both the parties praise their bravery.

13. TRANSFORMATION OF SHATHA PASHA DEADLY GAME INTO THODA DANCE
Changes took place with the passage of time and the intellectuals of the society and the social reformers of Shathad-Pashad saw the destructive consequences of the feeling of animosity of Shathad-Pashad towards each other. As a result seeing this, they tried to remove this feeling of hostility. Shathad-Pashad used to become thirsty for each other's blood, but with the passage of time, awareness started rising in the society, hence maintaining such an environment in the society was now becoming unbearable for humanity. Even during the game of Shatha-Pasha, the mutual hatred between the two parties was clearly visible and many a times fights also took place during this period. Therefore, an attempt was made by some intellectuals to convert this game filled with feelings of hatred into the 'Thoda' dance, game and folk drama of goodwill. For this, meetings of intellectuals of both the parties and heads of many khash kanait rajput fraternities were held at many places. In this, an effort was made to create a feeling of mutual brotherhood with a view to remove differences of opinion and improve the society with time.

Under this, a mahakumli (meeting) also took place in Kotla village of Pajhauta in Sirmaur, in which the enmity between the two parties was ended after 18 people from both the Shathad-Pashad parties were killed and beheaded. 18 Kanait Rajputs and 4 deities participated in this mahakumli and the enmity between Shathad-Pashad Kanaits of Kufar and Dibbar villages was ended forever. Centuries ago, with the aim of ending the enmity between Shatha-Pasha, a Khumli was held in Pab village in which 32 Rajputs gathered and decided to end the enmity between Shatha-Pasha and start the game of Thoda. Gradually, the feeling of enmity between the two parties ended and a feeling of brotherhood started emerging. Earlier, people from both the parties did not marry the other party, but now marriages started taking place in both the parties and relations became cordial. This game of thoda no longer has the feeling of enmity and has become a game of entertainment. Although the rules and traditions of this game were kept the same as in the war of Mahabharata, but after ending the mutual enmity, in Bishu ki Jubri, the players of both the teams did not act like enemies, but like player artists entertaining the people present in Bishu ki Jubri, following the tradition, with dance, comedy and satirical dialogues.
14. CONCLUSION

Shadhad-Pashad considers themselves supporters of Kauravas and Pandavas. But if we see, we do not see a clear image of the Kauravas in the Shathds, nor there is complete influence of the Pandavas on the Shathads. Don't know why both of them kept carrying on the tradition of Mahabharata war. One reason behind this is that in order to establish their supremacy and to avoid the other party subjugating them, they continued to follow the Shathad-Pashad war tradition. We see that society improves with time. Big enmities turn into brotherhood. The intellectuals of the society also tried to end this enmity between Shatha-Pasha. As a result, relations between both the parties became cordial. Earlier there were no relations of any kind between the two parties, but after the enmity between the two parties ended, now marriage relations have started forming between the two parties. But the tradition of Shatha Pasha and their enmity in history still shows us the animosity between the two parties.

BIBLIOGRAPHY