

## DEVELOPMENT OF FEUDALISM FROM BELOW WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MEDIEVAL BHAOR ANDE VELHE

**Balasaheb Kendale**

Head of the Department History Amruteshwar Arts Commerce and Science College  
AT/POST Vinzar taluka Velhe District Pune .

### Abstract:

*During Mughal India Zaminadar the idiom covered wide range of local land rights assuming the position of local rajas. These rights were also hereditary. So far in Maharashtra the term Zamindar related to local hereditary officials who were called Deshmukh or Desais. One can notice Desai or Deshmukh Deshkulkarni Patil and Kulkarni hereditary officers operating over Paragna and village level. Pargana is Persian term which means region. It was introduced into India by Muslim rulers and was widely used both in north India and Deccan. A Pargana contained from 50 to 200 villages.*

### KEY WORDS:

Development Of Feudalism , Medieval Bhaor Ande Velhe , local community.

### INTRODUCTION:

These officers' prototype had existed before the Muslim invasion. *Patil, Kulkarni* these expressions are found in some copper plates of 12th and 13th century. According to Fukujawa one cannot find expression of *Desai and Deshmukh* prior to Muslim rule. Fukujwa also states that earliest documentary evidence of *Deshmukh* and *Desai* goes back to 1395. However, the prototype of these officers is traceable to 8th to 11th centuries with different names. *Desai or Deshmukh* were not overlord of *Pargana* but royal servant and were assigned duties of collecting revenue, maintain security and order and to perform other official task of *Pargana*. He was also entitled perpetual over lordship of certain villages. Over lordship within them was normally restricted by traditional judicial system supported by royal authority.

Thus, evolution of chief village officer *Patil and Pargana* level officer *Deshmukh* is important development of early medieval Deccan. One can notice these officers were not appointed but were inherited their offices through law of inheritance. This law of inheritance was absolutely adhered by state authority and adored by local community. Once conferred upon certain personnel their offspring's were entitled to taste its fruits in perpetuity. These officers were also had to dispense some duties in lieu of services and other financial benefits as office bearer. These officers were at the helm of local and provincial cultural, social and administration of justice sphere. Thus, these office bearers naturally became leaders within their sphere of influence without any special performance. The social prestige they acquired through mere law of inheritance; naturally get transmitted to their progeny. To all these office bearers were called *Vatnadars*. As these *Vatandars* were entitled to get considerable services and financial benefits in form of local taxes as well as revenue free land, the sum of all his these rights and responsibilities was called *Vatan* . *Patil and Deshmukh* were thus important *Vatandars at village and Pargana* level respectively. There were other petty *Vatandars* at village level. *Kulkarni and Deshpande* were *Vatndars* operating at village and *Pargana* level in coherence of duties of *Patils' and Deshmukh'* in revenue administration as maintainers of revenue records. *Deshmukh* is associated with regulation but regulation was not a structure out of which conflict

was eliminated but rather one of management by conflict. As the regulation tract under Maratha sovereignty we may define that area where the structure of landed showed an effective dualism of *Deshmukh/Deshpande* and *Patil/ kulkarni* collecting and managing the land-revenue on the basis of measurement survey. The importance and significance of these *Vatandars* is cited in medieval Marathi text named *Ajnapatra of Ramchandrapant Amatya*. The *Vatandars* in kingdom, the *Deshmukh* and *Deshkulkarnis* the *Patils* etc they may be called office-holders but this is only a term convention. They are in fact very small but self-sufficient chiefs. They are not strong on their own, but they succeed in keeping up their power by allying themselves with lord of all land the *Sarvabhm*. Yet it must not be thought that their interest coincide with that of the latter. These people are in reality the co-sharers of the kingdom. Thus understanding the importance of these *Vatandars* one can realize underlying gravity to acquire and maintain the same during medieval Maharashtra. As these officers' were hereditary; very limited scope were left to other ambitious persons to acquire it. However, there were opportunities that sparingly get available to ambitious personnel of that time. These opportunities may get created due to large scale political upheaval as territory gets transferred to more powerful and assertive king after military expedition. In due event king may assign these *Vatans* to his favorable personnel. Some time the *Vatandar* may become bankrupt and he sells his *Vatan* to rich personnel. However, this opportunity may more often get created at village level *Vatandars* and not at *Pargana* level. Another important opportunity gets created when there is no legal heir to such.

While studying medieval documents of Medieval *Bhor* and *Velhe* regions one can come across many violent incidents for acquisition of these s during early and middle age of medieval history. Live present is indeed extension of history. It is therefore imperative to peep into the past of *Bhor* and *Velhe* Tehsil. One can observe more number of *Deshmukh* families spreading over *Bhor* and *Velhe* Tehsil compare to any other region of Maharashtra. Nationalist historiography sprang during late 19th century and 20th century all over India as a result of reaction to imperialist historiography sponsored and led by British imperialist. Exploration of history of *Marathas* in general and *Shivaji* in particular was the quest of newly emerged intelligentsia of Maharashtra. In this endeavor great historians like *V.K.Rajwade* wonder all over the Maharashtra and more particularly to the region adjoined to the western crest of Maharashtra more particularly '*Maval*' region acknowledged in popular culture of this region. In the year 1936 separate office was set to collect the old indigenous records to construct history of *Shivaji* in *Pune* by *Bharat Etihās Snashodak Mandal*.

Great *Maratha* historian *V.K.Rajwade's* collection on sources of *Maratha* history volume 16<sup>th</sup> and reedited and reprinted volume third depicts all these violent stories. The underlay violence in acquisition of *Pargana* itself highlights the importance of this as described in aforesaid passage.

This record are not only important for arranging political events of 17<sup>th</sup> century but also for understanding social formation and working of *socio-economic* as well as cultural traits of contemporary Maharashtra. As far as applications of these documents concern, so far these documents are not used to construe for *socio-economic* and cultural history as well as for the local history. More pronounced stories of violent struggle to assert rights over *Pargana* are dealt with *Maral*, *Shilimkar*, *Jedhe*, *Khopde* and *Bandal* all these medieval families were from *Bhor* and *Velhe* Tehsils. Many *Deshmukh* and *Deshpandes* adored their story by saying that they owed their rights originally to the favor of *Badshah*. This was of course considered as the honorable recognition of settling a *Pargana*. Though the *Pargana* and village s seems acquired its medieval form during 14th century, suggested by *Altekar* it may be traceable to more antiquity. Otherwise, it would not have got that much craze only during medieval period. The law of inheritance accepted by all stake holders including state and society itself suggests antiquity as well as traditional importance of this institute. There are many plaint of 18th century prepared for calming original inheritance of these s in the court of raja of *Satara*. These plaints tells the story of violent struggle for *Deshmukh* in particular. These stories tell about how assertive, ambitious and valour's local chiefs tried to acquire this *Vatan* and tried to become local leaders. The only avenue to prove once ability and performance was to display military skills as well as to subordinate other powerful chiefs in order to gain such *Vatnas*. *Jedhe* of *tarf Utroli* tried to acquire *Deshmukhi* of one of the *Bhor* valley after displaying his skills and by means of good contacts with Sultan of *Bidar* after demise of local *Deshmuk's* of this valley without leaving any legal heir behind. In pursuance of his efforts in court of *Bidar* the rights of *Deshmukhi* conferred upon him and an order was issued to him. When he was approaching to his village the news broke to other relatives of deceased *Deshmukh*. An ambush took place on one pass of the approaching hill ridge of this region. One of the *Jedhe's* brother was killed in ambush and one escaped to his village. Escaped and survived brother of *Jedhe* rearranged his personnel and military resources to take revenge of *Khopde* by killing whole marriage party of *Khopde*. At this juncture 12 original retainers (*mulve*) were rallied behind *Jedhe* which were well garrisoned and assigned particular job as per preplan convincing of *Jedhe*. Similar story is depicted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century another plaint presented in court of king *Shau* of *Satara* stating claims of

*Maral Deshmukh* of *Dhanep* over his original *Deshmukhi Vatan*. While elaborating on their original ancestry the plaintiffs depicted story how care taker and kin of *Dahnep Deshmukh* tried to butcher all legal heirs of original *Deshmukhi* holder of *Kanand Valley*. While original office bearer of *Deshmukh Vatan* was dispensing royal duties at royal court handed over the charges as care taker to his distant relative of same clan. The care taker sought an opportunity to kill all legal heirs of original office bearer pretended to perform religious function at his village. He invited and took all close relatives and legal heirs of original office bearers along with himself to attend the religious function. However, when they were on the way some distance from *Dhanep* butchered all legal heirs except one child who took shelter in tall pastures. Relative of survived child took safe custody of child and was brought up in safety of another *Deshmukh* of *Mose valley*. Just parallel to *Jedhe's* story in this story also grown up heir of original office bearer reorganized his personnel and garrison and gave away the yoke of usurper. Yet another plaintiff of adjoining valley tells similar story. In this plaintiff provided whole genealogy of his ancestry claiming that his ancestors were original office bearer of *Deshmukhi Vatan* of *Gunjan Valley*. This plaintiff provides information how the original office bearer of *Gunjan Valley* widow named *Kale* departed without leaving behind any heir to her office. Plaintiff claims his ancestor *Shilimkar* took charge of *Deshmukh* office. However, there was rivalry with *Chorghe* colleague of *Shilmakar* serving as officer under *Kale Deshmukh*. An agreement was reached between these two rivals to assign *patil vatan* of five villages to *Chorghe*. However, *Shilimkar* sensed constant danger of *Chorghe* who can at any time could begin contention and in turn violent reaction for *Deshmukhi Vatan*. To combat this violent reaction of *Chorghe*, *Shilimkar* invited *Shilimkar's Pavana valley*. These invited *Shilimkar* in turn killed their host and usurp the *Deshmukhi Vatan* of original office bearer. The descendent of original incumbent office bearer of *Deshmukhi Vatan* thus are deprived from their rights. These stories are blue print of social formation of early and late medieval Maharashtra. All these stories are self explanatory underlines significance of this nodal *Vatan* of *Pargana* level and violence involved in acquisition of it.

The stories narrated in the plaintiff are acknowledged by local community and all *Vatandars* of adjoining as well as concern region. Thus the claims are genuine it tells us the story of early social formation. Consensus of all adjoining *Paragna* level *Deshmukh* to ascertain *Deshmukhi Vatan* of disputed region in meetings of *Gota* means in council of *Vatan* holders and artisans was essential requirement. The judgment copies prepared after decision of *Gota* get endorsed by signature and seal of all participated *Vatandars*. These copies were called *Majhars*. Violent clashes for acquisition of *Vatans'* were not accounted as violation of law and order either by state or these councils. On the contrary these violent clashes and *Vatan* acquired through such a clashes were legitimized by state and larger fief holders under whose territory such incidences were occurred. This certainly tells us that whoever posses power of assertion and strong ambition to acquire such powerful *Vatan* with his cunning violent activity by killing incumbent office bearer was able to do this. This was possible because at such remote sites; state was not able to enforce its law and order properly. This is the process of state formation as well as social formation. Narrations depicted in these documents though of middle period of medieval era, are expositions of process of social formations may be well conceived by community which may have ancient antiquity. The duties conferred up on *Pargana* level *Vatandar* are to increase the area under cultivation, to protect the peasants and to settle new villages as well as to streamline the revenue administration along with ascertaining propriety rights of peasants over land of their possessions. In order to appropriate more and more surplus created through agricultural production; to bring more land under cultivation was the demand of state as well as urge of *Pargana Vatandar*. Certainly these pressures evolved new kind of peasant propriety relations as well as village community. Though the village community comprises peasants, *Vatandars* and artisans, organic relations exist among all of them. These relations gave birth to a entirely different kind of *socio-cultural* milieu which in turn developed different kind of unwritten but strictly observed and practiced *socio-legal* system of village community itself. This in regional Marathi language more profoundly called as *Gav-gada*. The *socio-economic* and cultural rules of this village system were deeply rooted among village communities and became universal rules time and again people stuck to these traditions and rules. As more and more expansion of settlements took place the people and new villages which came into existence were governed by these unwritten laws observed and practiced. These sets of village administration remain till beginning of British rule. One can notice the remnant of this system in *Elphinstone's* observations. He observed there were two classes of peasants: the landed proprietors called *mirsadar* or *thalkari* and *Upri*. He observed that the relationship between *mirsadar* and local and provincial *Vatandar* of landlord and tenant. *Upri* cultivated government land on lease. *W.Chaplin* recognizes two classes of peasants throughout the *Maratha* country free holder (*mirasdar*) and tenant at will (*Upri*). *Mirasdars* were paying 50% taxes and *Upri* much less, as *upri* having precarious interest must be compensated by higher immediate profit being tillers of waste lands belonged to state. As observed by aforesaid two British officers and 18th century enquiry made through medieval documents by *Fukujwa*

Hiroshi. In preceding centuries cultivators either in *mirasi* form or *upri* form mobilized to cultivate enormous land at disposal in new settled areas by provincial as well as local *Vatandars*. Meta analysis of this process suggest expanding settlements and cultivation gave birth to integrated system of village administration and four types of power structure operating over rural Maharashtra. These powers operated coherence with each other without interfering each others' sphere, shaping *Gavgada*. These powers well pursued as oligarchic *Vatandars* Got power, Religious power, civil administrations power of state and power of businessmen. Beside this there were other traits of within agrarian system of medieval Maharashtra administration and cultivation of *Inam* land and state owned land. A.S. *Altekar* emphasizes theory of peasant ownership of all agricultural land. He said in his 'A History of Village Communities in Western India (1972)'; that there was neither nay idea of communal ownership nor that of crown being the owner of land in the Deccan. The ownership of lands occupied by our village communities in western India was vested in peasant proprietors. The land holder had theoretically no ownership rights at all . In the Deccan and in the south the *raiayat* was not allowed to sell his lands. Ownership was only acknowledged in land granted revenue-free by State and apparently in lands held on the privileged tenure of *vatan*. Indeed he calls the *raiayat wari* villagers crown tenants. Against this theory of state ownership of ordinary agricultural land apart from the land granted revenue free by the state and the lands held on the privileged tenure of *vatan*.

According to him even the *Indamdars* have got the rights to receive merely the revenue usually they have no proprietary rights in the soil. In this context we have to adjudge the agrarian system of Maharashtra.

While observing nature of agrarian system of medieval Maharashtra scholars differ in their opinion whether there was feudalism in medieval India as such. It was the year 1981 when *Harban Mukhia* published article in Journal of Peasant studies entitled ' Was there feudalism in Indian Society?' paved way for great academic debate internationally. *R.S. Sharma* first time attempted to apply model of Indian feudalism. However, it had been challenged by many scholars on the ground that there was not serfdom like Europe in India. Though the terms feudatory, feudal, feudal lord, feudatory state and feudatory families has been recklessly used and gain divergent meaning is assertion of *Vijay Kumar Thakur*. Feudalism debate centered on whether it was world system or not and whether there were similar elements involved in it. However, in Indian context many scholars rely on the theorization of *R.S.Sharm*. he claims that different medieval regions did posses some essentially similar characteristics of feudalism. However, those like *Harban Mukhia* deny feudalism as system well conceive the appropriation of surpluses created through agrarian system and oppression and coercion of peasantry. If these elements loosely or intentionally called as feudalism is used by academicians. In this context if we analyze regional nature of agrarian relation in medieval Maharashtra encompassing as feudalistic character, surpluses were appropriated by *Patil*, *Deshmukh* and even state in form of taxes as well as services rendered by village community. In broad context this can be summarized initiation of feudalistic traits of feudalism from below. A society which develops into the mature class relationship of feudal lord and serf peasant is characterized by *R.S.Sharma* as feudal. Historian *D.D. Kosambai* considered period before 600 A.D. as feudalism from above and period after that as feudalism from below. *R.S.Shrama*, *Kosambi*, *Vijay Kumar Thakur* and others identified feudal elements in ancient and early medieval period of Indian history on the basis of the *Marxian* principals of relations of production at the operational level and the forces of production. Thus *R.S.Sharma* opines ' political essence of feudalism lay in the organization of the whole administrative structure and on the basis of the land, its economic essence lay in the institution of serfdom in which peasants were attached to the soil held by landed intermediaries place between the king and actual tillers, who had to pay rent in kind and labor to them. The system was based on a self sufficient economy in which things were produce for the local use of the peasants and their lords and not for the market.' *Vijay Kumar Thakur* stressed on degree of servitude to identify feudalism in Indian context. Certainly peasants' surplus was appropriated by *Patil* and *Deshmukh* and they have to also render the services to these *vatandars* mentioned in many medieval Marathi documents. *Patil* and *Deshmukh* were entitled to receive free gift from peasants in kind. Village servants were bound to gift their manufactured articles to them. Even they were entitled to levy entry fee in their territory in form of custom duties. *Deshmukh* were entitled to receive certain cash from each village and some villagers have to serve directly in form of labor. These traits are similar to some characteristics of even western feudalism.

In medieval power structure within agrarian administration *Vatandar* at local and *Pargana* level were important because principle of inheritance was followed both by state and local village community. *Patil Vatan* in general and *Deshmukh Vatan* in particular were really considered as perpetual source of income and social prestige. Therefore, great military leaders like *Shaji* were also affectionate of these *Vatans*. One can notice number of *Nizhamshai farman* granting such *Vatans* to *Shaji* after battle of *Bhatwadi*. *Chatrapti Shau* showed similar affection of *Deshmukhi Vatan* as he feel proud mentioning

*Deshmukh* instead of *Chhatrapati*.

In case of large fiefs by the high-class bureaucrats, the condition of granting them was obscure integrity and overlordship extensive. Such grantees tended to ignore the restrictions imposed on their overlordship and this enhanced their power of decentralized *feudalization* and worked towards increasing the subordination of hereditary officers to the fief holder. Moreover, not only the large fief holders but the hereditary *Desai* also and even royal *Havaldars* had ample scope for transforming themselves into overlords of the entire regions in their charge, once the controlling mechanism of the Sultan over them and their sentimental and practical bond with the Sultan weakened. All great *Maratha* commanders as well as the *Brhamans* were eager to possess a *Inam* in their villages. The *Peshwas* themselves and Nana *Pahdnis* held *Deshmukis Patilkis kulkarni inams* and shares of  $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{1}{3}$  of s by grant from *shau* or through purchase commonly in the southern *Konkan* which was their homeland. The possession of such *Vatnas* like the possession of *seri* or government land or a piece of *kuran(meadow)* was not merely an investment opportunity but also a point of honor.

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