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**MARATHA ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE PESHWAS RULE**



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**ABSTRACT:**

The Maratha administration in the 18th and early 19th centuries was a happy combination of Hindu and Mohammedan institutions. The Maratha kingdom came into existence, when the Hindu and Muslim principles of government and finance had been in a process of inter-influence and interaction for some centuries. In the Maratha administrative system, the basic structure was Hindu with numerous Muslim characters in the superstructure. Of course, the Peshwa introduced numerous changes to suit the needs of changing circumstances. A distinct change, we notice in the Maratha administrative system in the 18th century is the place that, the Mughal Emperor occupied in the constitution. In the administrative

system of Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha kingdom, the Mughal Emperor, even in theory does not figure at all. Under Shahu, however, we find the supremacy of the Mughal Emperor being openly acknowledged. By the Treaty of 1719 Shahu accepted a mansab of 10,000 from Emperor Farrukhsiyar and agreed to pay an annual tribute of ten lakh rupees to the emperor. That, Shahu was sincere in his profession of loyalty to the Mughal Empire is clear from the protest which he made when a gate of the Delhi Darwaza built at Poona was built facing the north; Shahu maintained that this meant defiance and insult to the Emperor. Mahajadi Sindhia obtained from the emperor the office of Wakil-multlug for Shahu. Even Nana Fadnavis referred to the Emperor as Prithvipati. (master of the world). In the context the present article deals with the Administrative System under Peshwas rule.

**KEYWORDS**

*Peshwas, Maratha, Central, Justice, Military, Administration, Huzur Daftar.*

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### INTRODUCTION :

The stiff opposition from the Marathas under Raja Ram and Tara Bai to uphold Maratha nationalism and counter Aurangzeb's armies only exposed the weakness of the Mughal Empire. And with the appointment of Balaji Vishwanath as the Peshwa in 1713 CE, the Marathas began their journey of spreading their domination in the whole of India.

Taking full advantage of the internal conflicts between the Mughal officials, Balaji Vishwanath concluded a treaty with the Sayyid brothers, Abdullah Khan and Hussain Ali Khan in 1715 CE. According to the treaty, the Mughal court recognized Shahu as the king of all those Maratha territories, which had earlier been occupied by the Mughals. The Mughals also surrendered Khandesh, Gondwana, Berar and the districts of Hyderabad and Karnataka. The Marathas were given the right to levy the taxes of chauth and sardeshmukhi in the six subas of the Mughal Deccan. In return for all these favours, the Peshwas promised to maintain 15,000 horses for the Mughal army, pay an annual tribute of 10 lakh and maintain peace and order in the Deccan.

Acknowledging the Mughal presence in Delhi was a clear shift from Shivaji's policy of pursuing absolute independence for the Marathas, but Balaji Vishwanath had no other option left to him at the moment. Thus, Tara Bai was neutralized and friendship with the Mughals was established. Balaji Vishwanath had adopted a two-pronged approach: one, he led a Maratha contingent to Delhi in 1719 CE, and helped the Sayyid brothers depose Farrukh Siyar; second, as part of his primary duty he also helped Shahu win over the important Maratha leaders like Kanhaoji Angre to his side.

Not only did Balaji Vishwanath work on expanding the political boundaries of the Marathas, but he also developed networks of trade, banking and finance. As a result, there was a substantial rise in banking houses based out of Poona, with branches extending into Gujarat, the Ganges valley, and the southern regions. At the same time, expansion of the agriculture sector and maritime affairs were not neglected either.<sup>1</sup>

### Aims and objectives :

- To Study the Central Administration
- To Analyze the Provincial Administration
- To understand the Local Administration
- To Know the Administration of Justice
- To Explore the Revenue Military Administration

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

The study is historical as well as analytical and based on the historical records, which consists of primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected from lithic records, monuments and other unpublished works. The secondary data were collected from State Archives of Karnataka and Maharashtra, various books, journals and articles etc. are also used in the present study. The primary and secondary source material has been of great help in the development of the present paper.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY :

The present study is aimed at examining and Evaluating the administrative system of Marathas during

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Peshwa's Rule. The present study falls in the area of administration during Medieval Maharashtra, which in turn falls within the range of political history of Medieval India. The researchers in the field of political history nominated historical researched during the Pre-Independent Period. The post independent period however witnessed a short decline in the study of political history. But the study of the Maratha administration under Peshwa's rule will be widen the scope of political history of Maratha Empire for further research.

A critical review of the existing literature and also the aims and objectives of the study on hand brings forth the importance of the study.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

Studies on Maratha Administration under Peshwa's rule are in general are numerous. However, specific studies like the present one are few and far between.

B.L. Grover and Alka Mehta in their famous book titled "A new look at modern Indian history" have given the history of Peshwa's administration of Maratha Empire, which till appended to the their works, excellent as the work was for the time, and for the sources and historical material at their disposal, it suffered from the neglect of the evidence available in various forms in literature, which go a long way towards filling up the many gaps that in respect of that history.

Among the general studies V.D. Mahajan "History of Medieval India" deals with the Maratha administration division under Peshwa's rule in a Pan-South Indian Context. This study also deals under the veneer of a uniform political system during Peshwa's rule.

Salma Ahmed Farooqui's book entitled "A Comprehensive history of Medieval India" is one more scholarly work on the history of Maratha Empire. This book explains the establishment of the Maratha dynasty, organisation and administrative aspect related with the Peshwa's rule.

Raj Wade's book entitled "Marathanchi Itihasanche Sandhanen" is one more qualitative work on the administrative system in the rule of Peshwa's. In this work author has elaborated the administration existing in the provincial and local government under Peshwa's rule.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, it becomes clear from the above studies that, they have concentrated much on the political and administrative aspect of the Maratha Empire. Though there were some vague studies concentrating on the political history but they were related to particular region and no effort has been made exclusively to study the administrative machinery under Peshwa's rule at macro level, therefore this research study has been initiated to fill the research gap on Administrative set-up during the Peshwas rule.

### Administrative Machinery under the Peshwa's Rule :

#### The Central Administration -

The Peshwa's secretariat at Poona called the Huzur Daftar was the focus of Maratha administration. It was a huge establishment having several departments and bureau. In the words of J.Macleod the work of the Secretariat may be described thus; "All accounts rendered to the government of the revenue and expenditure of the districts, with the settlements of them by government; the accounts of districts rendered by the hereditary districts officers; and those of villages by village officers, of farms, of customs, etc. accounts of al alienations of public revenue, whether Surinjam, Inam or otherwise, of the pay, rights and privileges of the government and village officers; accounts of the strength and pay of troops and the expenses of all civil, military and religious establishments. The Rozkirds (daily registers) were registers of all

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revenue transactions generally, together with all grants and payments, and more particularly the accounts of all contributions and exactions, levied on foreign states - the whole of which were considered and exhibited in one comprehensive view in the Turjamas. "The most important department were the El Beriz Daftar and the Chalte Daftar. The former dealt with accounts of all sorts and was located at Poona; it maintained classified accounts from all other departments and prepared a Tarjuma - an index of the total receipt, expenditure and balance of the State's income in a year - and a Khataunis - abstract of all expenditure alhabetically arranged. The Chalte Daftar was under the direct charge of the Fadnavis. Nana Fadnavis introduced many improvements in the working of Huzur Daftar, but under Baji rao II it fell in complete disorder.

### The Provincial and District Administration -

Under the Peshwas the terms Tarf, Pargana, Sarkar and Subah were indiscriminately used. However, a Subah was styled a Prant and a Tarf and a Pargana as Mahal also. The big provinces of Khandesh, Gujrat and Carnatic were under officers known as Sarsubahdars.

The Sarsubadar of Carnatic appointed his own Mamlatdars but the Sarusbahdar of Khandes had only the powers of general superintendence, the Mamlatdars under him rendering account direct to the central government.

Next in rant to the Sarsubahdar was the Mamlatdar who held charge of an administrative division variously styled as Sarkar, Subah or Prant. He was assisted in his work by Kamavisdar. The Mamaltdar and Kamavisdar were the representatives of the Peshwa in the district. They were men of all jobs, looking after the development of agriculture and industry, civil and criminal justice, control of local militia, the police and even arbitration in social and religious disputes. The revenue assessment of the villages in the districts was fixed by the Mamlatdar in consultation with the Patels in the villages. In case of need the Mamlatdar made available a Shibandi (militia) to assist the Patel in matters of revenue collection.

The salary and perquisites of Mamlatdar and Kamavisdar differed from district to district keeping with the importance of the district. In Shivaji's times these posts were transferable but under the Peshwa theses tended to become hereditary with its concomitants of bribery and corruption.<sup>3</sup>

The Deshmukh and the Deshpande were other district officers who served as checks on the Mamlatdar and no accounts were passed unless corroborated by corresponding accounts from them. Besides, the Darkhdars - hereditary officers independent of the control of the Mamlatdar - served as checks on the district officers of every department. The Karkuns in the districts were also independent in every respect and reported direct to the central government any deviation from the normal functioning of the district administration.

The smaller administrative division called Mahalas or Tarfs were run on the same line as the district. The chief officer in a mahal was the Havaladar who was assisted by a Muzumdar and a Fadnavis.

### Local or Village -

Form pre-historic times the Indian village communities functioned as the units of local administration. These self contained and self supporting village communities enjoyed complete autonomy in their affairs under the paternal supervision of a set of government officers, The chief village officer was the Patel who performed judicial, revenue and other administrative functions. He served as a link between the village and the Peshwa's officials. The Patel's office was hereditary and could be sold and purchased,

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sometime in the Patel sold part of his rights and perquisites. In the latter case there might be more than one Patel in a village. The Patel did not receive any salary from the state, and his remuneration consisted of a share in every villager's produce. The Patel was the social leader of the village and had some obligations also.<sup>4</sup>

The Patel was responsible for the payment of stipulated revenue from the village to the Government and was liable to be imprisoned in case of default. Further in times of political turmoil or foreign invasion the Patel had to stand surety for the good conduct and loyalty of his co-villagers.

Next in rank to the Patel was the Kulkarni who was the village clerk and record-keeper. Like the Patel the Kulkarni was rewarded by a number of perquisites by the villagers. Below the Kulkarni rank came the Chaugula who assisted the Patel in his duties and looked after the Kulkarni's records. Besides, the Bara Balutas to twelve village artisans (Mahar, Sutar, Lohar, Chambhar, Parit, Kumbhar, Mang, Kulkarni, Joshi, Gurav and Potdar) rendered various services to the villagers in return for baluta or remuneration in kind. In some villages the Bara Balutas were assisted by an additional body of twelve servants called Bara Alutas.

### Town Administrations -

The pattern of Maratha city administration conformed by very nearly to the system that prevailed in the Mauryan times and the Kotwal's duties approximated to the duties of the Mauryan Nagarka. The Kotwal was the chief officer in a Maratha city. His duties included disposal of important disputes, regulation of prices, maintenance of a record of persons coming in and going out of the city, arbitration in disputes relating to roads, lanes and houses and upkeep and transmission of monthly accounts to the government. Above all the Kotwal was a Police Magistrate and at the head of the city police.

### Administrations of Justice -

Nowhere perhaps the influence of the ancient Hindu law-givers is more perceptible than in the judicial system of the Maratha. The Maratha law was based on the old Sanskrit treatises on law like Mitakshara and Manu's Code and old customs.<sup>5</sup>

The judicial officer in the village was the Patel, in the district set-up the Mamlatdar, above him the Sarusbahdar and then the Peshwa, and above all the Raja of Satara who was the fountain of justice and honour. In towns the judicial duties were entrusted to the care of a Nyayadhish who was well versed in the shastras and who performed judicial functions only. Thus, the separation of the judicial functions from the executive was not unknown to the Maratha.

The administration of justice was very simple and well-suited to the needs of the time. There was no codified law, no set procedure for trial cases. The emphasis was on amicable settlement of disputes. The Chhatrapati and the Peshwa acted more like patriarchs of old than modern judges.

The Panchayat was the main instrument of civil justice. The Panchayats were popularly called "Panch Parmeshwar" and the Panchas were often addressed as Ma-Bap. The decision of the Panchayat was binding on the parties. An appeal from the decision of the village Panchayat lay to the Mamlatdar who usually upheld the decision, unless the parties concerned could prove that the Panchayat was either prejudiced or corrupt. In that case the Mamlatdar could assemble a Panchayat outside the village of the disputants. In such suits the Panchayat's decision was subject to an appeal to the Peshwa.

In criminal cases, the authorities were the same as in civil cases - the Patel in the village, the Kamavisdar or Mamlatdar in the district, the Sarsubahdar in the province and the Peshwa and the Chief

Justice as Poona above all. No regular set procedure was followed in the trial of cases.

Flogging was frequently resorted to and in cases of treason against the state the instruments of torture were decoity, murder, treason, the usual punishment was confiscation of property or imprisonment of the criminal. The main idea behind punishment was to reform the offender and not to drive him to the extreme of despair and make him a hardened criminal.<sup>6</sup>

### The Police -

The police arrangements were satisfactory. The Metropolitan Police at Poona was a watchword of efficiency and honesty and has deserved the applause of European observers like Elphinstone and Tone. According to Elphinstone a sum of Rs.9,000 annually was spend on the unkeep of this force which consisted of a large number of peons, horse patrols and Ramoshis. Tone writes, "It is little remarkable for anything but its excellent Police which alone employs thousand men. After the firing of the gun, which takes places at ten at night, no person can appear in the streets without being taken up by the Patrols, and detained prisoner until dismissed in the morning by the Kotwal. So strict is the discipline observed that the Peshwa himself had been kept prisoner a whole night for being out at improper hours."

### The Revenue Administrations -

Since agriculture was the principal industry of India, land revenue formed the main source of income of the Peshwas. While Shivaji preferred a share in the actual produce of the field, the Peshwas preferred grand of land on long lease on fixed state demand. Fixing the state demand according to the availability of irrigation facilities was a old as the days of Manu and Kautilya, but the classification of land according to fertility and actual state of cultivation was due to the Mughal influence.

To give inducements to cultivators to bring more and more land under cultivation the land newly brought under cultivation was lightly taxed. For bringing waste and rocky land under cultivation, Madhav Rao II announced that, half of such land would be given in inam and for the remaining half rent free concessions were offered for 20 years and a further concession in reduced taxes for another five years. In times of famines, drought or plunder of crops or failure of crops, remissions of land revenue were granted.

To save the cultivator from the clutches of money-lenders the state granted tagai loans at low rates of interest.

The state demand as well as the mode of payment of land revenue was not uniform throughout the empire.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the revenue system of the Marathas was based on the principles of security of the taxpayer. However, the excellent system was upset by the wickedness of Baji Rao II who resorted to the system of revenue farming to the highest bidder.

### Other Sources of State's Revenue -

The other source of income of the State were the Chauth (25%) and Sardeshmukhi (10%) of the total tax collection of territories over run by the Marathas but offered the option of purchasing security by these payments. The income from the Cauth was traditionally divided thus - Bakti or 25 % for the Raja, Sahotra or 6 % reserved for the Pant Sachiv, Nadgaunda or 3 % left to the discretion of the King and Mokasa or 66 % divided among the Maratha Sirdars for maintaining troops.

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The Sardeshmukhi was also similarly divided. After the annexation of the territories paying Chauth and Sardeshmukhi, the remaining 65 % of the revenue was called Jagir and was granted in varying proportions to different individuals.

The Government also derived some revenue from forests, customs and excise duties, mints etc. Permits were sold for cutting timber from forests; forests grass, bamboos, wood and wild honey were also sold. The state also granted licenses for private mint to approved goldsmiths who were required to pay a royalty to the state.

The total revenue of the Peshwas' Government has been variously estimated. Lord Valentia put the revenue at Rs.7,164,724 while Mr. J. Grant estimated it at 6 crores of rupees towards the close of the 18th century, which of course included a Chauth of 3crores. Elphinstone estimated the revenue at Rs.9,671,735 in December 1815; this figure did not included income from Chauth.

### The Maratha Military System -

The Maratha army was organised more on the Mughal model than the ancient Hindu system. The Maratha military regulations were framed on the lines of the Muslim Kingdoms of the Deccan. In the Maratha emphasis on cavalry at the cost of the infantry, the methods of enlistment of troops, the mode of payment of salaries, the method of rewarding troops after conquest of a new territory, in making provisions for the dependants of the soldiers, in the branding of horses etc. we find unmistakable marks of the Mughal System. Thus both in theory and practice there was a wide departure from the ancient Hindu rules and tactics, principles and practices.<sup>8</sup>

While Shivaji had mostly recruited his soldiers from Maharashtra proper, the Peshwas recruited their soldiers from all parts of India. In the Peshwa's army we find men of all races, religions and creeds - Karnatikis, Arabs, Abyssinians, Telingas, Bedars, Rajputs, Sikhs, Rohillas, Indian Christian, Shenvi subject of Portuguese settlements in India. Thus, the Peshwa's army become heterogeneous and assumed a profession character rather than a national character. Perhaps this became inevitable as a result of the expansion of the Maratha power throughout India. Again, while Shivaji distrusted feudal levies and preferred to keep all his officers and soldiers directly under his command and paid them from his treasury, the Peshwas mainly relied on feudal levies and parcelled out the whole Maratha empire into military jagirs.

### Cavalry -

The mainstay of the Maratha army since the time of Shivaji had been cavalry. Maratha leaders were granted jagirs and required to maintain a stipulated number of horsemen. The military leaders were required to bring their troops for a general muster every year. In Balaji Baji Rao's time the horses were divided into three classes : a horse worth Rs.400 was classed as superior, the one priced Rs.200 as middling and the one priced Rs.100 as inferior. A horse valued at less than Rs.100 was not counted in the muster.

The Peshwa tried to lessen the dangers of the feudal system by granting jagirs to various chiefs in the same area in the hope that their mutual jealousies would keep them as a check on one another.

### Infantry -

The Marathas felt the need for a strong infantry force when their empire extended beyond the Narmada. Since the Maratha talent was more suited for service in the cavalry, for its infantry regiments the

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Peshwas had to depend on the Rajputs, Sikhs, Rohillas, Sindhis, Arabs etc. Europeans commanded some regiments of the Peshwas infantry. Boyd's regiment of trained infantry cost the Peshwa Rs.26,242 p.m. the Commander receiving salary at the rate of Rs.3,000 p.m. a Captain Rs.450, a Lieutenant Rs.250, a Sergeant Rs.90 and a Havaldar Rs.15 p.m.

To induce foreigners to join the infantry, higher salaries were offered to foreigners as compared to Marathas. Thus a soldier from Arabia received Rs.15 p.m. a Hindustani Sepoy Rs.8 p.m. while a Maratha and a Deccani only Rs.6 p.m.

### Artillery -

The Maratha Artillery Department was mostly officered by Portuguese and Indian Christians. The Peshwas did set up their own factories for manufacture of cannons and cannon balls; a cannon ball factory was set up in 1765 at Ambegavan in Junnar district and one established at Poona in 1770. But for most of their requirements of the Artillery Department the Peshwas dependent mostly on the Portuguese and the English. The salary of an ordinary Portuguese gunner ranged between Rs.30 and Rs.15 p.m.<sup>9</sup>

### Navy -

The Angrias kept a strong fleet on the western coast but they were independent of the Peshwas. The Peshwas set up their own naval fleet. The Maratha fleet was generally used for checking piracy, collecting zakat from incoming and outgoing and safeguarding the Maratha ports.

An Admiral under Balaji Rao received a salary of Rs.1,186 per annum besides some perquisites and possibilities of reward after a naval victory. A Sar Tandel received Rs.10 p.m. a Tandel Rs.7.50 and a sailor Rs.4.50 to 5.00 p.m.

### Employment of Foreigners -

The Peshwas employed a large number of foreigners in their army. Challenged by European powers, superior in discipline and military skills, the Marathas tried to meet the enemy with the weapons of the enemy. To train their troops the Marathas employed English, French, Portuguese, German, Swiss, Italian, Armenian professionals in their army. They paid them very high salaries and granted jagirs for the maintenance of special battalions.

However, the experience of the Marathas, like that of the Sikhs in the Punjab later on, was that these foreigners were mostly fortune-seekers and could not be expected to loyally serve their master. To employ Englishmen and to expect them no fight against their own nationals was the height of folly. Commenting on the case with which the fort of Alighar or Koel was captured Thorn remarks, "It should here be observed that the achievement was materially facilitated by the loyal and gallant conduct of Mr. Lucan, a British officer, who had lately quitted the service of Sindhia, to avoid fighting against his country. On joining our army he undertook to lead Colonel Monson to the gate, and pointed out the road through the fort, which he effected in such a manner as to gain the particular thanks of the Commander-in Chief, and the public acknowledgement of the government".<sup>10</sup>

### CONCLUSIONS / FINDINGS :

The Maratha administrative system has suffered in estimation because of its comparison by British historians with the modern European set-up and not with the contemporary European standards. Such writers have described it as 'abominable' and the Maratha generals as 'robbers, plunders and scoundrels'.

An objective study would convince anyone that the Maratha administrative institutions were based on excellent set of regulations, inherited from their Hindu and Mohammedan predecessors and these left behind a legacy for the British administrative set-up. The Maratha empire certainly was not based on robbery and plunder alone, for how could it have lasted more than a century and a half unless it was based on sound principles of good government.

The contemporary Maratha administration of Peshwa was based on Hindu Sastras, Muslim law, reforms by Shivaji himself and his successors and amendments done by Peshwas. Thus the system of Peshwas was a mixture of many features. The administration of Peshwa was main and permanent.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH :

There is wide scope for the Research Scholars and Historians to conduct a Research on Administrative set up during Peshwa's rule under Maratha Empire. Present study is having good future towards minor and major research projects.

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